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State Government’s Impact on Campus Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Students

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State Government's Impact on Campus Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Students

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my supportive husband, Michael, to my loving daughter, Vivian, and to my late mother Diana.

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Abstract

College campuses have been creating targeted support programs in the last decade to assist students coming from at-risk backgrounds, including those who are homeless. Although research has begun to look at the impact these programs are having on the students they serve, little research has been done on how outside support has influenced the development and construct of these programs. My research addresses this gap in prior works via an exploratory study of how the existence of statewide supports, including the formation of networks, within three different cases impact colleges' ability to build support programs. As part of a case study analysis, three different states - Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania - were reviewed in order to measure levels of support being provided to colleges; and then administrators from a selection of those colleges were interviewed to determine the level of impact these supports are having on the services provided to homeless students. Findings in this report demonstrate there is a mismatch in institutional services, those being served, and the level of support being received from states. The conclusion of this report includes recommendations at the institutional, state, and federal levels.

Keywords: foster, homeless, networks, student development, unaccompanied

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter I Introduction

In this chapter, I will introduce the main topic for this research as well as provide a framework for the development of this study's research question. To do this, I include an introduction to prior research and findings that support the need for additional resources for homeless students in higher education. A historical synopsis will also be included in this chapter to introduce background knowledge for this topic, including the importance of student development within higher education and the policies that support homeless students. The concentration of network management within the field of public administration will also be introduced, as it is one of the statewide supports reviewed within the case study analysis of this report. Finally, after providing a historical context for my research study, a theoretical framework which includes student development theories and public administration theories will be used to demonstrate how my research will expand upon prior research within the fields of higher education and public administration. Student development theory has been incorporated, as most of the field research done for this study was focused on the work of campus support programs for homeless students. These programs aim to provide a means for college students to develop and succeed during their time of enrollment. If not a formal program, then the participants for this study worked within a field of student affairs or in a role on campus that has been charged with supporting student development. Therefore, to better understand why these positions are created and why these participants were selected, I will be reviewing the theories that over time have been known to motivate university leadership to construct a level of holistic support for students that goes beyond academia. With that said, since the purpose of this study is to determine the impact of state government supports including the formation of networks within each state, additional theories focusing on network management will also be reviewed within this introduction. By the end of this chapter, readers will understand the purpose of this research as well as its significance for guiding future decisions of both university leadership and legislators in order to improve the access and success rates of unaccompanied homeless students in higher education.

Introduction

Our society and federal government have already determined the importance of supporting the future success of unaccompanied homeless students as policymakers have focused on increasing college enrollment as a means to mitigate poverty (Deming, D., & Dynarski, S., 2009). However, others have voiced concern that a college student who is homeless is a contradiction of sorts as they are being housed and supported by their institution (Klitzman, 2018). In response, federal policy and regulatory guidance do not limit the definition of unaccompanied homeless students to those without nighttime residence but also those at-risk of becoming homeless. Denning & Dynarski (2009) recognize the holistic needs of these at-risk students go beyond having access to a college education, as they reveal in their findings that there have been many programs implemented to increase the enrollment of low-income students into college, but little has been done to ensure these students complete their degrees. Abdul Rahman, M., et al. (2015) also noted that when homeless youth in particular lack support they are susceptible to failure. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) (2016) reported that 32,000 unaccompanied young adults aged 18 through 24 were homeless on a single night during the course of their research. Individuals who are 24 years of age or younger who are not cared for by a parent or guardian, and do not have a fixed and regular nighttime residence are considered unaccompanied homeless youth (Mahaffie, 2015). This population includes those who “run away from home or have been asked to leave home by a parent or guardian” (NCHE, 2010, p. 2). As well as those who are residing with individuals, other than their biological parents, due to a loss of their own housing or a change in financial circumstances that prevents them from paying for their own housing (Klitzman, 2018). Policies and regulations have been promulgated by federal government agencies, including the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 (CCRA), with the goal of ensuring this population of unaccompanied homeless youth are able to access and complete a college education (Cruthchfield, R. M. et al, 2019).

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) promotes the notion of constructing a state higher education network in each state to improve the implementation of policies that support unaccompanied homeless youth. State networks are a potential means of helping the field of higher education build necessary support systems. The GAO report (2016) included these potential support services that should be provided to homeless students to provide both financial and academic support. To build an argument for the existence of these state networks, the purpose of my research study is to prove that an impact is being seen in colleges that have access to state resources including developed networks. The significance of my findings from this research study is that it provides evidence that states should systematically and financially support higher education institutions to increase access and completion rates of homeless youth in higher education. After conducting an extensive literature review, my study will reveal the importance of college support services for unaccompanied homeless youth and why they are necessary for these at-risk students to successfully complete a college degree and become gainfully employed. This research will also determine if network management is a necessary means to respond to inconsistent service levels and policy gaps for our homeless college students in the United States. To better understand why statewide resources were reviewed as a potential measurement of impact on college performance, participants located within each state were asked to speak to homeless students' success in their colleges. This report will discuss what is known and has evolved over time regarding the use of networks and other resources in public administration and the application of student development theories to support students holistically in higher education.

Research question. The problem proposed from my initial analysis is that state efforts to support homeless youth in higher education are not substantial enough to motivate colleges to create services for homeless youth. Therefore, findings will be used to determine if additional state resources or federal policy should be used to provide consistent and regulated support both to homeless students and the colleges that serve them. In order to do this, my research will look to answer if varying levels of state support impact the level of services institutions are providing homeless colleges students. My hypothesis that will be proven or nullified based on the findings of my research, is that if colleges are located within states that have higher levels of state support, then those colleges will provide more consistent support services to homeless youth compared to colleges located in states with lower counts of resources aimed to support homeless students. If this hypothesis is nullified, then the recommendations will focus on what can be done to improve services based on findings from my research as well as prior research outlined within the literature review in this report.

Historical Background

Student development. The significance of student development evolving into an important field of practice for post-secondary institutions for my research is that several of the challenges homeless students face in accessing and completing a college degree take place outside of the classroom. These barriers even stem from developmental challenges that occurred before the students stepped on to their prospective campuses. Therefore, to better understand how present-day colleges and universities feel about student development when establishing priorities for serving students I must look at the field itself and how it has grown overtime. A general overview of how the field of higher education moved from a primary focus on academic studies and liberal arts to vocational placement initiatives and then finally to an integrated approach of providing students with both a means to learn and prepare for careers is a critical element in understanding the research question presented within my report.

Higher education has come a long way in our nation since Harvard's students commenced their studies in 1636. However, many of the early periods of higher education focused on the academic and vocational goals of students who were continuing their education from training clergy to training workers returning from war. Even as recent as the 1930s when the Great Depression caused institutions to focus on preparing students for placement within the workforce during times of job scarcity. This vocational preparation movement was a shift from expanding the mind to matching students with a career. However, even during this movement it was recognized that students' emotional states impacted their ability to learn. For example, the American Council on Education released a report back in 1937 titled the "Student Personnel Point of View" which introduced educators to the notion of serving the "whole student" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 8). This thought process evolved even further to formal theories in the 1960s that had a more intentional student affairs focus for colleges' objectives for students. In 1962, Nevitt Sanford introduced the notion that for students to be successful there must be a balance between support and challenges while attending college. This acknowledgement of how students engage with their campus environment shifted the focus of student affairs to use development theories during their practice instead of only as a preparation tool used prior to being employed in the field. As a result, student development became a guiding theory for practice and eventually started to expand outside the area of student affairs by the 1970s.

Feldman and Newcomb, who were both sociologists, expanded this work by introducing the idea of environmental factors playing a significant role in student development. During this same time period one of the more prominent student development theories was introduced by Arthur Chickering in 1969. Chickering's model was not a linear step ladder like other developmental theories proposed in this era would instead demonstrate how different phases of development weave together to help students mature. This then impacts students' success while in college. Chickering then revised his theory in the early 1990s with the assistance of Linda Reisser; this adaptation is still referenced in today's student affairs research. Today, student development theory continues to evolve and be inclusive of external factors; for example, social identity theory and ethnic identity theory both look at how peoples' differences impact performance, whether they stem from privilege or disadvantaged backgrounds. Additional thought processes include how differences in race and culture influence identity development which will then impact how students respond to external factors such as campus life. For example, in 1997, Holland believed that there were six personality types that were influenced by environmental factors. Overall, most higher education professionals adopt some integrated approach when using theory to inform practice. Today, there is still concern that not enough administrators are using theory at all during their day-to-day operations. This is for a variety of reasons including not having enough time in a day, not having enough of an opportunity to refresh on what they learned before they were hired, or not having an opportunity to learn these theories before beginning their tenure in a higher education position. My research study was mindful of these theories when developing questions about the existence of campus support programs and services that address barriers such as food insecurity and housing insecurity which if not addressed could lead to homeless students not developing at the same rate as their peers or having a realistic expectation of being successful (Evans et al., 2010).

Policy background. During this research study there has been more movement related to legislative action targeting the needs of college students outside of the classroom than there has been for the last twenty years. Unfortunately, this newfound focus on caring for at-risk young adults was directly in response to the global pandemic that swept our nation during the conclusion of this research. However, before the pandemic little was done to target the needs of college students beyond supporting the direct cost of their education. Policies passed targeting homeless and foster youth fell short when it came to providing guidance to support this population after their K-12 education. Crutchfield et al. (2018) explains that unlike the elementary and secondary systems, a comprehensive federal policy has not been introduced to specifically address the issues of homelessness and housing insecurity within higher education. However, there are three federal policies that do have some guidance that dictate how to support this population. Those policies are McKinney-Vento Act, College Cost Reduction and Access Act, and Every Student Succeeds Act (Crutchfield et al., 2018). Additional policies also exist that target the needs of foster youth as they prepare for aging out such as Child Welfare Act and Adoption and Safe Families Act. This section will review all these policies to introduce legislative action referenced throughout my report that currently inform practices of the participants in this study.

The McKinney-Vento Act was passed back in 1987 provides federal funding to support students who are not able to stay in their district as a result of their unstable housing situations. This law was reauthorized in 2015 (Crutchfield et al., 2018). The indirect influences of this Act include removing education barriers for homeless youths, but the directives of the policy are limited to elementary and secondary administrators only. However, the definition that is used by colleges when determining who is considered “homeless” is usually drawn from McKinney-Vento, which is qualified by any student experiencing homelessness who lacks housing that is fixed, regular, and adequate. Therefore, colleges have learned that students who are couch surfing or are doubled up should be considered homeless. The federal government established the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program to support the needs to educate and train administrators responsible for implementation of campus support. The EHCY program focuses on making sure that students can enroll in school without barriers and provides training to school administrators to create consistent service standards for homeless students no matter what state, district, or school they are in. These service standards were expanded upon in 2015 as part of a reauthorization and with the passage of the “Every Student Succeeds Act” (ESSA) which requires that one liaison be designated to assist homeless students within each school district. However, this extension of resources is once again limited to K-12 grades and was not a requirement of higher education institutions including even those who are public (Klitzman, 2018). ESSA also states that federal college access programs such as TRIO should give priority to homeless students (Crutchfield et al., 2018). The importance of having administrators trained on the definitions of “homelessness” and “youths” is not only important in regard to knowing the appropriate language and understanding student pathways to homelessness, but it is also critical in helping students establish independent status through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) (2007). CCRAA states that students experiencing, or are at-risk homelessness should not have to include parent information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and therefore should have access to the same level of federal aid as other independent students

(Crutchfield et al., 2018). It is true that many students experiencing homelessness would qualify for similar aid if they had added parents to the FAFSA due to the expectation of minimal income being reported; however, this provision is critical for students who are housing insecure and do not have parents to add to the FAFSA or are experiencing homelessness due to escaping an abusive parent. Without this provision of the CCRAA students feel pressured to seek out other adults or abusive parents just to complete their financial aid application and access federal aid. Independent status not only supports access to college by awarding students their full financial aid eligibility, but also protects their privacy through the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (1974) as administrators cannot share students' statuses from the FAFSA or their financial account information with any other individual without the student's permission (Crutchfield et al., 2018).

Foster youth are the other at-risk group discussed in this research study as they traditionally have surfaced when identifying students who are housing insecure or homeless. Students in foster care have their own history of targeted policies to support their access to education. These policies are a little more thorough regarding guidance and support for those looking to continue their education. For example, back in 1961, the welfare provision for foster care was introduced to help offer funding to individuals who were willing to support children whose parents were unable to care for them (Sanders, 2003). Then in 1980, the Child Welfare Act focused on trying to reunify families who were found to be kept apart for unnecessary reasons (Sanders, 2003). Later, in 1997, it was found that putting children back with their families should not always be the goal if those families are unfit, and therefore the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997 focused more on the well-being of the child instead of reunifying with parents (1997). However, it was not until 1999 that the question of how to help these young adults after they left the system of placement was answered. The federal government has tried several times to implement policies that will support and help foster youth during their time in the system and after the fact. Policy changes for foster youth in the past years have ranged from providing more support, more funding, and even increasing the age that youth can remain in foster care, with the central policy goal of improving the lives of youth who end up in foster care. A policy goal is the desired outcome that is clearly stated within the policy itself or is implied through the creation of the policy and other historical legislative decisions (Birkland, 2011). The Foster Care Independence Act of 1999 is an example of such a policy, as part of its aid to help foster youth transition into independence, federal funding was made available to states via the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program (Haggerty et al., 2016). The funding is then used to provide independent living programs (ILPs), transitional planning and preparation services, and vouchers to help with a college education (Haggerty et al., 2016). The Education and Training Vouchers are awards provided to students who have aged out of care, up to an amount of $5 thousand per year for postsecondary education expenses (Emerson et al., 2016). Although these programs are available to each state, not all funding is being spent due to youth not being aware that the support exists, or by aging out of eligibility while still enrolled in college (Emerson et al., 2016). Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz (2009) reported in their study that six states have returned more than 10 percent of their Chafee annual funding allotment to the federal government for at least four out of the five-year timeline in which the study was conducted. According to the Center for Fostering Success (n.d.) for every youth that ages out of foster care, taxpayers and communities end up paying $3 million in social costs including public assistance, which equals a total of $6.7 billion for all foster youth who age out of the system each year.

Network management. The research question in this study is not focusing on whether colleges should provide support to homeless students but instead how they can with the support of states including the development of a network of multiple agents. Therefore, a review of the notion of network management as a concept of public administration is reviewed in this section to better understand why this method of interorganizational management via statewide networks is one of the resources found in my research for addressing policy gaps and implementation challenges of the policies outlined earlier. Ferlie et al. (2005) explain that the concept of networks did not emerge in public administration teachings until the mid- 1970s; however, works focused on collaboration and interorganizational work for implementation were introduced as early as the 1960s. Therefore, network management is an expansion of how the field of public management focuses on intergovernmental relations and the inclusion of outside entities such as non-governmental agencies, for-profits, and universities. This was a result of more attention shifting to the focus on the implementation strategies of policy instead of policy development alone. The management of networks focuses on the power of structure and the ability to reach mutual consensus by bringing together multiple experts instead of relying on implementing policies with the use of a hierarchy of experts (Agranoff, 2007) This "horizontal" structure for administering policies includes a "bottoms-up" approach of looking at what frontline workers would need to make a policy successful. This awareness led to multiple constituents needing to coordinate and find effective and efficient strategies (Ferlie et al., 2005). However, this is not to say that network management replaced hierarchies as these structures are still important for many organizational and political constructs, but instead provides an alternative when looking to coordinate the management of public policies (Agranoff, 2007). Agranoff believed that networks should be taken seriously as cooperative solutions that serve a common mission statement, address problems, or fill a known policy gap using interorganizational actors. This focus on policy outcomes instead of policy goals introduced the idea of plurality, or being inclusive of how separate actors and their individual interests influence the implementation of a new policy. Agranoff (2007) also explained networks can be categorized by the types of actors within them as well as by their size and purpose, but when deciding to form a network the "public administrator must test the assumption that shared governing activity has shifted the roles of the state..." (Agranoff, 2007, p. 19). For my research study I am testing if the formation of state networks and the shared governance for supporting homeless students in colleges with the use of outside non-profits and government entities will lead to improved service offerings to this at-risk population.

Theoretical Basis

Student development theories. Student development theory currently is believed to have multiple uses including describing student behavior, explaining how internal and external factors can influence behavior, and predicting how programs are developed to address segmented populations such as first-generation. This work includes building supports for disadvantaged students to help them reach the same level of development and engagement as their peers. However, practitioners still struggle with integrating a history of revised and revisited student development theories. One example, provided by Evans et al. (2010), is when students break the rules, student affairs professionals then question if they should be given consequences or provided with an opportunity to develop, but the answer is that these theories explain why the behavior happened or to predict a behavior that might happen, they do not negate other human development theories. Instead, administrators should acknowledge that putting consequences in place is a learning opportunity and helps students develop. Higher education professionals must be careful to not only be aware of student development theories when working with unaccompanied homeless students but to use them responsibly which means not assuming all students are the same when evaluating a situation or implementing theoretically informed practices.

Nevitt Sanford (1966) explains that readiness for college results either because of the internal processes associated with maturation or beneficial environmental factors. To encourage development, determining the optimal range of disparity in these factors is critical (Evans et. Al., 2000). Sanford's (1966) theory was one of the first to look at how person and environment relationships can impact a student's development and recognized that, "the amount of challenge a student can tolerate is a function of the amount of support available..." (p.30). The importance of this work for unaccompanied homeless students is awareness of the various different circumstances and levels of support students could be coming from: a student abandoned by his parents but living with a high school coach will probably have more support than a homeless student who lost their only parent and home and is couch surfing with family and friends, and a foster youth who aged out of their group home and now lives in a shelter would have even less support than the first two cases. In other words, theory is a useful tool for informed practice, but the individual student always takes precedent over the generalized assumptions that might be made by student development theories (Evans et al., 2010). Carl Jung (1971) also believed typologies of personality impact how each individual student handles circumstances. Jung (1971) believed that innate differences between personalities influence human behavior. Higher education professionals could be charged to support two different students who are coming from similar unstable housing scenarios such as couch surfing, but may have an easier time understanding needs of a student who is more outgoing and extroverted than from a student who is feeling more shame and is naturally more introverted. Therefore, not all pathways to homelessness in college can be categorized and treated the same because there are still differences amongst individual students coming from those pathways. Abraham Maslow believed individuals need to satisfy their basic needs including physiological and a sense of belongingness before they can build a sense of self-esteem. Therefore, it is incredibly important for professionals to be mindful of whether or not basic needs such as housing and food are addressed year-round when working with unaccompanied homeless students. Maslow created a hierarchy of needs with recognition that it is difficult for individuals to develop if they are still feeling insecure, hungry and unloved. Since students who are facing housing insecurity and homelessness do not satisfy the base level of physiological needs, before entering college, there is concern that this will hinder their ability to focus on academic achievement (Klitzman, 2018).

As mentioned before, Chickering's (1993) vectors are unlike a linear or hierarchical approach and therefore do not have to progress or be satisfied in the same order for every student. These seven vectors include: developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing identity. At the point that Chickering worked with Linda Reisser to update his theory, in the early 1990s, the acknowledgement of how seven different campus environmental factors impacted the means students developed and approached each vector as well. These seven environmental factors are: Institutional objectives, institutional size, student-faculty relationships, curriculum, teaching, friendships and student communities, and student development programs and services. For higher education professionals, all these factors are still relevant when working with homeless youth, however, certain factors have more influence than others.. Evans et al (2010) explains how Chickering and Reisser (1993) institutional objective factor are important as clear objectives, “lead to greater consistency in policies, programs, and practices while making evident the values of the institution...” (p.69). Higher education professionals who work directly with homeless students should keep their university presidents and campus leaders informed to influence the strategic goals of the university and to include serving homeless students year-round as an objective of those goals. Institutional size is a factor that is considered in this research when constructing the coding mechanisms for the participants. Institutional size is a relevant factor when considering developing supports and formal programs to support homeless youth as resources are not abundant at most smaller colleges and programs that are not properly resourced may not lead to the desired impact on a student's success.

Network management theories. Original and prominent public administration theories that are still perceived relevant today include the works of Dwight Waldo, who argued that the administrative state can be broken between the decision (politics) and execution (administration), Charles Lindblom, who emphasized the idea of considering all policy alternatives before settling in order to increase the likelihood that the policy maximized the intended goal, and Kaufman, who focused on decentralization being a necessity after vast growth and recognizing a need for more representation within administrative agencies. However, this research focuses on a more modern theory of public administration known as network management. This is because the notion of using a network of support for assisting colleges with unaccompanied homeless youths and their desire to obtain a college degree is a more relevant practice. That is also why this research is looking at whether or not these networks are having the desired impact on university behavior. Networks as a prescriptive theory argue that "without network management it is hardly possible to achieve interesting outcomes..." (Ferlie et al., 2005, p.267). With network management theory, a manager is still needed to coordinate activities by the other members within the network. This individual would also need to identify new members when there is a gap in performance or resources as these collaborative units tend to see constant change in membership due to turnover or new staff members being appointed to the role as part of an ongoing rotation of responsibilities. Decision making within a network aims to be done as a collective task as even the network manager is not expected to have enough authority to make decisions on their own. This theory of network management challenges traditional public administration theory which has more of a top-down approach where the political decision makers identify the goals and make the decisions as to what should be included in policy, and it is the administrators or managers job to implement these policies on their own with the policy makers' goals as the primary directive. In 1978, Hanf provided one of the original works on network management focused on intervening in a way that would allow for coordination to improve implementation. This message continued to be prevalent in future works on network management and for good reason. The focus of this research also aims to find how the collective efforts of multiple governmental and non-governmental organizations can best support homeless youth and their goal of obtaining a college degree. This includes the implementation of policies outlined in the previous section such as Mckinney-Vento and CCRA. Questions about financial aid and admissions were purposely included in this research because even though higher education administrators have been given a newly appointed role in ensuring success for college youth, they are not alone in the challenge of identifying and sharing consistent messaging during the application process (Ferlie et al. 2005).

Chapter II Literature Review

Chapter two of this report will include an extensive literature review that is relative to the overall topic of study and provides an understanding of the reason for this study's research inquiry and the questions developed as part of the methodology. For example, one of the more impactful barriers to access for unaccompanied homeless students is the increasing cost of college. Some of the published works that focused on low-income at-risk youths with enrolling in post-secondary institutions emphasize that cost can potentially outweigh benefits. To help readers, understand why cost is a common theme when discussing barriers to access in these works and in order to highlight potential benefits of a college education that still exist, the first section of this chapter will provide a cost and benefit analysis of obtaining a college degree. Readers will also have the chance to learn more about the different pathways of students who are homeless while enrolled in college based on federal policies. Also, to provide a full scope of the population, this chapter includes a review of literature that focuses both on foster and unaccompanied homeless youth statuses as these two groups of students overlap both in needs for support with accessing and completing a college degree. More recent research that focuses on campus support services for foster care youth have started to include homeless youth within their targeted participants. Eman & Opsal (2018) is an example of this type of blended study as they found that these students were being faced with "similar forms of marginalization... and were approaching programs for foster youth as they recognized a need for similar resource (p. 618). After introducing both the importance of a college degree and the unique population of students that will be examined within this research report, review of the literature that focuses on additional knowns barriers to completing a college degree will be provided within this chapter.

This literature will help to explain the significance of the interview questions that were used to inquire about support services being provided to homeless students within each college.

However, as this report focuses on the benefits of statewide support, a review of what is already being done by states to serve homeless students in higher education will also be included within this chapter. This section of research analysis will include the states that were used both for this study (Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania) as well as additional states who have passed legislation that serve as examples of policies passed and implemented. A few of these states as well as others have already responded to policy gaps by creating networks to examine and address the needs of their homeless students. Current federal policies will also be reviewed for readers to explain the shortfalls of inconsistencies these policies have resulted in and the need for state level support. To better demonstrate this, a summary of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report issued in 2016 that outlines the gaps in service our current federal legislation and higher education structure will be included within its own section. This chapter will conclude with a review of literature that discusses networks and their activities to review how their involvement impacts campus level support.

Cost and Benefit Analysis of Higher Education

The debate as to whether young adults attending college has an impact on the United States economy continues to be present in economic policy literature and research. U.S. Census data has provided evidence in recent reports that individuals' median salaries are associated with the level of education they have completed. For example, the National Institute of Education Sciences deduced from census data that the median salary of employees with a high school diploma was $30 thousand compared to a median salary of $36 thousand for employees with an associate degree and a median salary of $45 thousand for those with a bachelor's degree (Murshid et al., 2013). However, those increases in earnings as a result of educational attainment usually come at a high price that tends to result in students taking student loans to help finance the cost of their degree. Reynolds (2012) notes that costs of independent colleges are as high as $60 thousand a year and public institutions are costing up to $30 thousand a year and since federal and state funding have not been increasing on the same scale as the cost of college, most students are left to rely on federal and private loans to cover their out-of-pocket costs. Adam (2012) explains that college costs have tripled since the 1980s and have consistently outpaced our nation's inflation rate. Therefore, although the earning potential of individuals who completed post-secondary education has proven to be higher than those who do not seek a college education, there is a concern that monthly student loan bills are still leaving these students with a debt-to-income ratio that will prevent the ability to cover the cost of living (Reynolds, 2012).

The Pew Research Center surveyed 2,142 adults who completed a college education and 1,055 college presidents in 2010 to answer the question "Is College Worth It?" (Adam, 2011, p. 58). Findings from the Pew Center included 75 percent of respondents stating that they thought college is too expensive, but 86 percent still thought it was a sound investment and landed them a higher paying job (Adam, 2011). However, there is still a percentage of students who start a college education but do not finish and as a result they are potentially left with the burden of student loan debt without the degree that could lead to increased earning potential (Reynolds, 2012). Policymakers have been spending more time on studying the economics of higher education now that new datasets are available which show widening socioeconomic gaps in access as well as the fact that only half of college entrants complete a degree (Page & Scott-

Clayton, 2016). In addition, some researchers question if post-secondary education attainment is truly the type of training and preparation that will best serve the individual and economy regarding increasing employment rates of those individuals.

Covaleskie (2010), professor at the University of Oklahoma, and Reynolds (2012), professor of law at the University of Tennessee, both comment within their own findings on how there is concern that the college experience is being touted as more of the purpose of the investment into a post-secondary education instead of the actual skills an individual needs in order to acquire jobs that are in high-demand or that pay higher salaries. Covaleskie (2010) goes on to explain that increased rates of educational attainment in our nation do not equate to economic success and the correlation between the two is not as realistic as some may lead people to believe. When considering the supply and demand relationship between educational attainment and jobs in a perfect competitive market, there is a concern that as access to higher education increases the value of the degrees being earned decreases as there will be a labor supply surplus (Covaleskie, 2010). This is because an increase in better-trained laborers does not directly impact the demand for those laborers; in other words, the number of jobs available to be hired in would be the same. Pew Research findings show that there is a still a policy preference for access to universal education with 94 percent of parents still wishing to see their student attend college, and responses to survey questions supported the notion that the public still believes that there is a pay-off as a result of continuing their education (Adam, 2011). However, Vining and Weimer (2010) explain that if the job market remains thin in response to the increase of skilled labor, then the result could be imperfect competition with an impact on prices paid for that labor and therefore an unequal allocation of demand for service would exist amongst job markets based on required skills. Therefore, Covaleskie (2010) believes that universal access to a certain level of educational attainment would be useless in response to economic inequalities since it would result in that level of education no longer holding the same value. With that said, this research study acknowledges that we already have universal access to K-12 education through the public school system and the value of a high school diploma is still proven to be worth more than not having one based on average salaries reported by the U.S Census data analyzed earlier in this chapter. This means we can assume that universal access does mean universal enrollment or completion and there will still be a portion of the population who will choose not to complete a college degree and choose a vocation that requires a different skillset than one provided by a 4-year liberal arts college.

Page & Scott Clayton (2016) argue that a perfect market would be one where access to higher education is still the policy goal, but the method of reaching that goal includes ensuring enrollment represents different socioeconomic populations and geographic regions. However, they also explain that in a perfect market, subsidizing costs no matter how high they are would only lead to inducing college enrollment in an inefficient manner in regard to the level of benefits that are currently acquired. In the past, the purpose of education was to actually educate and enrich individuals, not to find a job, but the introduction of federal financial aid with the G.I. Bill after World War II, a shift in motive for attending college surfaced and individuals started enrolling in order to secure a good paying job (Covaleskie, 2014). Increased enrollment and a focus on college being the answer to economic equality has also changed the way a college student approaches a post-secondary education; instead of wanting to learn there is now more interest in getting by and earning a degree in order to make more money one day (Covaleski, 2014). The Pew Research Center’s 2010 survey results of college presidents show similar concerns with 38 percent stating the U.S. higher education system is moving in the right direction, 52 percent explained that college students are studying less now than they did 10 years ago, and the majority, 60 percent, stated that students are not as prepared as they once were and that high schools are doing a worse job than they were 10 years ago (Adam, 2011). Although it is true that economic growth is tied to the amount of labor a country is able to produce, continued growth comes with innovation and new ideas for improved efficiency (Ip, 2010). As a result, a push has been made recently to direct students to certain majors that lead to entrepreneurship or jobs in high demand (Webber, 2016). Webber (2016) collected data to determine how innate ability, the amount of debt, and the major a student has impacted their earning potential in the future. Weber's findings support that college is still a strong financial option even if there is a level of uncertainty as to whether a student completes a college degree; however, policymakers should still focus on how students entering from lower income backgrounds are still at high-risk of suffering significant hardships if they leave college without a degree but with debt used to attempt to earn a degree. Reasoning as to why some experts continue to argue college is worth the investment, whether a student earns a degree or is hired in a high-earning field may have more to do with positive externalities associated with a college education than the job training that was received by each student. Externalities are benefits that are earned by a third party, in this case society, from a market transaction taking place between two other parties (Vining & Weimer, 2011). Potential educational externalities include health education, increased levels of voting and volunteering, lower levels of criminal behavior and higher levels of school readiness in future generations (Page & Scott-Clayton, 2016). Ricci and Zachariardis (2013) explain some of these externalities as being driven by an increased willingness to take in latest information; they believe that these positive externalities that are received by a nation's society result in economic growth for that society. When society's benefits from positive externalities are combined with potential individual benefits, including being able to make a living wage, it is understandable that our government continues to justify subsidizing higher education to make it accessible to those who wish to continue their education.

Unaccompanied Homeless Students in Higher Education

As explained in the last section of this report, obtaining a college education is still believed to have economic benefits, but the ability to obtain and complete a college education has been “stratified by socioeconomic status…” (Perna, 2006, p. 99). For unaccompanied homeless youth, “earning a degree can mean more financial stability when transitioning to adulthood so that they can establish independent productive lives…” (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016, p.1). The cost of education has been increasing at a rate that federal financial aid programs cannot keep up with, but without access to some of these programs such as the federal Pell Grant and direct student loan program, students do not even have the opportunity to begin a college education (Goldrick-Rab, 2016). In order to, at the very least, help unaccompanied homeless youth access what they should qualify for from these programs, legislators including U.S. Senator Patty Murray (D-WA) urged for a more simplified application process. Senator Murray asked in a letter to the U.S. Department of Education that obstacles which create confusion and burdensome requirements be removed (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016). Currently, due to changes made in 2007, under the College Cost Reduction Act (CCRA), unaccompanied homeless youth are able to self-identify via questions provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. However, these applications can be confusing since they ask applicants if they have had a determination made by their school district’s Mckinney-Vento liaison, or if they were living in a shelter that was funded by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assistance program, or if they lived in transitional housing funded by the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA). The Federal Student Aid Handbook (2016) explains that if students do not have an unaccompanied homeless youth determination, but believe they qualify for one in order to be deemed independent on the FAFSA form, they may request their financial aid administrator makes the determination and updates their FAFSA for them. The GAO (2016) reports that although financial aid administrators have been able to consider unaccompanied homeless youth as independent students since the passing of CCRA, "financial aid staff are often reluctant to determine that a student is an unaccompanied homeless youth without making extensive documentation requests" (p. i). The importance of financial aid administrators being able to make these determinations without documentation is two-fold. First, even if students have the school district liaison determination in their first year, they are still being asked to get a determination from a different eligible entity, typically the financial aid administrator, in subsequent years. Second, if these determinations are not done and the FAFSA remains rejected due to a lack of parent information being provided then students will not receive federal financial aid and therefore may likely decide they are unable to afford to go to college. A Dear Colleague Letter from the U.S. Department of Education was released in July 2015 aimed to explain the importance of making homeless youth determinations with little to no additional documentation than a recorded interview. However, as the GAO (2016) points out, this guidance did not come with a standardized form or means of doing so which has led to continued inconsistency in implementation of the policy. Recently, Sara Goldrick-Rab, founder of the HOPE Lab, explained in the Chronicle of Higher Education that more needs to be done beyond issuing changes in policy and financial aid programs; instead, administrators should accept that, "helping students succeed, and fulfilling the promises of our education system, requires listening and learning from them" (2016).

At the beginning of this research one of the initiatives NAEHCY had published on the higher section of their website was information about the importance of establishing a state network as a tool that can be used to help motivate administrators and stakeholders to listen and take part in implementing better practices that respond to policy change and the needs of homeless students. Since then, some of these tools and references have been moved to a member only page and the public promotion of the state's coordinator appointed by the state government has been put in place of network information. Even more established state networks such as Embark are no longer searchable on NAEHCY's website. Another recommendation would be improving the implementation of CCRA by training financial aid administrators on how to make unaccompanied homeless youth determinations. NAEHCY created a form that can be used by colleges in order to help them do so (National Association for Education..., n.d.). In addition to improving the practices of each college, there is also hope that a review of statewide networks will "test the assumption that shared governing activity has shifted the roles of the state…" (Agranoff, 2007, p.19). Researchers of the public administration field believe that networks, due to their decentralized structure in comparison to the centralized role of government, can lead to innovation through inter-organizational exchanges (Waters Robichau, 2011). This would mean there is more room for knowledge sharing within a decentralized statewide network than within state government agencies alone, which could lead to improved ideas for implementing policy changes and the recommendations of the GAO report for how to better support unaccompanied homeless youth. Agranoff (2007) believes that networks are useful because they help to find and share solutions between organizations that may be unavailable to individual entities. In this case those entities would be universities, and the creation of such networks should be noted as an available solution to inconsistencies in assisting homeless youth in accessing and completing college. For example, community colleges typically do not have housing options on campus and therefore may need to reach out to other members of the state network for assistance with finding housing options and shelters for their students who are unaccompanied homeless youth. Another example, which may be more relative to this study, is when colleges have not implemented a policy for making unaccompanied homeless youth determinations for their students, they could reach out to a college within the network in order to duplicate any forms and policies proven to have already been successful. These examples of how networks of colleges can support each other demonstrate two important components of a successful network: the ability to produce collaborative outcomes and to regulate procedure that may have been implemented differently by individual members of the network (Agranoff, 2007). One of the better-known practices recommended by NAEHCY when creating a state network is to identify a Single Point of Contact at each college who can help streamline and lookout for the needs of unaccompanied homeless students (National Association for Education..., n.d.). This is an example of how networks can also be useful to the students they are serving, since as Abdul Rahman, M., et al. (2015) explained in his research, homeless youth have a challenging time building their own support networks, but they do utilize support networks while on campus. This results in college campuses trying to foster a level of engagement not only through supportive faculty and administrators, but by providing the opportunity for peer engagement through student organizations and events. Feldman and Newcomb also noted how peer groups, “help students accomplish family independence, facilitate the institution’s intellectual goals, offer emotional support, and meet the needs not met by faculty...” (Evans et al., 2010, p11).

Foster Youth in Higher Education

Eman and Opsal (2018) not only used previous peer reviewed studies on foster youth in college they conducted their own study to determine that foster youth tend to see similar housing and basic need irregularities with other college students who were without caregivers. However, they also acknowledged there is more data on foster youth available and that is why there tends to be more peer reviewed research available for that segment of this at-risk student population. For example, during their research they found that although 40 percent of foster care alumni enroll in college only 7 percent actually earn a degree (Eman & Opal, 2018). The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2011 that there are 28,000 foster youth aging out of care and a total of approximately 400,000 youth in care (Berzin, Hokanson, & Singer, 2014). Although many surveys of foster youth have revealed a continued interest in attending a college or university one day, foster youth continue to have a disproportionately low attendance rate compared to their peers (Murshid, Shpiegel, & Simmel, 2013). As of 2013, Murshid et al. (2013) reported in their study of foster youth policy, that only 20 percent of eligible foster youth attend college after high school graduation compared to 60 percent of non-foster youth high school graduates. After reviewing Maslow's hierarchy of needs this comes as no surprise since foster youth are commonly moved several times between placements and therefore also potentially attend multiple school districts during their education. In addition, foster youth have also had lower high school completion rates and standardized testing scores than their peers due to this mobility and disruption to their educational. Youth who age out of care without a support system or long-term plan for adulthood have been reported to have higher cases of poor outcomes in adulthood including substance abuse, homelessness, unemployment, unplanned pregnancies, and involvement in the legal system (Berzin et al., 2014).

Berzen et al. (2014) provide a federal framework which shows that over the last few decades there have been multiple pieces of federal legislation passed to support foster youth who want to access a post-secondary education as well as to provide a means to support living expenses for foster youth who have aged out of the foster care system. First, in 1986 the Federal Independent Living Program (FILP) was passed to provide states with federal appropriations to institute independent living programs to foster youth who were aging out of care. Then, a little over a decade later in 1999, new legislation was passed -- the Foster Care Independence Act (FCIA) -- to address some of the restrictions found in the FILP that were believed to be causing barriers for foster youth who were trying to successfully care for themselves on their own. The FCIA, more commonly referred to as the Chafee Act, doubled the federal allocation for programs and expanded the definition of who qualifies in order to provide more support to foster youth who were living independently and needed help covering costs such as health insurance and care. In 2001, the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Act amended the FCIA in order to provide Chafee Education and Training Voucher (ETV) programs to help foster youth not only cover the cost of living independently, but also to be able to afford a college education. Most recently, in 2008, legislation titled the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act was passed in order to further expand FCIA with the intent of increasing the likelihood that foster youth would be able to find permanency through reconnections with biological families or adoption after aging out of foster care (Berzin et al., 2014). Providing support to foster alumni who have aged out of the system, was deemed necessary since most youth reported not having supportive relationships with adults or lacking a sense of connection to their community (Berzin et al., 2014). This expansion of services provided by FCIA also came with a number of states recognizing that there was a need to extend services to students past the age of eighteen, which provided a more gradual transition to adulthood after leaving high school. (Berzin et al., 2014). However, Chafee programs are a discretionary federal budget item and therefore the amount of federal funding states can count on varies from year to year. In 2002, no money was allocated to the ETV program, but then in 2005 $47 million was allocated. The challenge of facing inconsistent funding coupled with the requirement that states provide a 20 percent match has resulted in inconsistent program offerings and a variation in each state's offerings (Murshid, et al., 2013).

Barriers to Independent Student Success in Higher Education

Successful college completion continues to result in greater earning potential, as well as improved self-worth and confidence in adults (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). A study conducted in 2005 supported this notion by revealing those adults between the ages of 25 and 34 years old with a bachelor's degree were, on average, earning 61 percent more in income than those in the same range who had only earned a High School Diploma (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Most foster youth are in the care of their state system until the age of 18 years old, with the exception of a few states who allow students to remain in foster care until the age of 21 years old (Hernandez & Naccarato, 2010). Therefore, many foster youths who are applying to college are doing so while simultaneously leaving the only support system they have had during their life and becoming independent for the first time. Although the majority of foster and homeless students are interested in attending college after high school, there are different barriers that prevent them from attending at the same rate as other students (Haggerty et al., 2016). Completion rates are even more discouraging for this population, to demonstrate Eman & Opsal (2018) found that 40 percent of foster care alumni had attended some college by their mid-twenties but less than 7 percent had actually earned a degree. Haggerty et al. (2016) identify the following barriers in their research, “financial resources and housing, alcohol and substance abuse, lack of connection with resources and services, lack of support with academics and school/career planning, becoming a parent, and lack of campus involvement…” (p. 23). Depending on the living arrangements, limitation in preparation for college can also start while youth are still in the system; these barriers may include not being able to obtain a driver’s license, not being able to have typical social interactions such as staying out late after school or having friends sleep over, or even being unable to get a small part-time job and work after school (Blakeney-Strong et al., 2015). Depending on living arrangements assigned via foster care, limitations on educational experiences at the primary and secondary level can also result due to multiple moves between districts and even between schools within the same district (Blakeney-Strong et al.., 2015). Blakeney-Strong et al. (2015) found a negative relationship between the number of placements a foster youth received and their performance in education, employment, time in shelters, and financial literacy. These inconsistencies in education at the start of school have resulted in foster youth reporting low standardized test scores, which are still essential for admission to many four-year traditional colleges (Blakeney-Strong et al., 2015). Other foster youth who are aging out at 18 years old have reported not even earning a high school diploma or GED at the time of their emancipation (Blakeney-Strong et al., 2015). Even for foster youth who have completed high school and have standardized test scores that are strong enough to be admitted to a college campus, there are still substantially lower rates of retention and completion for foster youth attending college (Haggerty et al., 2016). This could be due to some of the other barriers foster youth face after they leave the foster care system.

During the early years of adulthood, challenges and barriers to success are only heightened; for example, 11 to 46 percent of foster youth surveyed at different times have reported being homeless for at least one night after leaving foster care placement (Blakeney-Strong et al., 2015). Financial difficulties are apparent for these young adults, as 12 to 30 percent of foster youth who have aged out of the system are relying on public assistance and only one-third of youth reported being employed after leaving placement, both factors demonstrate how and why foster youth are faced with homelessness after leaving the foster care system (Blakeney-Strong et al., 2015). These barriers are very similar for those who identify has unaccompanied homeless youth as well parallels have been found in performance and access figures; however, not as much research is available for this population even though they are also considered to be "independent" while in attending college (Eman & Opsal, 2018, p. 620). As a result, Blakeney-Strong et al. (2015) reported that foster youth who have aged out or left the foster care system are 4.8 times more likely to be dependent on illicit drugs than other young adults. Even when foster youth try to stay on the right path and make good decisions, the lack of family support that is readily available to other young adults their age creates additional barriers (Emerson et al., 2016). For example, these young adults may not have an adult to ask to sign on a lease for an apartment or to co-sign on a loan to purchase a car (Emerson, et al., 2016). These additional hurdles and barriers combined with a "lack of access to appropriate mental health services…and subsequent trauma related behavioral and mental health challenges…" call for more support and intervention while seeking a college education and independence from the system at a young age (Emerson et al., 2016, p. 264). Thousands of foster youths can overcome these challenges and are admitted into college each year; however, another ongoing challenge for this population is accessing and maintaining enough financial aid to pay for their college education (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2009). As a result of not being able to access enough funding to cover the cost of living in addition to direct educational expenses, studies have shown that foster youth try to work full-time even though there have been warnings that students working 15-20 hours a week while enrolled in college are less likely to succeed than those who work less (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2009).

Campus Support Programs

College campuses across the country are creating support programs that help at-risk youth and more commonly foster youth succeed while enrolled in their institutions (Haggerty et al., 2016). Supports offered through these programs include, "scholarships, priority access to housing and course registration, tailored academic services, mentoring, and referrals to off-campus services, among others…" (Emerson et al., 2016, p. 265). Eman and Opsal (2018) also found that these programs provide social capital for the students who are lacking a caregiver who social network. By providing access to not only administrators but peers who have had similar experiences before starting college. The students interviewed for this study recognized it was easier to connect to students who are not uncomfortable with their background or lack of parents as well as giving an opportunity to connect with others who need similar resources outside of the classroom (Eman & Opsal, 2018). The administrators for these programs also add to the social capital by being a support that may not be needed all of the time but students appreciate knowing it is there as many have not had that type of consistency before enrolling in college (Eman & Opsal, 2018). Support from these members may not always be direct but come in the form of referrals to other experts that can help with issues such as apply for food stamps, connecting with a tutor, or even connecting with professors if something disruptive takes place and there is no one else to advocate for them (Eman & Opsal, 2018). Blakeney-Strong et al. (2015) also saw that these administrators also did well to support students as not just a reference point but also as a coach.

Coaching, a form of mentoring usually done by campus administrators, can and should also go beyond helping foster youth access college. Blakeney-Strong et al. (2015) saw increased rates of employment when coaches and support systems spent more time on communication and building life skills after foster youth left the system. Coaching is also crucial since foster youth tend to lack the long-term social relationships that offer assistance with adapting to adulthood with only 1 in 5 foster youth reporting having a non-familial relationship with an adult 2 years after aging out of the foster care system (Emerson et al., 2016). Three states in particular, California, Michigan, and Washington, have moved forward to build their own individual support programs and networks to better support foster youth specifically. Dworsky & Perez (2010) conducted a study reviewing 10 campus support programs within California and Washington since both states have had state-wide programs to support foster youth established since the 2006-2007 academic year. Both California and Washington's state programs to support foster youth and aged out foster youth are backed partly by philanthropic support (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). According to Hanley-Brown et al. (2012), funders support collective impact projects because they understand "social problems, and their solutions, arise from the interaction of many organizations within a larger system" (p. 2). This means that philanthropic funders recognize that even though federal funding is offered through federal programs such as the Chafee program, there is still a need for campus support programs and statewide support to continue to work towards the agenda of providing at-risk youths access to higher education as well as helping them succeed after they enroll in college

Policy Framework

State policies. Murshid et al. (2013) reported that at the time of their research, 23 different states were providing some type of tuition assistance; however, among the states with the largest foster youth populations only three states were offering full tuition waivers to their population. Texas is one example of a state that is already providing financial assistance to their foster youth in the form of a tuition waiver for state funded institutions in Texas. However, in 2014 the New York Times reported that only 37 hundred students of the estimated 49 thousand who would have been determined eligible took advantage of the waiver in 2013. (Hamilton, 2014). Reasons for the shortfall in participation in Texas's tuition waiver program are believed to include lack of awareness, not enough support during the college search process, and low high school graduation rates with only 41 percent of foster youth on average graduating from Texas high schools each year (Hamilton, 2014). In order to address these previously mentioned issues and barriers which have led to low participation in the Texas state institution tuition waiver program, experts from the Texas Education Agency and Education Reach for Texans believe that if more funding was dedicated towards supporting students while they are in high school, then foster youth would be more likely to successfully enroll in college after they age out of the system; one recommendation presented was to have a foster care liaison in every school district to support these students during the college search process (Hamilton, 2014). As of 2013 only two states, New Jersey and North Carolina, provided supports beyond financial assistance including case management and scholarship programs for over the summer (Murshid et al., 2013). Murshid et al. (2013) explain that providing services such as support programs, tutoring, and housing over breaks would be crucial elements in supporting foster youth alumni who enroll in postsecondary education. They caution, however, that before an expansion of services should be promoted with the use of federal funds from the FCIA policy, the disparity in states participating and offering financial assistance should first be addressed.

The majority of the 23 state programs that currently provide financial assistance to foster youth to help pay for post-secondary expenses provide exemptions from tuition and fees at public institutions within the student's home state. The one exception to this is Connecticut, which allows their funding to provide waivers for public, private, and out-of-state institutions. One of the more concerning aspects of the disparities in state programs is that the size of a state's foster youth population does not seem to directly correlate with whether funding is being used to help students with tuition and fees. Murshid et al. (2013) categorized states into three categories (large, moderate, and small foster youth populations) in order to identify whether the amount of foster youth a state was serving influenced their state program. Findings from Murshid's et al. review included that not only did the size of the aged-out population not influence whether tuition assistance was offered, but also that there were inconsistencies as to whether or not tuition assistance was being offered in states within the same size category. Findings from Murshid et al. (2013) show that each tends to be state motivated by the political atmosphere of each state instead of the seriousness and size of the problem based on their homeless and foster care youth population. Considering the political atmosphere when introducing a new policy issue is a factor of a process known as looking for a "window of opportunity" to present a new policy. Policy windows are times when the policy issue and political atmosphere are in line with supporting the proposed new policy (Birkland, 2011). States that are not already implementing state tuition assistance programs for foster youth may not have had the desired "window of opportunity" to do so based on the seriousness or transparency of the policy issues and the lack of awareness by the legislators that are controlling the state budget and process.

Current federal policies. The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) also works to eliminate barriers for foster youth who are trying to succeed in accessing higher education after leaving foster care (Emerson et al., 2016). The HEOA states that foster youth should be targeted as a vulnerable population that should be provided postsecondary support by the campus community (Emerson et al., 2016). Many students have trouble understanding the bureaucracy and jargon that comes with applying for federal financial aid, but foster youth have their own unique challenges when completing federal and state applications for financial aid (Davidson, 2016). The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the most critical but also most confusing application for financial aid that foster youth will complete. Most applicants who, due to lack of access or misunderstanding the questions, do not complete the FAFSA application (approximately 1.5 million students) are from low-income backgrounds (Davis, 2006). The FAFSA form requires parental information unless a student can answer yes to one of the independent status questions which used to include, “are both of your parents deceased, or are you (or were you until age 18) a ward/dependent of the court?”, but was recently revised to ask, “at any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care, or were you a dependent of the court?” (Davis, 2006, p.31). Davis (2006) explains that not all foster youth understand that they qualify to answer “yes” to this question since it is complex and asks for multiple statuses in one question. As a result, their FAFSA forms will either force them to provide parental information, which could result in them mistakenly including foster parents or a mentor, or it will “reject” until it has parental status. This result would result in foster youth missing out on several types of aid including the federal Pell Grant and potentially state funding and Chafee Grant funding if their state is using the FAFSA application as part of their review process (Davis, 2006). In addition to accessing federal financial aid from the universal FAFSA application, there are additional federal programs that foster youth could be taking advantage of, including TRIO, “a federally funded program that emerged from the

Economic Opportunity Act of 1964…, and GEAR UP, another federal program that was authorized under Higher Education Act of 1965….” These programs operate on discretionary funds that are allocated to states to help low-income students succeed in higher education (Davis, 2006, p. 31). Accessing funding is not only critical when trying to pay direct costs associated with attending college, but also with helping pay for indirect costs such as transportation, books, and supplies needed to successfully attend (Davis, 2006). As a response to foster youth needing improved support systems when it comes to the college admission and financial aid process, some statewide and institutional programs have been developed to intervene and provide additional support to foster youth who want to access financial aid and enroll in college (Davis, 2006). Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) passed in 2015 in order to expand services to students experiencing homelessness. Under the previous version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was not as inclusive or direct as the reauthorized version of ESSA. This law included federal guidance on how all state education agencies are required to have a point of contact for foster youth (Department of Health and Human Services, 2016).

Government Accountability Office Report

The six recommendations of the GAO report 16-343 (2016) are directed at not only foster youth, but also the support of unaccompanied homeless youth. However, as found in the literature review of this study, foster youth are commonly viewed to qualify for the U.S. Department of Education’s definition of unaccompanied homeless youth, which is students who are 24 years or younger who are self-supporting and either homeless or at-risk of being homeless. Therefore, all six recommendations will be included in this study and review of findings. The GAO’s first recommendation is to encourage more professionals including caseworkers to involve themselves more actively in the college planning process. The second recommendation is to help foster youth as well as those who work directly with them in the college planning process better understand how to navigate the federal financial aid process including providing centralized web pages that offer targeted information on programs such as Chafee and Pell Grants. The third and fourth recommendations are specifically to support unaccompanied youth by assisting financial aid administrators and McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons to better understand and complete determinations of the unaccompanied homeless youth status, which is needed in order to complete the federal student aid application status for those who qualify. The fifth recommendation is also in response to the need to improve the federal student aid application process for unaccompanied homeless youth by removing the need to make determinations in subsequent years after the initial status is approved by an acceptable authority. The final recommendation from the GAO report 16-343 is to simplify the Chafee Voucher program by increasing the age of eligible former foster youth to 23 years old This recommendation and others will need direct action from multiple federal agencies since they are examples of policy changes or enhancements (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2016).

It is unreasonable to expect college campus administrators to specifically enact some of these recommendations since they are directed at federal agencies such as the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). However, while reviewing the campus support programs for foster youth in higher education, it is possible to assess whether or not members of the program have actively participated in advocacy efforts that support federal and state policy changes including the recommendations of the GAO report. Birkland (2011) explains that groups of citizens that have common interests in addressing a problem in society are more likely to obtain policymakers attention within that policy arena if they come together and work as a coalition, especially if they can provide indicators such as statistical research that support a policy agenda. Kania and Kramer (2011) also explain the power a group has in a policy arena, especially if the group agrees to using “shared measurement systems” and the individual actions of each member mutually reinforce the agenda of the collective group (p. 40). By addressing both federal agencies, ED and HHS, simultaneously, the GAO itself is promoting the notion of making a collective effort to address these policies, which is not typically the case of policymakers according to Ferber & White (2014) who explain that too often agencies, sub-committees, and departments operate in silos when building policy for a specific issue. However, in the comparative research in this study, themes of collaboration and collective agendas are reviewed in conjunction with policies to promote pathways that respond to the barriers foster youth confront in higher education.

Current Public Administration Framework

An example of an existing national network working to help support public benefit access is The Benefit Bank, which is a service established in six states (as of today) that consists of “community-based, faith-based, governmental, job-training, healthcare, or social service agencies…” in order to advocate for policies that might help members of participating communities. (The Benefit Bank, n.d.). The goal of The Benefit Bank is to “ensure that people are fully aware of the benefits to which they are entitled… by acting as a benefits eligibility screener, a benefits application filer, and an IRS-certified tax assistance and filing service…” (The Benefit Bank, n.d.). In order to help individuals, work through these processes, counselors are trained to operate as single points of contact to help people utilize and navigate options through The Benefit Bank. These counselors operate through regional and state non-profit organizations and grassroots campaigns that operate as a network to support agencies that signed on with The Benefit Bank. To make the services more user friendly and open to the public, The

Benefit Bank also has a self-service option that prospective and current students can use in order to complete eligibility checks for benefits based on their state of residence, as well as review checklists of what will be needed to complete student aid with the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) (The Benefit Bank, n.d.).

Similar to The Benefit Bank is Single Stop USA, Inc, a non-profit NGO which partners with community agencies, community colleges, and veterans' agencies to provide a one-stop-shop model for individuals looking for assistance with low-cost healthcare, public benefit applications such as SNAP, tax preparation services and financial aid assistance. After three years of partnering with the Community College of Philadelphia, it was reported that over 4700 students have been served by Single Stop resulting in over $10.8 million dollars in cash assistance and non-cash assistance benefits (Elliot, 2016). The success of the Community College's network of services and Single Stop program is the "partnership building and collaboration…" within the administration as well as the "confidence, trust, and relationship building…" with the students (Elliot, 2016, para. 4-5). In an attempt to improve and expand upon services provided by Single Stop, the NGO promotes advocating for policy change including finding "evidence-based solutions…" to the issue of college affordability (Elliot, 2016. In addition to engaging elected officials and advocating for certain issues, Single Stop also promotes collaborating with other partners who also work to fight poverty and remove barriers to benefit programs (Elliot, 2016).

After realizing that college students may not be accessing the public benefits they qualify for, which is adding to their cost of attending postsecondary institutions, some community colleges have implemented institutional programs or joined existing networks to support students throughout the application process. One example of such a program is the Pennsylvania

Keystone Education Yields Success (KEYS), which is a state-funded program that provides support to students who qualify for SNAP and TANF benefits in completing degree programs, verifying work hours to meet requirements for their benefits, and assisting with access to financial aid, transportation, and childcare (Bone, 2010). The KEYS program meets Agranoff's (2007) definition of an outreach network, as it brings together multiple agencies including the state Department of Welfare, local welfare offices, and administrators from each of Pennsylvania's community colleges, which operate under the title of KEYS student facilitators, to help advocate and support implementation of welfare policies, but does not make recommendations or strategize to improve the policies (Bone, 2010). Guy & Rubin (2015) explain that these types of collaborative networks are "only as good as the people at the table…" (p. 96). Bone (2010) implies that he agrees with Guy & Rubin's stance by explaining that the KEYS facilitators "are the most crucial aspect of the program…," since they act as a single point of contact for students, which provides an opportunity to build trust while working on solutions together (p. 3). The Center for Postsecondary and Economic Success at the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) notes there are some impressive innovations and offerings being provided by the KEYS programs, but also states that Pennsylvania's "work first" approach to guiding TANF recipients is one of the challenges to increasing enrollment in the program, since students are not encouraged to participate even though jobs that require a credential could lead to better paying jobs and therefore remove the need to be dependent on TANF in the future (Bone, 2010, p.4).

CLASP found similar challenges while conducting the Benefit Access for College Completion initiative, which was a research study that tracked the progress of students enrolled in KEYS and similar programs at seven different community colleges that are located within six different states (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, n.d.). The results of the study found that the rate of success institutions saw in enrolling students in public benefits and retaining them at their institution depended on key factors including institutions building relationships with local and state benefit agencies, leadership on campus fostering support from campus administrators, and the level of collaboration and teamwork taking place within each campus' administration (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, n.d.). Of these factors, Duke-Benfield & Saunders (n.d.) argue that the hierarchy of leadership within each institution needs to demonstrate that leadership bought-in to the notion of enhancing or creating these programs was most important for success. This argument bolsters the notion set by Robichau (2011) that the coexistence of networks and hierarchies enhances the coordination of actors as well as the oversight of the network. In order to solidify support for these programs it is recommended that the mission of the programs be built into the strategic plans of the institutions (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, n.d.). It was also found that building advisory committees is recommended since it provides an opportunity for different members of each organization who do not directly work with the program to meet and discuss methods for building sustainable programs and advocating for those programs (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, n.d.). Agranoff (2007) also explains that committees and work group involvement within networks helps to foster trust which is considered essential. Leaders in networks should be those who are experts in a relative field whose day-to-day responsibilities are in line with the primary goal of the network (Agranoff, 2007). For CLASP, team leads at institutions are important because they not only are knowledgeable about their institution, but they will be able to share the knowledge learned from other agencies participating in the network with their campus community (Duke-Benfield & Saunders, n.d.).

Washington. Washington was one of the earliest states to publish about what its institutions were doing to support at-risk youth including those coming from foster care. The Passport to Foster Youth Promise Program was started by Washington state in 2008 and has already demonstrated success by helping hundreds of foster youth access and succeed in college (Gonzalves, 2013, p.7). Washington state also provides a unique financial funding option for foster youth accessing college known as the Governor's Scholarship which provides financial support to as well as other assistance to foster youth in 56 institutions within the state (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). The Passport program launched in 2007 as a pilot program, with the goal of increasing the number of foster youths who successfully enroll in college (Gonzalves, 2013). In addition to providing direct financial support to the foster youth who want to attend college, the Passport program also provides financial support to the colleges who admit students from the foster care system (Gonzalves, 2013). Representative Carlyle Everett who spearheaded the program decided that paying colleges for each foster youth who attended their institution would provide a means to also require additional supports such as a single point of contact who would be responsible for supporting the needs of students who come from foster care (Gonzalves, 2013). The College Success Foundation also partners with the Passport program in order to provide a "backbone of support..." by providing community connections and helping to track the academic progress of students who are participating in the Passport program (Gonzalves, 2013). One of the more unique attributes of Washington's Passport program is that it allows students to remain enrolled up until the age of 27 years, which provides an additional four years of support compared to the Chafee Voucher program (Gonzalves, 2013). Program offerings continue to expand within Washington but also tend to be more focused on the institution's needs and resources and not the state. For example, the "Champions" program at University of Washington, established back in 2009, does have a link to emergency aid on their website and providing one-on-one support to their students to assist with advising and student success but their mention of network involvement is limited to those who are working within the campus and does not mention partnerships or collaborative work happening with like-minded programs (University of Washington, n.d.)

California. The state of California has a similar history and model as Washington state in how it serves students identified as at-risk youth or more specifically those coming from foster care. A research study conducted by The Institute for College Access in Success in 2009, revealed that in California, “by age 19, one in seven foster youth no longer in care has been homeless, almost half receive public benefits, and more than a quarter have been arrested…” (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2009, p. 2). In addition to potentially receiving federal Pell Grants and California state grant aid known as the Cal Grant, former foster youth, under the age of 23 years old, can apply for an additional $5 thousand in Chafee funding each year (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2009). However, in 2009, Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz found that only one in two eligible former foster youth were receiving the Chafee Grant they were eligible for in California. Only three of the 56 campus support programs in California that offer financial support did not require an application or an interview, but instead offered supports and services to all former foster youth on their campus (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). This means that students attending the other campuses had to take the initiative and apply for additional support and financial resources. Also, although most provided on-campus support services, a few referred students to community agencies for off-campus support services (Dworsky & Perez, 2010).

For example, the Guardian Scholars program at Cal State Fullerton has an application that it uses to identify over 80 students they are supporting through their program. This scholarship application opens each fall and is open until March but the student service application for the program opens year-round. Although clearly this is helpful for this very transient population for access, there are also other supports including a targeted center that provides a computer lab, free printing, specialized advising and workshops, as well as priority registration and summer programming (California State University, Fullerton, n.d.). However, the Guardians program and others like it in California are limited in nature either by a student's experience in foster care or continued academic performance requirements. Most California's programs provide a financial scholarship of sorts with minimal renewal criteria including either maintaining academic progress or a GPA of 2.0 or higher; these funds could be combined with Chafee and other federal and state financial aid to help cover costs (Dworsky & Perez, 2010). Still, the work California has done through its different programs, including the Guardian Scholars program, have inspired other universities and even full states to replicate and expand upon their work. One example of this is University of Georgia and their work to create the Embark network.

Georgia. Has a unique and structured network of support for their homeless youth enrolled in college known as "Embark Georgia". This network was created using funding from a grant University of Georgia (UGA) acquired in 2020 to improve access for underrepresented students within the state of Georgia. The Embark network includes over 50 institutions within the state of Georgia but is based out of the JW Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the UGA. In partnership with several relative constituents including the state's Department of Education, Family and Children Services, the Technical College System, and the University System of Georgia, the Embark network has not only worked to identify and publish single point of contacts (which they call DPOCs or designated points of contact) throughout Georgia's higher education system but has provided additional resources including an annual conference and grant opportunities to administrators who are working with homeless college youth. The annual embark conferences provide an opportunity for their DPOCs to share data on the students they are serving to identify trends and create recommendations on how to best improve services to students based on these findings. Therefore, this meeting does not only serve as a means for information sharing but also a coordinated planning session for the upcoming academic year. This is unique because it allows multiple university systems to work together to provide improved and consistent service to their students facing homelessness no matter what type of institutional, they are attending: 2-year, 4-year, community, public, or private.

In addition to these annual training and information sharing opportunities for DPOCs, Embark Georgia also has a robust website that provides a list of the different campus support programs which link out to each institution's informative webpage. This tool as well as the full list of DPOCs is a helpful resource for both prospective students and their adult mentors including advocates and Mckinney-Vento liaisons within the state. The presentation of the DPOC resource is also unique as it is a color-coded map that can be sorted by type of institution including private schools or those within the public system. By using a map students and liaisons who are not familiar with all of the 50 plus institutions in the state that have programs can search by location and more importantly proximity to the student’s potential established network of supportive adults. Another resource made available to students and their adult mentors is the scholarship search tool located in the resource section of the Embark webpage. This scholarship tool includes both state and national opportunities for students to apply to and focus specifically on students coming from similar situations or backgrounds as those who Embark aims to serve (Embark Georgia, n.d). These combined resources help to demystify the notion of college access as well as help to identify some pathways to connecting to administrators and funds that can make college possible for homeless and housing insecure students. Klitzman (2018) explains that the Admissions process can be complex and therefore it is necessary to have mentors and schools' officials who are informed and prepared to assist students with completing their applications and weighing their options. Embark’s tools do just that equipping these supportive adults with the information and connection they need to guide each student based on their situation and interests. Embark does give credit to other states for laying the groundwork of best practices when developing state networks. One of the states credited was Michigan for their foster youth network “Fostering Success Michigan” and their Seita Scholars program which is based in Western Michigan University.

Michigan. According to the Center for Fostering Success (n.d.), Michigan has 6,300 foster care alumni who are 18 to 25 years old. To help expand and promote improved services via campus support programs in Michigan, Fostering Success was established in 2012 to act as a collective statewide initiative to help foster youth succeed in higher education and prepare for careers after leaving the foster care (Center for Fostering Success, n.d.). As of the fall 2015 semester, Michigan had a total of 14 campus-based programs established, and another five campuses started the process by designating a campus coach (Center for Fostering Success, 2012). These programs served a total of 858 students who were currently in or recently aged out of foster care in the 2014-15 academic year (Center for Fostering Success, 2012). Scholarships are also distributed as part of Michigan’s statewide program, with 673 students receiving over $1.6 million in financial assistance to help with educational costs (Center for Fostering Success, 2012). Western Michigan University (WMU) also hires full-time coaches to help with engaging students and community partners in work that will help students from foster care succeed where they are known to have difficulties (Center for Fostering Success, 2012). These areas include health, identity, life skills, building relationships, housing, employment, and of course their actual education; these seven domains are used as a framework by WMU on how to best serve their foster youth population (Center for Fostering Success, 2012). The common agenda of Michigan's collective impact network is to increase the number of foster youths earning "high quality degrees…" from Michigan's colleges and universities from 21.5 percent in 2013 to 60 percent in 2025 (Center for Fostering Success, 2012).

North Carolina. In the last several years of this research study North Carolina has worked to improve services for homeless youth including creating a single point of contact list for each college, launching the North Carolina Promise program which provides reduced tuition at three state campuses, and supporting faculty who have done research to learn more about the need on their campuses. This is after analyzing data that demonstrated that thousands of students did not have consistent night-time residences that would provide a safe place to study, sleep, and provide a reliable means to return to school the next day. To help implement and manage this work, the North Carolina Homeless Education Program (NCHEP) to ensure students who qualify for support under the Mckinney-Vento Act have access to higher education opportunities as well (North Carolina Homeless Education Program, n.d.). One of the first acts was to create a single point of contact directory for students and advocates to use to help with the transition to college. This work came after acknowledging that close to 30 thousand students were determined to be homeless within the public education system. This research also found that close to 70 percent had some type of disability and 30 percent showed low English language proficiency. More relevant to this research is the fact that 9 percent of this statewide population is unaccompanied and therefore also lacks a parent or guardian to help support them throughout the college preparation process or to turn to during these traumatic periods of instability (North Carolina

Homeless Education Program, n.d.). In partnership with NAEHCY this program also worked to share resources including a SPOC tip sheet and training session which slides can still be found on their website. In addition, to creating and supporting a SPOC directory this program worked to keep constituents informed by having weekly meetings with their statewide liaison each Tuesday morning via zoom.

Pennsylvania. According to Lapp and Shaw-Amoah (2021), the commonwealth of Pennsylvania was ranked the thirty-sixth state out of the fifty in identifying school aged students in poverty whoa are experiencing homelessness. In 2018-19 a little over thirty-one thousand school-aged students were reported to be experiencing homelessness. This figure is believed to be underreported and does not include youths who have graduated and may or may not be enrolled in college as colleges are not required to report the same way elementary and secondary educators are (Lapp & Shaw-Amoah, 2021). These figures demonstrate a thirty-seven percent increase since the 2013-14 academic year which is encouraging to researchers collecting this data for overall reporting practices in Pennsylvania; however, the largest area of concern seems to be the Philadelphia school district. Philadelphia has reported the highest percentage of school-aged children are living in poverty of the top twenty largest school districts in the nation but ranks only tenth in number of students experiencing homelessness (Lapp & Shaw-Amoah, 2021).

With all of this said, Pennsylvania is still one of the more recent commonwealths to pass legislation and initiate work to support students coming from foster care and at-risk situation who are entering institutions of higher education. During the time of this research the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed Act 16 of 2019 which introduced the Fostering Independence Tuition Waiver program. This program is unique because although it requires all Pennsylvania higher education institutions to abide and provide any gap funding to cover the cost of tuition it does not provide state funding to support this initiative. The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA), which administers the Commonwealth's state grant program, was tasked with implementing this program at the beginning of fall of 2020. The tuition waiver program requires all students who are enrolled in a Pennsylvania post-secondary institution, file the current FAFSA application, are Pennsylvania residents mee the federal Chafee grant criteria, be awarded institutional funds to cover any gap that may exist between the cost of tuition and fees and any gift aid the student is receiving. Gift aid can include merit scholarships, outside scholarships, other institutional need-based grants, federal grants and state grants. As a result, there is an inequitable financial burden on private institutions which traditionally have higher tuition and fee rates than public institutions. Like Chaffee students are able to receive this state mandated institutional waiver until they are 26 years old; however, this funding is available for up to 5 years a student is enrolled in an undergraduate program of study. Therefore, if a foster youth had begun a course of study and had to stop out for any reason they could re-enroll and start taking advantage of this new benefit. However, if a qualifying student had previously completed their undergraduate degree, they would not be able to enroll in a graduate course of study and use this benefit. Also, this waiver is only mandated to cover gap costs with tuition and fees but not any costs associated with housing and meal plans which tends to be necessary costs since many foster youths are homeless or housing insecure and rely on the college to be their primary residence. In addition to the financial support through the tuition waiver program, Act 16 of 2019 also requires that each institution designate a single point of contact for foster youth who are responsible for assisting with completing the admissions application for students who identify as eligible, assisting students with the completion of financial aid applications including the FAFSA and Chaffee grant application which are both utilized by PHEAA to determine eligibility for the waiver program, and make referrals to outside agencies and social benefits as needed including health insurance and medical counseling, as well as tutoring, career services, and academic advising, throughout the student's course of study. PHEAA does not provide any guidance on who the administrator should be at each college, nor do they state that specialized training would be needed to serve as the point of contact. However, very few college administrators have experience working with admissions, financial aid, career services, advising, tutoring and have knowledge of how to access health insurance and medical services off-campus. Without proper training or guidance, institutions are at risk of selecting an administrator who is poorly equipped to best service students or remain compliant with these expectations. PHEAA does provide guidelines and a waiver certification presentation on their website; however, the focus of this training is more focused on the financial requirements of this program which include confirm eligibility and enrollment on frequent reports sent to the designated point of contact at each institution.

In addition to the challenge faced in supporting foster youth, even with recent legislation, Pennsylvania schools are also known to under report students experiencing homelessness which is a requirement of the McKinney-Vento Act (Lapp & Shaw-Amoah, 2021). Under reporting not only limits the vantage point of how serious the challenges are for potential incoming students to the higher education system, but it also adds to the issue of being able to properly identify and serve students experiencing homelessness. As discussed earlier in this report, students who are identified by a school district administrator have an easier time self-reporting or being identified as they can mark "yes" to the unaccompanied homeless youth determination question on the FAFSA. Students who do not have this determination or have not spent time in a shelter or transitional housing need to find someone at each college to help them update their status and

FAFSA each year. This is important because in 2018-19 the majority of school-aged students experiencing homelessness reported being in a doubled-up situation and or living in hotels or motels. Another critical data element found in Lapp & Shaw-Amoah's research is that the largest increase in change of living situations for these students was being unaccompanied which means being without their biological parents. This is important to understand when using this data to understand how many students qualify for independent status within higher education as well as who may need additional resources to establish stability while attending college.

Chapter III Methodology

In this chapter one will provide a review of the methodology of this study including a description of participants, an explanation of the instrument used to collect data from said participants, and the methods used to analyze the data once collected. The goal of this chapter is to help readers understand how data was used to develop findings that naturally lead to the recommendations presented at the conclusion of my report. This includes a description of the coding mechanisms used to analyze data collected and the limitations I faced when not only collecting but analyzing the data. As data utilized came from a case study analysis multiple methods of research were used to determine the units of analysis from each case. Also, since questions were directed to be answered about an institution as a whole instead of limiting it to the job description of a particular participant, an additional section on the institutions analyzed will be provided within this chapter. This is because institutional demographics also help to provide context to the data collected from each participant. By creating a table that provides a breakdown of the different types, regions, and sizes of institutions, I hope to help readers easily reference demographics while reviewing results, I also created alphanumeric labels for institutions in order to maintain anonymity while still being able to have a key (Table III). I also shared tables in this chapter as a reference point for readers who may need to circle back and revisit levels of support or demographics for context for both case studies and institutions. This context proved to be critical as themes developed out of the data revealed that not all services reviewed in the results section of this chapter can be equitably expected of all institutions due to limited resources and number of students being served. In other words, there is a mismatch not only in perceptions but in expectations of services amongst various institutions.

The concluding section of this chapter will be used to explain how data collected was coded and analyzed to discover previously mentioned themes by using an exploratory schema. Here I will also speak to how the process for data collection and analysis was limited due to personal and environmental factors during the course of my research. These limitations are important to understanding the scope of the research and how results can only be built on if future research is done using a more expansive approach both regarding the number of case studies and the methodology. Understanding these limitations ahead of introducing the findings will also address concerns over the reliability of findings and recommendations outlined in the next two chapters. The nation's higher education system is inclusive of many different universities that vary by size, funding source, governance structure, accreditations, and even mission statements. Therefore, by acknowledging the limited sample size of this study, the notion of a one size fits all federal policy could not be generalized without future research. To help summarize these threats to data analysis and potential validities, a discussion of this data evolution and timelines will be provided within this chapter to better prepare readers for interpretation of the results shared in chapter four. Limitations also help to explain whether or not findings from my research can be generalized or expected to hold true throughout the nation and beyond my selected case studies.

Research Questions

For this research study I am testing if the formation of state networks and the shared governance of supporting homeless youth between colleges and outside non-profit and government entities will lead to consistent service offerings to this at-risk population. The research question of my study is aimed to address the problem introduced in chapter one of this report, which is the lack of success housing insecure students have when it comes to accessing and completing higher education. Although there are several recommendations outlines by the federal Government Accountability Office's report reviewed in chapter two of this report, the goal of my research is to review how state governments are impacting the performance of colleges when serving housing insecure students on their campus. Therefore, the research question for this study is, does the level of support provided to institutions by state governments impact the level of support institutions are providing housing insecure students. In order to answer my primary research question two additional questions must be answered to form two different units of analysis that can be reviewed within the results. The first secondary question is what types of support are being offered by state governments to improve institutional service levels for housing insecure students. The answer to this question should come from the data collected while forming the case study analysis for each state I reviewed in this report. The other secondary research question is what types of support are being offered by various institutions within each case study. Responses about these services will help establish levels of support by each institution to be measured against the unit of analysis determined by the case study analysis. Before explaining how data will be collected and analyzed it is important to identify both the independent and dependent variables (Johnson, 2015). The independent variable is the data element that is the explanatory variable or what is being added to a situation to see if there is a change in measurement in the dependent variable. The dependent variable is the data element that is being measured to see if the independent variable has had an impact and whether a change has been caused (Johnson, 2015). By collecting data that will establish units of analysis both at the state and institutional level I was be able to code responses to look for developing relationships or themes that address the primarily question of whether more state level support leads to improved institutional support for housing insecure students. Therefore, the independent variable the measurement of support for institutions provided by each state and the dependent variable is the measurement of support from each institution when serving homeless students. My hypothesis is, if a state provides more support to institutions than another state then the institutions within that state will provide more support to homeless college students on their campuses than institutions would outside of their state. In other words, states with higher measures of support will have demonstrated better campus support services for homeless students than the states with lower measures of support. Therefore, the data collected via case study analysis and interviews should result in an association between these two variables. This means I should be able to see that as the independent variable, level of support from states, changes the dependent variable, level of support from institutions, also changes and in the same direction.

Research Design

Conceptual definitions. Understanding the concepts being inquired and analyzed is an important aspect of understanding methods and results. Therefore, conceptual definitions to review what I am studying will be reviewed in this section. The focus of my research study is to assess if adding a level of governance, such as a state network, will impact the level of support colleges are providing to homeless students. However, of the existing state networks no two seem to be structured or managed the same way. The National Association for Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) also does not have a standardized concept model as to how a state network should be structured and operated. Instead NAEHCY explains that typically state networks aim to accomplish the same goals but operate independently and do not need to look alike (National Association for Education..., n.d.). With that said, it is the mission of NAEHCY and their members, including established state networks, to build support for administrators and advocates working with homeless youths; this includes building pathways when applying to college and completing a degree (National Association for Education..., n.d.). Agranoff (2007) also confirms that not all networks operate the same or have the same goals; some are focused more on policy development and enhancement where others are more concerned with day-to-day operations. This holds true for the multiple states and their networks that are already in existence. Therefore, for the purpose of my study, state networks are governance structures that create partnerships amongst colleges and other critical agencies and non-profits with the goal of supporting homeless college students as they attempt to access and complete higher education. Their hierarchy and structure may not be determined using the same framework, but established networks have a centralized core or single brand that provides additional information and resources to colleges who are looking to better serve homeless youth.

Since my study is also focused on unaccompanied homeless college students including those who may or may not qualify under McKinney-Vento definition or those coming from foster care, the population being questioned about in data collection methods is also defined for participants and readers. Using some language provided by McKinney Vento, homeless college students are those who are on their own and are lacking fixed, adequate, night-time residence. However, since unaccompanied homeless youth are referenced as a unique group within the literature review, it is also important to note that the concept of unaccompanied homeless youth was expanded for financial aid purposes by Section 480 (d)(1)(H) of the Higher Education Act of 1965 to specifically refer to students who are unaccompanied (without parents), at risk of being homeless, and are under the age of 24. (U.S. Department of Education…, 2016). In conclusion, my study recognizes that not all campus support programs use the same consistent conceptual definition, but instead may use more general terms such as homeless students or foster youth at risk of homelessness.

Finally, when referring to the support services colleges are providing homeless students, themes of what types of resources homeless students need were extracted from the literature review and then organized into three main categories. The first category of service is access. The concept of access includes three areas of direct support for homeless students including: support during the admissions process, targeted support through financial aid, and providing transparency about resources for homeless students on the institution's website. The second category for type of services is basic need support. The concept of basic need support includes providing year-round housing support, food security, assistance with transportation, and access to emergency funding. A final category of support was identified as the concept of having formalized campus support specifically for homeless students. The concept of formalized campus services includes having a single point of contact assigned to work directly with homeless college students or having an established campus support program that works to guide students from acceptance to completion. After identifying these significant predictors of student success from the literature review, I formulated questions as part of a semi-structured interview used for data collection from each participant. This process is explained further within the instrument section of this chapter. These responses were scored and operationalized after all responses were collected and transcribed by me as part of the coding and analysis process.

Operational definitions. Initially, all concepts measuring support services were to be assigned a binary numeric value in indictive of one for "yes" and zero for "no" from responses about whether services were being offered to support homeless students. However, after commencing interviews and beginning to code and review transcripts, the responses I collected revealed there was more varying levels of support for each category than a simple "yes" or "no". For example, when asked about emergency aid one participant explained that it was available, but it was not targeted to homeless students and could only be applied for once a year and for a certain dollar amount where another participant explained that they have funds set aside specifically for the students in their campus support program for emergency needs on an ongoing basis. When asked about admissions practices, one participant explained the Admissions department does not have a question about housing security on their application, but they do have it on their new student form that all students complete once they have matriculated, but another had trained Admissions staff who could make referrals to a single point of contact for support ahead of matriculating. Both examples made it clear that colleges may mean diverse types of service and may be reaching homeless students differently even when they answer "yes" we have that service. Also, they may not be creating targeted support for homeless students, but could still be developing a holistic model of support for all students which by default includes homeless students. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the level of support from the three different states selected to be case studies for this research were operationalized by using a score to distinguish level of support: none, low (one of more resources), moderate (two to three resources) and strong (four to five resources). Again, types of resources states could offer are outlined in Table I and their relative score is assigned in Table II. For all three categories of support a similar scale was utilized to operationalize responses for analysis. If a participant did not provide a support a zero was assigned as a response, if a minimal level of support was provided than a score of one was assigned to indicate a low level of support, moderate levels of support were scored a two, and strong levels of support would be scored a three. Although not each type of support could be defined the same way each was measured using this low, moderate, or strong scale. This scale of measurement means totals could not be used for assessment since there were different numbers of participants and institutions contributing to this student from each state.

The actual questions for each category can be reviewed in Appendix A which also provides the interview format. For the admissions support question, if a participant indicated admissions staff were trained to refer students to a single point of contact or financial aid for homeless student support that would be a low level of support which would equate to a score of one, but if the participant responded that they had a point of contact trained to provide information directly to homeless students without referring them out of office that would be a moderate level of support and scored with a two, but if the response was that an identifying question was put on the admissions application so students could self-report as being homeless and targeted outreach was done by a point of contact in the admissions office then that would be considered strong support and a score of three would be assigned. For financial aid, if the participant was aware of a contact accepting homeless youth determinations without a dependency override that would be a low level of support, but if a financial aid office had a contact for homeless students who was doing outreach to complete homeless youth determinations on their own that would be moderate support, if a financial aid office had a contact, was making determinations and helping the student with gap funding or prioritizing campus-based funding that would be a strong level of support.

Another example of how this scale of measurement for support was used while reviewing responses was whether basic need resources were provided. These included questions about food pantries, housing, transportation support, and emergency aid. If participants had no housing options on campus (score of zero for none), other had housing but it was not available during breaks (score of one for low support), some schools had housing year-round, but students were charged extra during breaks (score of two for moderate) and others had year-round housing and did not charge over breaks (score of three for strong). For food pantries if there was a department who was helping with non-perishable snack items or keeping small closet that would be low, if there was a full food pantry affiliated with the campus and/or on the campus that students were being referred to with minimal restrictions that would be moderate support, if participants had a food pantry and a supplemental support such as meal plan scholarships or donated meal swipes that would be considered providing staunch support. For transportation, most participants did not have much support but the few that did offer a shuttle to town (low support), discounted public transportation passes (moderate support), or funding to assist with the coverage of transportation costs (strong support). Responses to the emergency aid questions did shift over the course of this study due to increased resources from federal stimulus as a result of the covid-19 pandemic. With that said, one-time funds for specific purposes were considered low levels of support, funds that could vary based on need and frequency that targeted homeless and/or foster youth was considered moderate levels of support for emergency aid, and funds that were established to support this population specifically on an ongoing basis with few to no restrictions was a strong level of support.

The final category of inquiry from the interview was about what formalized support had the participants created to directly target homeless college students. These supports included a single point of contact and a campus support program. For the single point of contact, having someone in financial aid or someone who was aware of resources for homeless youth was a low level of support, having a single point of contact for foster or other independent students who may end up serving homeless students as a result of cross-over was a moderate level of support, but having a published single point of contact that focuses on homeless college students is a strong level of support. Finally, for campus support programs if a participant had a committee that looked into basic needs support for these students that was considered a low level of support, if they had a campus support program for foster youth that may end up serving homeless college students that was deemed a moderate level of support, but if they had an established campus program specifically serving homeless college students then that was determined to be a strong level of support. As a result of learning of the varying levels of support determined when reviewing responses for each service, all three categories of support were scored with one of four values: none (0), low (1), moderate (2), or strong (3). As explained earlier, this scale and its operational definitions could not be solidified until after all interviews were done and transcripts were available for me to review. For example, having a program that focuses on homeless youth specifically was found to be the strongest level of formalized institutional support for homeless students so then all other responses were measured against that ideal level of support. Those with a formalized foster youth program that might see crossover with homeless students were scored moderate but may have been scored strong if no other participant explained the differences in campus support programs.

Case Studies: are used to help answer questions based on regional examples when the entire population cannot be included in one study. For my research, since I could not dedicate enough resources to do a full national study of how homeless college students are served on every college campus nor an analysis of what every state is doing differently. However, these cases will be used to compare against each other and ideally find an in-depth understanding of the problem and potential solutions. To help address the fact that case studies are known to limit the scope of findings and rarely can be considered generalizable I adopted the practice of triangulation, or using multiple methods of data collection, to improve the validity of my results. As explained earlier in this chapter, this research is using a selection of three states to serve as case studies to answer whether the level of support provided at the state level impacts the level of support provided at the institutional level when serving homeless college students. Each state is considered its own case study as not only will an in-depth analysis be done on what the state government or governance structures are providing to institutions within their state, but also a sample of institutions will be contacted and studied to perform a comparison of impact these supports are having. The three states selected to make up these case studies are Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania. The states were not randomly selected as the section of states to use as case studies were selected based on my previous knowledge and the interactions, I had prior to starting this research study. For example, Georgia has the established formal state network of support called Embark, which has its own website and is celebrated for being one of the more established statewide support systems for colleges looking to assist housing insecure students. Therefore, I chose Georgia with the expectation that it would serve as a higher performing case study and also provide more information about what types of support could be offered at the state level to help establish that unit of analysis. If I only chose states who I did not think were doing a good job in serving homeless colleges students, then I would more than likely not learn enough about what can be done and therefore would not be able to form a scale of measurement to measure levels of support across case studies. I also chose Georgia because I had previously met college administrators from University of Georgia who seemed interested in introducing me to potential participants for my study. Similar to this approach for making selection, I decided to add North Carolina as one of my states to research and form a case study out of in response to a professor reaching out to me to learn more about the work, I had personally done to support homeless youth and shared that North Carolina is in its initial stages of forming a support system for institutions looking to help homeless students enroll at their campuses. Therefore, I thought using North Carolina would provide a perspective of what it looks like when both state governments and colleges are commencing the work needed to improve access and completion rates for homeless students in their states. Finally, I selected my own state Pennsylvania as I had met many administrators during my time serving on an executive council for financial aid as well as a committee to support foster youth and felt I had a strong pool of potential participants to interview from various types of institutions who I could learn from. I also chose Pennsylvania as it is an easier state for me to develop a case study out of as I work at a state institution, and I am familiar with the different government and governance structures that serve higher education in Pennsylvania.

As first outlined within my literature review the initial data collection method was completed for each state to better understand the differences of how each state is responding to the needs of their institutions who are trying to better understand how to support homeless college students. This data collection was done by completing internet searches of each state's name in combination with multiple key words. These key terms and phrases included: McKinney-Vento, homeless Students, homeless network homeless legislation, housing legislation, homeless scholarships, college emergency funds for homeless, homeless training, housing insecure students, single points of contact. From these search results any website that was found to have information on state efforts to support homeless students was bookmarked. Within each webpage all keywords were searched again using the "find" feature and any relative excerpts were copied and pasted into a file for me to review. These excerpts provided context for the literature review, but also helped confirm which states I wanted to use as my own case studies as I did find various levels of results when searching for the same phrases with different states attached. For example, I learned that North Carolina started to build statewide supports for higher education administrators including a simple point of contact list but did not have a network developing as Georgia did. As for Pennsylvania, I learned it does not have any published resource yet for higher education administrators looking to support homeless college students but did propose and pass recent legislation that focuses on supporting foster youth which included key words as single points of contact and housing insecurity. These web searches also determined the method adopted to pull a sample of participants for each case study based on available resources including single point of contact directories with contact information. Table 1 provides an outline of results. Based on results of these web searches five different supports stood out and therefore were measured with a simple binary scale of one for yes and two for no to provide a count of support services by each of the three state case studies. The alphabetic value used to label each state is also provided in Table 1 as a precursor for the labeling of institutions in future data tables. As the independent variable in our research question looks to define the level of support each state provides, I created Table II to define scale of measurement using counts of resources provided in Table I. The data shared within Table I and Table II will defines the independent variable for this report in order to compare measures of institutional support levels, the dependent variable in future analysis. These measurements allow me to determine if there is an association between the two variables and if the hypothesis can be tested using these data collection methods in a cross-case study analysis.

Table I

Case Studies

State	Network	SPOC List	State Legislation	Funding	Training	Count of Statewide Supports
Georgia (A)	1	1	0	1	1	4
North Carolina (B)	0	1	0	0	0	1
Pennsylvania (C)	0	1	1	0	1	3

Note: Each state was scored with either a one for "yes" the resource is provided to colleges in the state or a zero for "no" the service is not provided to colleges within that state.

Table II

Level of State Support

State	Level of Support
Georgia (A)	Strong
North Carolina (B)	Low
Pennsylvania (C)	Moderate

Note: To demonstrate the level of support from each state the count of resources was utilized with 1 resource considered low level of support, 2-3 resources equating to moderate level of support, and 4 to 5 resources meaning a strong level of support

Participants The population that could be sampled for this study includes all college administrators from each institution within every state. This is because interview questions used in my study asked about the practices of the institution as a whole and not only about the work each person is doing within that institution. This was done purposely as I learned during the course of research done for my literature review that there are very few college staff positions solely focused on supporting basic needs of students or more specifically supporting homeless students. With that said, for the purpose of my study college administrators who may have worked with homeless youth in their roles were targeted to hopefully acquire some insights that went beyond what I could have discovered by searching each institution's website on my own. **A**lthough, the goal was to complete recruitment of participants using a random sampling method with the goal of being able to generalize findings across universities during analysis, the timeline for collection and low response rate resulted in a mixed sampling approach being utilized. First, the sample was put together using purposive sampling since as I mentioned earlier, I aimed to find professionals who had some familiarity with the topics I planned to ask about. Second, my sampling was a convenience sample as I knew there were probably more than one college professional on campus familiar with the topics at hand, but I wanted to target those the most familiar with homeless students and potentially what was happening within their state.

As a result, for Georgia and North Carolina all single points of contact were sent an email inviting them to participate with a copy of the consent form for them to review. Finally, a third method employed to gather my sample was done by inquiring at the conclusion of each interview, if the participant knew anyone else, they had worked with on the issue of supporting homeless college students who may be willing to speak to me as an attempt to create a snowballing effect from my initial sample. A similar method was employed in Pennsylvania, however, instead of emailing all administrators from one single point of contact directory for homeless youth, the closest model to this contact list that could be found was a campus support program directory for foster youth on University of Pennsylvania's website. Also, since the research reviewed within the literature review of this report reveals that homeless college student supports can be created in several different areas of the universities it was decided to focus outreach to points of contact within student affairs or enrollment management as a primary contact and then reach out to leadership within the university if no response was received.

However, due to low response rates, a snowball effect of sampling did emerge early on in recruitment as participants who committed early assisted by making referrals. By the end of the data collection period of this research, three of the participants were referrals from earlier participants which is known as snowball sampling.

Demographics of participants cannot be shared in this report due to the conditions of anonymity outlined in the consent form ahead of the data collection process. This limitation will be reviewed in more detail in a later section of this chapter. However, to further explain why anonymity was so important when recruiting participants, it is important to understand that since participants might have to admit that their institution was not providing a service or perceived their institution could be doing more they would be more inclined to participate and share if their names or identifying characteristics were not shared. Since institutions vary in size the safest approach seemed to be to share as little as possible about the actual participant, so they felt secure in their answers and their position while responding to questions. For example, if stated that a black female administrator working in the financial aid office responded to this inquiry and there is only one black female in the financial aid office then I woud not be protecting her identify even if I used her name. However, more demographics could be shared about the institution the participant was speaking on behalf of as that provides context without naming or isolating the college or individual who is speaking of the college as so many different and diverse institutions reside within each state used as a case study for this research.

Institutions As I explained in the previous section individual participants who worked within ten different institutions from the three selected states (Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania) provided responses for analysis. However, the breakdown of participants was not event across the three case studies. Instead, two institutions from Georgia, four from North

Carolina, and four from Pennsylvania had participants who work for them represent them by responding to questions about their services. As outlined in Table II each of these states have varying levels of support including relative state legislation, an established network of support to offer resources to both students and colleges, financial commitment to students or colleges, and training offered to administrators working with homeless youth. Since I cannot share identifying information for each participant interviewed, the institutions they work for are coded in Table III as a means to share information about the campus itself and not just the person who works there. Table III includes multiple characteristics for comparison to help provide context to the reader about the campus itself that is being described in responses. As explained within chapter two of this report, these characteristics can influence the level of support each college or university is able to provide to their homeless students. First, the nominal label for each participant is provided with the letter value that coincides with the state's value in Table I. Each institution is then assigned a numeric value to provide a distinguishing identifier. However, the numeric values in Table 3 do not speak to the order in which each participant was interviewed. Next, the size of each institution is provided based on the following scale of measurement: small (enrollment less than five thousand students), medium (enrollment between five and fifteen thousand students), and large (enrollment is greater than fifteen thousand students). This table allows the reader to be able to understand the size of the institution without having the exact enrollment of each college or university to better protect each institution's identity.

Finally, Table III provides two additional descriptive characteristics: the type of area the college or university resides in and the type of college or university the participant is from. This information was pulled from each institution's website. Categories for region are urban, for those who identified as residing in cities or metropolitan areas, suburban, and rural. The categories for type are: 4-year private, 4-year public, and 2-year public which for this study were community colleges that were invited to participate. There were no for-profit or trade schools invited to participate in this exploratory study. Unfortunately, the small sample of participants for this study is not equitable in representation across all three cases as not all combination types, regions, and sizes of institutions participated in this research. Only case study C, Pennsylvania, had participation from all three types, all three regions, and all three sizes. However, to get a true representative sample the varied combination of each of those descriptors should be present within each case study. This limitation is further discussed in the concluding section of this chapter as findings from my report cannot be generalized without a representative sample.

Table III

Institutions

INSTITUION	SIZE	REGION	TYPE
A1	Medium	Suburban	4 YEAR PUBLIC
A2	Large	Suburban	4 YEAR PUBLIC
B1	Medium	Rural	4 YEAR PUBLIC
B2	Medium	Suburban	2 YEAR PUBLIC
B3	Large	Urban	4 YEAR PUBLIC
B4	Medium	Rural	4 YEAR PUBLIC
C1	Small	Suburban	4 YEAR PRIVATE
C2	Large	Urban	2 YEAR PUBLIC
C3	Medium	Rural	4 YEAR PUBLIC
C4	Medium	Rural	4 YEAR PUBLIC

Note: Institutional labels include an alphabetic value to indicate which state they reside in [Georgia (A), North Carolina (B), and Pennsylvania (C)]. The scale of measurement for size: small (enrollment less than five thousand students), medium (enrollment between five and fifteen thousand students), and large (enrollment is greater than fifteen thousand students).

Instrument

As explained earlier in this chapter, multiple methods of research were used in this study to develop a case study analysis of each state. Techniques from grounded theory method were used to help initial research identify trends and themes that could help form questions used in a semi-structured interview which served as the primary instrument for this study. For example, I started with web searches using key words and phrases in combination with a state's name (Homeless youth in North Carolina) to learn about what efforts each state was already making and then used those results to form questions for a future web search and the interview. Since my study did not use a random sample, this research would be classified as an exploratory study on service programs that support college homeless students with additional data compared by reviewing results against case study results to determine any findings. Human participants were recruited to represent their institutions to explore the impact states' support services had on their ability to recruit, retain, and graduate homeless students. The instrument used for this data collection process was s semi-structured interview which was conducted either on the phone or face-to-face using the zoom platform. The questions that were asked in this interview focused on the services that were recommended within research conducted for the literature review of this paper. For example, what types of support are being offered by the Admissions office as the GAO report from 2016 explained that not only are completion rates lower for housing insecure students but so are access rates. Additional questions were formed based on the results of web searches used to collect data on the support from states and whether it was enough. Such as, do you know of any support provided on the state level and have they impacted the services you are providing to your institution? Open ended questions like these allowed for me to establish rapport with the participants as well as open the conversation to learn about state level efforts that I could not find during my own web searches such as state conferences and training sessions. This also allowed to let the participant have some control in the conversation which as Bazely (2013) explains helps to build some trust which can result in participants feeling more comfortable in sharing.

The timeline of data collection also impacted the evolving method of data collection as interviews were conducted over a 2.5-year period that included the passage of new state legislation in Pennsylvania that influenced responses and more notably the beginning of the covid-19 pandemic when many administrators were being sent home to work virtually. With that said, although a list of questions was made available to participants in advance, all participants were presented with the research question, consent form, and general themes being inquired about in an email invitation ahead of the interview. Initial interviews were scheduled as phone interviews and were recorded using an application downloaded on my phone. Files were saved from these initial phones interviews and uploaded to a password protected file on my computer. Once the covid-19 pandemic hit, and most participants were working remotely, a shift to recorded zoom interviews for data collection took place, but the storage method remained the same. This allowed the me to not only record and save interview files right there on the computer instead of transferring downloaded files from an application, but it shifted the interview to a face-to-face since all zoom interviews did allow for the use of a webcam.

The informed consent form was sent with the emailed invitation to participants which provided information on the value of the research, the potential significance of the study, as well as explain how the participant's responses and identity will be kept confidential and not released with the results. In addition to the confirmation that information will be kept confidential the demographic questions will be limited to the name of the college which will then be used to disseminate what state the college is in, its size, and the type of college it is. Participants will only have to provide email or contact information if they wish to participate in a follow-up interview. Most of the questions about support services will be open-ended in order to provide a means to learn from support service offerings instead of limiting them to a binary “yes” or “no” response. Open ended responses allowed me to learn more about varying levels of support to establish an ideal level of support to measure all responses against. It also resulted in me using grounded theory, as when learning about latest ideas from one participant provided me with more context when asking about the same category of service by others. For example, one participant spoke of having a food insecurity committee that is evaluating and assessing the needs of students and how to best serve them. So, when asking about food insecurity in my next interview I could add the follow-up of, “is there a group of administrators working together on these efforts continuously or is only one administrator responsible for this activity?”. Consent forms were collected prior to interviews and a copy of the template used can be found within Appendix B of this report.

As noted previously, the services and resources identified for review were pulled from prior research on homeless student success during the course of the research, but there were still different ideas within different research studies without one standard to generalize across all. Also, there is no single direct policy in place to guide college leadership on what is required or even best practice to help homeless college students be successful in both accessing a college degree and completing one. Therefore, an open-ended semi structured interview was the best tool for data collection in this study as it provided me with results that went beyond what I learned in the research interview and allowed me to develop theories while identifying themes over the course of interviews. This is important as this study is exploratory in nature as the closest, we have come to seeing federal level guidance is the 2016 GAO report reviewed in chapter two of this research report which means there is no set expectation or policy to measure results against. As a result, this qualitative exploratory study utilized semi-structured interviews to best learn of existing practices and thought processes and as a result of low response rates. As a benefit to these semi-structured interviews, I learned early on that there were varying levels of support and data from this study which will best serve future research in developing a scale of measurement to be used instead of the originally intended binary scale for analysis. As responses varied in level of support from non-existent, to low levels that included one-offs or the beginning of establishing a resource, to moderate which the myself determined meant the resource existed but limited or restricted to certain students, and finally a strong level of support was determined to be an established resource that was not limited or restricted to students in need. However, to provide some level of reliability an interview protocol was still followed throughout the data collection period with pre-determined questions still being asked even if additional secondary questions were added as a result of lessons learned in prior interviews. This initial list of interview questions can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study at the simplest was reviewing level of support each participant is identified during a semi structured interview and then comparing those results to levels of service for each state determined by web searches and case study analysis. As explained by Riccucci (2010) public administration research is traditionally focused on practice and not on theory development and therefore is not limited to a single paradigm or methodology. This held true for this this exploratory study is no different as it is using inductive reasoning to use patterns and trends in data to develop themes within the results as well as better understand the phenomena of developing statewide networks to support homeless youth and if that is necessary based on other themes identified in the results. In order to review these results, coding practices were implemented to help me identify emerging themes and patterns within the data I was collecting. First, all interviews were transcribed and stored in a password protected Microsoft TEAMs folder with my consent forms and additional research. These transcripts were then reviewed on an ongoing basis to highlight responses in one of two colors: yellow, which was used seemed to identify emerging patterns in responses; for example, the use of a food pantries to address food insecurity, or green which indicated new information that had not been provided in previous interviews such as the use of new student forms to identify students after they matriculated. These highlighted sections were then pulled out and added to note cards of the same color as a means of sorting labels created in this coding pattern.

My study does contain some phenomenological research as it uses findings from past studies to drive semi-structured questions about what homeless college students may be facing at the institutions who participated in this study. Therefore, I returned to my literature review to also code and find both relative linkages between interview responses and prior research as well as inconsistencies. For example, the College Cost Reduction Act and Federal Student Aid Handbook indicate that all financial aid administrators should understand how to determine if a student needs a homeless youth determination to access aid. However, in some interviews it was found that financial aid was not supporting homeless youth efforts on campus. These inconsistencies were pulled out and coded red in order to determine if a mismatch in results and prior research was its own finding from the data collected. This method is important because as noted in the literature review not all students who are experiencing homelessness come from the same pathways and therefore will have diverse needs for support. One example is that not all will understand that they qualify for that determination and will lack paperwork to provide financial aid and therefore it is important to understand if financial aid knows how to make these determinations. To analyze both the level of services being provided by participants and the impact the state resources are having on these varying levels, the transcribed interviews were coded, by myself through noting perspectives and commonalities while scoring responses, but also revisited after each additional interview to see if new data were creating different patterns. This allowed myself to better understand the lived experiences not only of the administrators being interviewed but the homeless college students seeking support in real time since as mentioned previously these interviews were conducted over an extended period of time. To determine if the relationship between the independent variable, level of a state support provided has a relationship with the levels of support provided at colleges tables were created to organize results into categories for comparison. This allowed me to present all results from the ten interviews conducted with readers while also providing a more visual friendly way of analyzing the two units of analysis to answer my research questions.

Limitations

Based on the participants of this study there are some demonstrated limitations of this research study based on the participants. First, not every type of university is represented within each state. In other words, it would have been better if additional private institutions were interviewed from North Carolina and Georgia as well as smaller universities from both states. Also, a community college from Georgia would have provided this study with the ability to compare 2-year colleges from each state, which is an important opportunity this research did not provide. Community colleges are an important focus of homeless and basic need research as many students coming from housing insecurity feel that they only mean to attend a college or university is to start at community. However, although the community is typically more affordable than a 4-year institution it also typically lacks access to on-campus housing options. In addition to only having two 4-year public institutions from Georgia, both were actually located in a suburban region. Therefore, I could not see the impact the Embark network has had on institutions in rural and urban regions of the state. Georgia also has the highest level of support but had the fewest number of participants. Another limitation of this study related to data collection was the covid-19 pandemic, changing the framework of both services needed and provided during the course of the interviews. At the beginning of this research study interviews were conducted prior to the pandemic and responses were solely based on what institutional and states had provided to students with housing insecurity. However, after the pandemic interviews started to include responses that included federal emergency funds that were provided both directly to students and institutions to help with basic needs support beyond the cost of higher education. Finally, the format of the interviews conducted after the pandemic did change for the better as more administrators were more comfortable using zoom which provided a face-to-face interview versus the phone interviews that were conducted and recorded prior to the pandemic. These changes in data collection methods may have biased results both in findings in regards to level of service and ability to access administrators once the nation shifted to working from home and virtual platforms. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, another change in policy for one state influenced responses during interviews. Pennsylvania passed the Fostering Independence tuition waiver program and single point of contact requirement after myself started interviewing Pennsylvania institutions. With that said, it was discovered over the course of interviews that not all participants were aware of the single point of contact requirement. Therefore, the shift to requiring a single point of contact to serve foster youth did not have as significant of an impact on this study as it would have had if research was to be done after a couple years of implementation of the new state policy. However, this limitation should be considered when developing future research as whether or not an institution has a single point of contact that serves a relative group of college students was a focus of this study and would have influenced the level of support score for Pennsylvania.

Finally, my own bias was also a limitation of this study during the data collection process. For this study, it is also important to be aware of the fact that I also manage a campus support program for homeless and foster youth while providing training on the topic during state and national conferences. Therefore, a few of the participants had attended sessions or meetings with the myself on a professional basis before agreeing to participate in the study. One of these committees is the higher education committee of NAEHCY which focuses on providing support to homeless college youth and another is a foster youth to college committee for Pennsylvania. Although this experience helped to form the research question and interview questions for this inductive qualitative study the personal bias was used as part of the methodology of providing perspective to levels of support and understanding students lived experiences at each institution. However, this means finding from this study cannot be generalized to all colleges or even to a type of college as the interpretation of findings did influence results.

Summary

All data collected for this study I believe to be valuable as supporting students facing poverty as a result of uncontrollable circumstances that left them to be homeless during their youth is providing an opportunity for them to avoid homelessness and poverty in adulthood. College graduates were reported to still make $20,000 more per year than high school graduates and develop strong social networks during their time in higher education. Job opportunities and options are also expanded for those with college degrees based on data collected from our current workforce (Johnson, 2015, p. 93). However, the purpose of this study is to not only learn diverse methods these students can be supported when trying to earn a college degree but also what still needs to be learned about serving this at-risk population and how state efforts and institutional efforts impact each other with the goal of improving pathways to access and completion. Measuring these benefits is certainly not easy and at this point success rates can only be assumed as no state or institution offered college completion rates of those who took advantage of services while facing homelessness in college. However, the analysis of data still yielded emerging themes and learning outcomes that can be applied to future research both in higher education and public administration fields. Including learning more about the phenomena of state networks developing as a result of limited federal directive within policies which leave gaps when trying to support homeless students. After reviewing the different states via web searches and identifying varying levels of support during the preliminary research conducted, outreach was done to prospective participants for additional information of what benefits are coming out of state government efforts and whether or not there is a strong enough effort to adopt best practices and target supports to those who need it.

Chapter IV Results

In the beginning of this chapter, I will be presenting the results of this research study using the exploratory schema and method of analysis previously outlined in chapter three. A table for each category of data collected will be shared with scored interview responses using the scale of measurement provided within chapter three. Answers to this report's research question will be derived from data and shared using these tables which demonstrate the significance of the results for each case study as well a means to overall analyze state government's impact on campus services. After all responses and their corresponding results are presented, an interpretation of said results will be utilized to construct a findings section as a conclusion to this chapter. Findings provide s an explanation of results by sharing insights and relationships between performance levels of colleges and the states they reside in which result in the formation of themes. Therefore, this section should enable readers to better understand discoveries made by myself from both case study analysis as well as how results answer the research questions presented in chapter one and three.

An example of a theme building within this report's findings is that some participants shared they are in the initial stages of discovery at their institution and therefore had not been formally introduced to students yet. Therefore, results shared were based on what the campus was intending to do based on what they knew of the population before actually working directly with the unaccompanied homeless students themselves. Another important context to measurements provided within the data collected is that more than one participant explained they provided a partial or similar service but could not answer "yes" or speak to the exact service in question. One example of this was the question about providing homeless students access to housing throughout the year. One participant explained that they do have community partners that they can refer out to and have had success with, but they are still looking into how to offer this option on their own campus as they have not been able to offer it to any student in the past. These responses demonstrate why a scale of measurement was more appropriate than using binary responses of “yes” or “no” as part of the development of operational definitions and the formation of results. The open-ended dialogue that naturally takes place after building trust in a semi structured interview format requires a scale of measurement in order not to miss the fact that many participants are still developing or resolving known issues with their support services. It is recommended that readers use the findings section of this chapter to better understand the relevance of the results shared in the beginning of the chapter. Although the findings section will not be presented using the same categories of analysis used in the result section, multiple themes will be explained using the culmination of the results section. The three themes presented within the findings section include the discovery that there is a mismatch between needs of the students and the services being provided, that networks are a best practice in the absence of federal policy, and that future service development and policy proposals should focus on independent students as a whole and not only the unaccompanied homeless students who were the focus of this research study. As explained in chapter three data was collected before and after the start of the covid-19 pandemic therefore, lessons learned from the pandemic are considered when constructing themes as a result of the data analyzed. Two distinctive examples of how results were influenced by the beginning of the pandemic were the need for housing when campus was not operational in-person and the use and thought process around emergency funds as the federal government did spend a significant amount of stimulus funding on direct payments to students via their institutions.

Results

The following three tables provide scores that explain the types and levels of support being provided to housing insecure college students at each of the participating institutions. Although the descriptions for each level of support are slightly different based on the type of service in question, the zero to three ordinal scale was used in all three areas of support. The score of zero refers to not having any support or service, one is having low support, two is having moderate support, and a score of three shows levels of strong support. As this study is focusing on each state's level of support to determine the influence of whether having a state network impacts service levels, an average count of services (not a sum of service levels) is provided within each table for easy comparison. For example, a participant may have a score of 1 for low level of admissions support, but a score of 2 for moderate financial aid support, this total would still only be totaled as having two services for analysis. Since these are unmatched variables with no defined interval in the scale a mean cannot be used to analyze the ordinal data, but an average of the count of services can be used to determine overall impact of existing state level resources. For each table of categorical information provided within this section a total column was added to better demonstrate overall support levels of each participant when looking at access, formalized institutional support, and basic need resources. However, these totals are not true means and cannot be used to compare overall case studies as a scale of measurement was used for each category and there is an uneven number of participants within each case study.

TABLE IV

Access service levels

Participant	Admissions	Financial Aid	Website	Total
A1	0	1	0	1
A2	1	1	3	5
B1	1	1	0	2
B2	0	0	0	0
B3	0	0	1	1
B4	0	1	0	1
C1	0	1	2	3
C2	0	0	1	1
C3	0	1	1	2
C4	0	0	0	0

Note: Interview responses were provided a score by the myself after the transcription process. Score definitions are as follows: 0= (none) no support provided, 1= (low) low support levels that are reactive to state requirements or limited to certain populations, 2= (moderate) levels of support that do serve housing insecure, but have limitations or restrictions, 3= (strong) levels of direct support that work on a holistic approach and adapt to remove barriers to support overtime.

Access results. As explained in chapter two of this report, many high school graduates who are struggling with housing insecurity, regardless of cause, cannot imagine being able to attend a post-secondary institution due to multiple barriers including affordability. Therefore, to determine if participants in this research study were assisting homeless students with accessing their institution as an option for themselves research questions included what types of supports were being provided during the admissions and financial aid processes. In addition, as many would not initiate a college application or financial aid application without some sense of feasibility a separate question about what information is available on the participant's website was also added to this results section to measure how easy it is to find critical information to support this vulnerable population. Interview questions that referenced resources that support access to higher education were grouped together to determine levels of support given to homeless youth who were applying to each participant's institution. Resources that were inquired about and are relative to the issue of access include trained staff members within Admissions, questions on the application that allow students to identify as homeless or housing insecure, trained financial aid counselors who can make McKinney-Vento determinations, and published guidance on what steps homeless youth will need to take to apply without facing issues completing both their admissions and financial aid applications. After scoring each participant in the three areas of access, admissions, financial aid, and web resources, it was determined that participant A2 demonstrated the highest level of direct support with resources provided in all three areas and participants B2 and C4 ranked at the bottom with no direct resources provided in any of the three services areas. The rest of the participants scored with low to moderate levels of support, but only A2 had responded to interview questions in a way that proved they supported students both before they applied with guidance on their website and during the process via admissions and financial aid resources. Participant C1 responded to questions about access in a way that ranked with the second highest level of support to homeless youth attempting to access their institution.

Results about access are concerning but based on previous research discussed in chapter two of this report they are not surprising. First, it was determined that many institutions shy away from asking any questions on applications that may put them at risk of being accused of discriminatory practices. Second, we know there is minimal guidance given to administrators on how to best support traditional college aged students who are coming from at-risk situations including being housing insecure and without the support of a parent. In addition, the basis of this research study is to look at how influential state support is in guiding colleges and universities in developing institutional level support of homeless youth. As demonstrated in Table II of this chapter, participants coming from state A are provided with a strong level of state support where participants coming from state C receive the second highest level of support. Therefore, results for levels of support given to students applying to participants' colleges do align with the level of support the colleges are receiving from states in understanding how to support homeless students.

Within this section of results, admissions services for students facing housing insecurity were measured on a scale of no support provided, score of zero, to a strong level of support provided, score of three. To determine the scale of measurement best practices were used from this report's literature review and applied to each participant's responses to learn what types of services from that list were being provided. From this data review a strong level of support was determined to be having trained staff within the admissions department who were familiar with McKinney-Vento determinations and housing insecure terminology who provided direct support through identification in the application process, unique tours or visit plans that target this population and spoke to important services provided on campus. A moderate level of support would be an institution who does not actively recruit but has a method for identifying this population and either referring them to a single point of contact or having at least one admissions staff member who is trained on the needs of this population. A low level of support would be a participant who does not actively recruit this population with targeted visits and either has an identifying question on an admissions document or has trained staff who are familiar with this population and the resources they may need but does not offer both.

Results for admissions services were disappointing across all three case studies with none of the participants scoring above a low level of support and none of the participants in case study

C providing any types of support by their admissions offices. The two participants who did provide low levels of support were A2 and B2 which means they either have a way to identify students or they have a referral system to connect students who identify with those who are familiar with their needs. As admissions counselors serve as the frontline it is concerning that only two participants feel that housing insecure students are getting the attention and information they need prior to enrolling in their institution. It also leaves readers to questions if students receive any type of support before stepping on to these campuses. However, therefore the myself asked about two other important areas students visit while working through the admissions process which are the financial aid office and college websites.

Consistent with the admissions scale of measurement, financial aid levels of support were defined by best practices discussed within the literature review of this report. As explained in chapter two, financial aid support is just as important if not more important than admission support as financial aid administrators is the entity on campus who can make McKinney Vento homeless youth determinations if they were not completed by a high school administrator previously. Financial Aid is this critical because it is how many college campuses identify homeless students who qualify for their programs or services, but also because cost of a college degrees is one of the more well-known barriers for unaccompanied homeless students for both access and completion. Financial aid is also the office where review for title IV aid eligibility is done based on McKinney-Vento determinations of unaccompanied homeless students. These determinations are critical to students who are not with their biological families and lack stable housing as they are one of the few ways to be deemed independent and complete a federal financial aid application, FAFSA, without parental information. A strong level of support, score of three, for financial aid support would be participants who have trained staff within the financial aid office who can assist with making McKinney Vento determinations for the FAFSA application and questions about financial aid, are aware of important resources on campus to support basic needs and address the barriers this population face, as well as targeted monetary support which can include fee waivers, deposit waivers, or additional institutional gift aid for students who identify as housing insecure. A moderate score, two, would be those who have trained staff to make determinations without requiring paperwork from high school and can refer to campus resources, but do not have monetary support. Where a low level of support score of one would be participants who have a staff member who is aware of this population but does not have experience making determinations, does not provide monetary support, and instead may only make referrals to other campus resources if a financial aid application is successfully completed on the students own or with support of another entity.

Financial aid results were also concerning all three case studies in this report. Case study A was the only state to have support from both participants; however, both participants A1 and A2 scored low in their level of support. A participant from case study A explained that they do have a strong relationship with their financial aid office to collaborate with when serving their small list of homeless students, they identified. Yet there are still times when scholarships, grants, and even federal loans do not cover direct costs. This participant continued to explain that although Pennsylvania did just pass the fostering independence legislation that includes a last dollar waiver between tuition, fees, and gift aid, this only legislation only requires institutional financial support for a specific subpopulation of foster youth based on their time in care. Case studies B and C have participants, B2, B3, C2, C4, respond that they are not aware of any support from the financial aid office. What is even more concerning about this result is all four of those participants also indicated not knowing of any admissions support either and scores a zero for both categories. Although overall responses were better than results collected from the interview question about admissions service levels with six participants indicating at least a low level of support compared to only two reporting low levels of admissions support, this still results in an overall concerning outlook on how this population with specific Title IV financial aid requirements is navigating what is perceived to be one of the more challenging aspects of the college search process. Without formal support in both enrollment service areas admissions and financial aid, most of these students are perceived to be left on their own to learn of their options and requirements when it comes to attending these participants' institutions. One of the primary tools used by students who are conducting their own research on different colleges and options is the intuition's website and that is why a research question about this tool is the third category for access service level review.

On the surface whether each participant has dedicated web space to support homeless incoming college students would be presumed to collect a binary response and for some participants that is exactly what the myself received. However, in order to build a consistent scale of measurement for this category of access service levels the myself conducted a web search on each participant's website. Two key phrases, homeless and McKinney-vento, were searched on each website in order to use search results to build the scale of measurement. From these search results, a strong level of web presence for homeless students were websites that head dedicated pages to guide their homeless students to a point of contact and resources on their campus, a moderate level of support had a contact or similar information woven into another webpage instead of providing one targeted webpage for students to utilize, and low levels of support would be the mention of resources or existence of homeless students accessing education at their institution but no targeted webpage or contact provided.

Overall, website results were surprisingly stronger than levels of support provided directly by admissions and financial aid offices. Including one participant, A2, scoring a three for demonstrating a strong level of support via a web presence that had a dedicated page and outlined resources. Another participant, C1, scored moderate with information being found that was not on a dedicated page but did provide a point of contact and targeted information. However, the most common scores for category were still low or none at all with participants B2, C2, C3 with low scores and A1, B1, B4, and C4 scoring zero with no web search results found. The most surprising of these participants was A1 as the participant did identify at least having some sort of support through financial aid but apparently that information is not readily available on the public website. The most concerning of these results were participants B2 and C4 who scored zero for all three categories of access resources. Therefore, even if these institutions score better in other areas of service in this report including formal support programs for homeless youth or basic needs support it is difficult to imagine all the students are reaching these resources if they were not able to navigate the process of applying and enrolling into the institution first. These results lead into the next targeted area of support services that participants could be providing this population which are formalized support initiatives that target homeless youth who are already on campus and enrolled in classes.

TABLE V

Formal institutional service levels

INSTITUTION	CAMPUS SUPPORT PROGRAM	SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT	TOTAL
A1	0	1	1
A2	3	3	6
B1	2	2	4
B2	0	1	1
B3	0	1	1
B4	3	3	6
C1	3	3	6
C2	2	3	5
C3	2	3	5
C4	0	0	0

Note: Interview responses were provided a score by the myself after the transcription process. Scores definitions are as follows: 0= no direct institutional support provided, 1= low support levels that are reactive to state requirements or limited to certain populations, 2= moderate levels of support that do serve housing insecure, but have limitations or restrictions, 3= strong levels of support that work on a holistic approach and adapt to remove barriers to support overtime.

Formalized institutional service results. Transparent admissions and financial aid resources described in the results section above are important for ensuring that students facing housing insecurity are able to access higher education, but what about what is needed to ensure that these at-risk students can succeed and reach a sense of stability once they enroll and pay for their coursework. Two different categories, single point of contact and campus support programs, of results are provided in Table V to reveal formal service levels for each participant. Similar to how the scale of measurement was developed for each category within Table IV these two areas were chose based on best practices introduced within chapter two of this report: having one person to be the contact for all questions homeless students may have and having an established campus support program that provides or refers to important resources and/or builds a sense of community amongst homeless students. However, unlike Table IV responses collected during interview questions guided the scale of measurement used for each category.

For example, the first category of support measured within the formal institutional support service levels is having a campus-based program that is for homeless students on each participant's college campus. The scale of measurement for this best practice was constructed based on the responses and service levels provided by each participant. A strong level of service provided by a campus support program would be one that is created to serve homeless student specifically offers different types of support including programming, referrals to resources, and emergency funds and has a named point of contact or program name. A moderate level of support would be a program built for groups of high-risk students that may include homeless students that provide similar services but is not targeted specifically to homeless students. A low level of support would be if programming and resources are available, but a named individual or program is not specifically tied to these resources, nor are they limited to homeless students.

Results for campus support programs provided more of a binary response either participants had campus support programs that were deemed strong A2, B4, C1 or moderate, B1, C2, C3 or none at all A1, B2, B3, and C4. From this we see there is truly no consistency within case studies as to whether support programs are being provided or not as each case study had examples of having them and not having them. If anything, A1 not a campus support program for homeless youth came as a surprise as they did have at least a low level of support for access and a single point of contact which shows at least a framework for formalizing services into a program is there. What was a consistent result amongst both categories was having a strong level of support for both a point of contact and formalized support program which was the case for A2, B4, and C1. Single points of contacts tend to be the foundation for these formal support programs and therefore were also the second category of measurement when questioning whether institutions provide formal supports as from research found in the literature review it appears campuses are more likely to have a point of contact than a full established program for homeless students.

For the second category of support, for the single point of contact participants either had one established who targeted homeless student specifically and assisted with the full process from applying to financial aid to finding resources, on and off campus, which would be a strong level support and a score of three. Where some said they have a single point of contact established for students coming from foster care who end up supporting homeless students as they tend to overlap, which would be a moderate level of support. Other participants said they had someone or some department on campus who was familiar with these students' needs that they could refer students to but did not have a designated point of contact on campus who specialized in homeless students.

The results of the single point of contact responses from participants were certainly more promising than the full picture that access service level results revealed. First, five participants, A2, B4, C1, C2, and C3, reported having a designated single point of contact for homeless students and were scored with a score of three and only one participant, C4, indicated not having a single point of contact for homeless students at all. One surprising result of these responses was that B4 was included as when asked if students had admissions or financial aid support this participant responded that they do not offer that and did not have any search results on their website that indicated having targeted support for homeless students. One participant, B1 indicated having moderate support which means someone is available and aware but is not solely focused on homeless students. Finally, the remaining three participants, A1, B2, and B3 indicated having someone that they could direct homeless students to but did not believe that person had been established as a single point of contact but instead an individual who works in an area that is more equipped to help.

TABLE VI

Basic Needs Support Service Levels

Participant	Food	Housing	Transportation	Emergency aid	Total
A1	3	2	1	2	8
A2	3	3	3	3	12
B1	3	2	0	2	7
B2	2	0	3	2	7
B3	2	1	0	2	5
B4	2	2	2	3	9
C1	3	3	2	2	10
C2	3	0	2	2	7
C3	2	2	1	2	7
C4	1	1	0	2	4

Note: Interview responses were provided a score by the myself after the transcription process. Scores definitions are as follows 0= no direct institutional support provided, 1= low support levels that may be outsourced or extremely limited, 2= moderate levels of support that are accessible but have limitations 3= strong levels of support that are accessible and have minimal restrictions or limitations.

Basic need service results. As explained in chapter two basic need supports aim to address supporting Maslow’s bottom level of hierarchy of needs, the physiological needs. These needs include somewhere to sleep, food to eat, the ability to access clothing and a means to get these resources where they are provided. Therefore, four categories of basic need service levels were measured based on the interview responses of each participant. These categories are food security, housing security, transportation support, and access to emergency funds. Method of measurement is consistent with the other two tables of results, which is a scale of measurement that demonstrates ranging from zero (no support being offered) to a three (strong level of support being offered).

For the category of food security, the myself used different service concepts to create a scale of measurement. Strong scores included service models that provided more than one type of support to all students on campus. These services could include a pantry that provides free food to all students, snack stations that offer easy on the go options from different areas on campus, a meal plan program that offers free swipes to students who cannot afford a meal plan, promotion of access to a local food cupboard or pantry that is in walking distance or has an option to be transported there from campus, or meal plan scholarships that offer free meal plans to high-need students who cannot cover the cost with financial aid. Moderate level of support, a score of two, would provide at least one of these options to all students on campus, low levels of support, a score of one, would be participants who provide one of these services to targeted students who have been identified to have the highest need. The results of this category demonstrated that strong levels of support were being provided by at least one participant from each case study. Also, every single participant provided some type of support to students to address food insecurity on their campus with only one participant providing low levels of support and all others demonstrating moderate to strong levels of support. For case study C two different participants were providing high levels of support, C1 and C2. However, case study C is also the state that has the only participant who provides low level of food security service. Case study A provided the strongest level of support for food insecurity with both participants scoring a three which means their response to this interview question provided more than one act available to all students to combat food insecurity on their campus. As for case study B, all four participants provide a moderate level of support which means that all four provide at least one service to all students to combat food insecurity on their campus.

The next category of support within the basic need table is housing services. As described within chapter one housing insecurity is common for students with a McKinney-Vento determination or those coming from foster care as many are couch surfing, doubled up with individuals who are not their biological parents, living in transitional housing or independent living facilities or even spending time in shelters between campus stays or during the academic year. Therefore, this basic need support is critical to providing a sense of stability and reassuring students that their physiological needs will be addressed while attending each participant's institution. The scale of measurement was applied to responses with strong levels of support being reserved for participants who provide on campus housing options to their students throughout the year without charging extra during breaks between academic terms, moderate levels of support being assigned to those who have on campus housing options year round but do have to apply additional charges to students accounts to use these facilities during break periods between academic terms, low levels of support being participants who can provide an option for housing being either on campus or off campus throughout the year but may require students to pay for these options or finds means to access them without transportation support, and no support being campuses that do not have resources to offer if their students identify as being homeless and need somewhere stable to sleep at night.

Results for housing insecurity service levels were not as strong or consistent as food security service levels. Only two, A and C, out of three case studies had at least one participant who demonstrated strong levels of support for housing security on campus year-round. Both case studies B and C had participants, B2 and C2, who offered no support for those who are housing insecure. In addition, case studies B and C also had two participants, B3 and C4, that demonstrated low levels of support for their housing insecure students. Participant C4 being the most concerning as a result as they also demonstrated having low levels of support for food insecurity as well. The most common result found for participants who spoke about how they address housing insecurity on their campus is to provide on-campus housing options but for an additional cost which was scored as a moderate level of support. All three case studies had at least one participant who provided this level of support. This result is an important finding as well as it leads us to our next area of concern when addressing basic needs which is how are low-income students without their own mode of transportation accessing housing options off campus if they are not being provided on campus by four different participants' institutions.

Although transportation is not an explicit example of a physiological need in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, results found within housing insecurity services demonstrate why it is important for students to have access to transportation to travel between classes and where they are sleeping as not all will be able to access on-campus housing that would eliminate this barrier to success. Responses from participants found that there are different types of supports that institutions can provide to support transportation needs. These included subsidized or free public transportation passes where available, funding to support gas or purchase of a vehicle, a free shuttle from campus to important locations off campus such as grocery stores, downtown areas, or even access to public transportation off campus. Participants who were scored with a strong level of support would be those who provided more than one of these types of supports to all of their students in need, moderate levels of support would be at least one type of support available in a limited quantity prioritized by need, and low support would be one off instances of supporting students who demonstrated having a need but not having a generalized plan to offer consistently to students.

Results for the transportation category of basic need service levels were also disappointing compared to housing and food security services. Unlike housing where the most common score was a moderate level of support, transportation saw the most frequent responses to be either moderate or none with three participants scoring either a two, B4, C1, and C2, or a zero, B1, B3, and B4. This is also the only category of basic need service levels where case study A had a participant, A1, that scored with a low level of support. However, only case studies B and C had participants with no support at all which demonstrated that overall case study A still had the more consistent level of support for transportation. Only two participants demonstrated strong levels of support, A2 and B2. As mentioned earlier, one of the relationships that I was hoping to find while reviewing transportation as a basic need was that participants with low or no housing services would at least have strong levels of support for transportation. This proves to be the case for participant B2 who has no housing support but does provide strong levels of transportation support. However, B3 and C4 have concerning service measurements for these two categories as both have low levels of housing security services, and no transportation support services.

Case Study Results. For results about each individual case study, data was gathered by conducting web searches and from interview responses. Web searchers were used to find out what state governments were promoting when it comes to the work of educating homeless youth in their state as well as any additional efforts that are relative to my research. Interview questions about what types of support are received from the state and if federal policy is needed were used to provide perspective from the administrators who are implementing any guidance handed down by the state. By reviewing both the guidance provided by leadership at the state level and the street level workers, which in this case are the college administrators who served as the participants in this study, I was hoping to learn how much is known by colleges who are creating campus supports and how much was being done without even knowing of their state government's efforts**.** What I found after reviewing state government sites and articles, was that states have different approaches to supporting their colleges in helping students access and complete college educations. These support services can be as simple as a directory of contacts at each college to a formal network of multiple agents and actors coming together in its own website and conference to learn from each other. One limitation of the formation of these case studies that I hope to address in future research was that state government policy makers and staff who oversee state support services were not interviewed as well. These perspectives would have helped me learn as to what the motive is behind each type of support service as well how they perceive these supports are meant to be used and how they are actually being used. This also means if there are resources being provided at the state level beyond what is published on websites than I am providing a shortsighted analysis of what states are attempting to provide colleges to help support homeless students with. With that said, there was still quite a bit of insight provided by the participants who did add perspective to my research that the results provided below are still reflective of what type of impact state level efforts are having on colleges and their interest in creating campus support programs. The combination of responses about the type of support participants were receiving from states, the state published resources, and the level of support campuses are providing homeless students is used to determine how much of an impact state support are having on colleges support of homeless students.

The first case study in my research study was the state of Georgia. It was determined that Georgia has the strongest level of support for colleges looking to do more for homeless students. This was based on Georgia having four out of 5 types of resources that were determined to be useful to college administrators. These four resources include having a formal state network known as Embark, having a directory of single points of contacts on college campuses, having a source of funding for colleges to use, and offering a formal training to college administrators who are looking to serve homeless students. As reviewed in chapter two of this report, the Embark network has provided annual training to its college administrators and outside agencies to share outcomes and needs to provide a safe place to learn from each other. I also learned from one of the participants from Georgia that funding is also available for colleges to apply to. This funding can help with new initiatives or with scholarships that can be paid directly to homeless students. Although my study only yielded two participants from Georgia it was clear based on these participants responses that they were aware they had a unique resource to rely on and would not have been able to offer what they have done so far without participating in the Embark network. However, performance in support services did not align with feedback on the usefulness of having a statewide network in Embark. The first participant in this study, A1, reported only having one resource to help with accessing their college and one resource to provide formal support. Participant A2 had much higher outcomes with strong levels of support for access and formal offerings. This proves to be an inconsistent match with the high level of support being provided by the state. However, both participants reported having strong levels of support for basic needs. It would be helpful to have more insight from other colleges to see if this trend of supporting overall basic needs more than targeted support for homeless youth is a trend, but alas I am limited to the input received at these two suburban colleges. Therefore, based on these measurements I am unable to confirm that a prominent level of state support results in a consistently strong level of direct support for homeless students on college campuses.

These results also held true when examining case study B, North Carolina. Four participants responses were combined with resources discovered in web searches to consider how North Carolina's efforts to support homeless youth compared to Georgia's. North Carolina only had one public resource for colleges to use which is a directory of single points of contact. This directory was used to identify participants; however, two of the participants were surprised that I found their information through the directory as they did not feel it was a resource that was easily found or used in their state. Participants also did not seem to feel they were getting enough or any support from their state in forming programs or services for homeless students. The results of this low-level support were not always consistent though with college service levels. For example, two out of four participants had formal support services that were stronger than the two participants out of Georgia. This means that two North Carolina colleges were doing a better job of providing homeless students with their own point of contact and formal program to assist them throughout their college experience. As for basic need service levels all four participants from case study B had strong areas of support services. This means that the motivation to support housing and food insecurity for students was motivated more by the college's experiences and findings than recommendations coming from the state. The only campus performance measurement that was aligned with North Carolina's low level of support was colleges' measurement of access service levels. This result ties back to an earlier point made within chapter two which is how helpful formal support and basic needs resources if students are unable to access the college to get to them.

Institutions from Pennsylvania, case study C, received a moderate level of support from their state government which includes a recently passed policy to have a single point of contact for all foster youth at each college within the state, which leads to a public listing available to both colleges and students, and as part of promoting this new required practice a new state wide training opportunity for college administrators who are new to being a single point of contact and are not familiar with the needs of foster youth is being provided. The primary goal of this legislation though is to provide last dollar scholarships to foster youth who qualify for Chafee and other gift aid but still have to cover a portion of their tuition and fees. One distinct difference here between these services and those reviewed in the previous case studies is they are for foster youth specifically and not all homeless students. As explained within the review of prior research for this report, foster youth are likely to spend time homeless or housing insecure so the overlap between populations is relevant enough to counts these resources, but there is concern about how students with a Mckinney-Vento determination and no official time in the foster care system would not have access to the same resources. However, results for how participants perceived Pennsylvania's support for colleges working with homeless youth were more similar to that of North Carolina's participants. Half of Pennsylvania participants did not know or understand the new legislation, especially the financial requirement for colleges to cover gap cost after gift aid for tuition and fees. One participant thought this would be a state grant program and did not realize the college had to cover the additional cost. This is not to say that Pennsylvania colleges are not doing more than what is being required for foster youth support. Three participants from this case study had strong levels of support services in both basic needs and formal programs for homeless students. Again, one of the campuses supports programs that contributed to a strong level of support result was specifically for foster youth. After speaking to these four participants about these new efforts for foster youth in Pennsylvania and how they will translate to support for all homeless students the commonality in response was that it is easier to identify and support foster youth than unaccompanied homeless youth. This result is not too surprising though since all four participants from case study C, Pennsylvania, had lower levels of support when it came to helping students access their colleges. One participant had no support established for access but had support for helping with basic need insecurity. Pennsylvania does have an established Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program that did manage to host trainings for secondary and college administrators through a campus connection series even before the Foster Education Waiver legislation passed. However, more participants were aware of the new legislation than they were of the campus connections series. Once again this demonstrates a disconnect in state efforts and campus awareness of support for homeless students.

Findings

This section of my report will review the themes that were developed from a combination of the results from my research study in combination with research analysis done from prior studies. The first theme discovered from my results is that prevalent mismatch between student needs and what campus services. In most cases, this mismatch is still evident even when a campus is providing multiple services to address known needs of homeless students. It is also clear that a mismatch was found throughout all three categories of results, access, basic needs, and formal supports. For example, the single point of contact model that was discussed with all participants, but more in depth with those who had implemented the model, does not seem to be consistently offering support to all homeless students as I would have assumed ahead of my research. Although all participants within this study acknowledged their role would be the closest to a single point of contact for homeless youth there was no consistency in title, expectations, transparency, and even familiarity with this responsibility. Only one participant had an established role of supporting homeless youth. Where others felt that their role was the most like the work and therefore did identify as the single point of contact even if they were not officially assigned the job. On the other hand, some of this comes out of barriers that come with only targeting one at-risk population at a time with resources like a single point of contact. For example, one participant from Pennsylvania did receive the assignment to operate as the single point of contact for foster youth. This individual acknowledged their role had crossover with the homeless population and therefore they could understand why people would reach out to them.

This realization would be more concerning, but the truth is it is common for higher education administrators to have many responsibilities and manage different initiatives that are not part of their official job title. In some cases, the role of supporting homeless youth was even self-appointed based on not having another established staff member to turn to. In these cases administrators are forced to look to the outside to see what they can learn from others who have worked with housing insecure students. For example, a participant in North Carolina serves as the single point of contact while also teaching as a full-time faculty member because of not knowing who to turn to but knowing students who need the support. The concern with this model is that the university may not to try to get her SPOC role turned into a separate position if it is successfully being accomplished by a volunteer. The leads to another challenge discovered during data analysis, which is at times the work being done for homeless students is not known by other administrators on the same campus let alone published on a website or within a job description. Based on this report's results those who have established campus support programs focused on supporting homeless students specifically did prove to be more likely to offer this a designated position dedicated to being the single point of contact. As pointed out by Hallet et al. (2019) the priorities of a university are set by the current leaders and policy makers of that institution; therefore, by not having single point of contact as an established part of an administrators' job descriptions this role is vulnerable to the interests of future leaders.

Another example of the mismatch between campus services and student needs is the concept of having emergency funding available to students facing financial hardship. With that said, homeless students tend to have limited options compared to their peers. They do not have parents they can either ask to assist with a payment plan, borrow from, or even use as a cosigner on their own loan. Trying to access financing on their own beyond the limited amount of federal loans they qualify for also is not an option as they have limited credit history at their ages and rarely have the social capital to assist with cosigning in absence of parents. The ability to work enough hours also tends to be a struggle as students would have to find time around their demanding class and study schedules. When financial aid is not enough, many schools are turning to their advancement offices and foundations to assist with raising emergency funds or scholarship funds that will target out of pocket gaps their students are facing. However, one institution explained that working with donors is much easier for developing pantries and addressing food insecurity than it is to raise for housing insecurity or foster youth. The understanding of this institution is that is because more people can relate to their experiences of living on ramen and junk food while in college than coming from foster care or to college without any stable housing or social capital. This is when universities implement emergency aid strategies to help keep students enrolled and for lack of a better word surviving during their time in college. Several participants responded "yes" they offer emergency funding, but when describing how much is offered, how it is offered, how frequently can it be offered and to whom it is offered there were clear inconsistencies in how emergency aid was supporting homeless students on different campuses. This led to my realization that the practice of offering emergency aid is being treated more like a checkbox than a part of a campuses culture or strategic mission. Most institutions were eager to state they offer emergency funding to help students with unexpected costs or living expenses if they came down on challenging times. Yet the methods in which these funds were awarded as well as the frequency did differ from school to school. A participant in North Carolina has a fund through the provost's area that allows students to apply for awards that range between five-hundred and one- thousand dollars; however, this fund can only be used for emergency expenses that are not associated with the cost of the university itself. Therefore, as explained by the administrator at the school, students will work to bypass this limitation by requesting funding for rent and then using their rent money to help cover their balance. Many explained that students could apply one time per term or one time per year and some even had committees that had to review and select recipients due to limited resources. Therefore, if homeless students have a transportation or a medical emergency within the same term, they could be asked to choose between which issue to resolve or may need to end up taking a break from enrollment in order to work more to afford these critical needs that all of us have as adults. Ideally, emergency aid would be able to be a lifeline to assist when financial aid has done all they can with the significant costs that can occur when students have no parental support. This also includes making sure students have what they need in regard to eating as another mismatch in service and student needs was addressing hunger on campuses.

For food insecurity, responses missed the long-term goal of making sure all students have access to healthy food that would not only fight hunger during class time while on campus, but give them the energy as needed while working on completing a degree no matter what time of day and where they were. As a result, part of the finding from this mismatch in service and needs resulted from my own interview question focusing on what was being offered to feed students on campus instead of asking do all homeless students have a means to always eat during their period of enrollment. Instead, the focus was when looking at students in campus housing with meal plans costs. According to one participant in this student a solution that students manage to navigate on their own was to reduce their meal plan to the smallest option and thus the more affordable meal plan option. However, the most common response was to have on-campus food pantries that offered mostly non-perishable but at times perishable items to students in need. This strategy to address food insecurity, similar to reduced or discounted meal plans, is still a narrow approach to the broad issue of food insecurity that requires broader efforts. Homeless students may be cutting costs by living with a friend or staying at a shelter instead of paying for on-campus housing. Therefore, if they are not on campus between classes to access dining services or have to work during the hours of operation of a food pantry then neither of these solutions would meet their needs. All three states had significant counts of food insecurity initiatives including pantries, meal swipe programs, and snack shelves for students. All but two colleges interviewed had food pantries or some sort of model in place to contribute food assistance on campus. These other models included spaces within departments to distribute snacks or pick-up to-go items for those who might not have time between classes to make it to the dining hall. Although these are useful methods to help students while they are on campus it does not address a few different barriers that come with relying on a food pantry. First, a place to store and prepare food. Many colleges that require meal plans do so because their on-campus housing units do not have their own individual kitchens. If housing does provide access to a kitchen, then the next barrier is having something to prepare it with, eat it with, and store any leftovers once they are prepared. Since as discussed when reviewing financial barriers, most homeless students do not have disposable income to support costs beyond their college bill and therefore kitchen supplies, microwaves, and mini refrigerators feel like luxury items that are not high on the priority list. These barriers and additional costs is why students rely so heavily on prepared food they can purchase from a meal plan. However, both pantries and meal plan support do not address students who are unable to live on campus due to housing not being an option, most community colleges, or trying to cut costs son their college bill due to limited financial aid and therefore choosing to stay doubled-up or within transitional housing placements. Another potential threat to relying solely to on-campus food sources is those who have to work between classes and after classes to afford their living and educational expenses as well as meet criteria for important benefits that could help them long-term such as food stamps. These concerns about scheduling, costs, and how to support basic needs like feeding themselves day in and out are the types of concern homeless students must weigh when considering dedicating precious resources to the idea of attending college. However, one of the more frequent mismatches of services provided and support needed found within this study's results also plays a key role in student's decision-making processes, and that is the lack of support found during the admissions process.

Admissions results from this study, consistently show that colleges are more dedicated to offering support to homeless students once they arrive on their campus but have yet to figure out how to meet the needs of students who are applying or even just visiting their colleges. This is concerning as prior research shows that a large population of graduating high seniors who are suffering from housing insecurity do not even consider college as an option due to the instability they are facing in their day-to-day lives. What can seem like simple parts of the process for their peers are exasperated by limited resources. Examples of standard tasks in the process that homeless students may see as barriers are, the cost of application and deposit fees, transportation needed to visit the campus or attend admitted student days (which usually result in fee waivers), completing medical requirements such as physical or immunizations, filling out the applications for financial aid which default to asking for parent information, not having support to move into campus, not having a way to get to the bookstore or a reliable address to have textbooks shipped to, and not having necessary supplies or technology for dorm room or class. All these processes take place before a student steps foot into a classroom and therefore impact whether a homeless student can access a college education even if they were an extremely successful high school student who is eager to attend. Therefore, it is critical for them to have connections on-campus and learn of additional support as well as resources that will be available early on to them to help them decide about attending that college or college in general. For example, if students learn during an acceptance student day or campus tour that there are break periods in housing and are unaware of exceptions made for their at-risk group, they may decide that it is too risky to enroll on a residential campus that would result in them facing housing insecurity again within a few months. It might seem natural to college administrators that these students would then want to identify as homeless youth and ask about exceptions early on but keeping in mind that first-generation students lack the network of support or encouragement needed to question policy or navigate how to start those conversations if a guidance counselor at the high school or another advocate is not involved or even aware of their situation. Limiting resources to responses about having someone who can make referrals or questions to help students identify after they matriculate is a mismatch in serving students and addressing these barriers. In addition to assisting the student with better understanding of how the college may be a better fit, having early-on identification mechanisms will also assist with the actual completion of college applications. As Klitzman (2018) points out applying to college comes with its own expenses including application fees, transcript fees, exam fees and finding assistance with getting to an exam. Therefore, if students do not have proper guidance during the college search process and proper support from the Admissions office, they may be immediately discouraged from applying to colleges or limit their interests and opportunities to institutions who are able to provide waivers or help defer costs until financial aid is available. Even though the administrators interviewed for this study shared having some level of support for homeless students with diverse needs, if they are not supported in identifying this population early on then how would they know to support students with these types of resources?

Considering responses from participants about inconsistent means of identifying homeless students as well as serving similar at-risk populations that may lead to crossover is part of what led to the development of the next finding I will address in this chapter is the need to stop separating independent at-risk students into separate categories. Foster youth, students at risk of homelessness, unaccompanied homeless youth, and other independent students are considered different populations of students with various levels of student support services. However, the outcomes that led them to be without parents, and what age they were when they left care do not seem to matter when looking at what they need to be successful in college now. Many support services are not open to all independent students, but instead a subpopulation of independent students that meet certain criteria. However, after seeing similarities in needs sand services during the course of this research study, the outcome should be what motivates campuses to form support programs and address needs instead of the cause. Looking back on my results from this research study there were multiple incidents in both Pennsylvania and North Carolina when participants stated that they were a single point of contact for a population that was inclusive of homeless students. For participants in case study C, Pennsylvania institutions, recent legislation caused confusion in requirements and even in understanding differences students needing to be served by a newly mandated single point of contact. This is because although all institutions in Pennsylvania are required to have a single point of contact for foster youth this does not automatically extend into serving homeless youth in the same way. With that said, these participants responded that legislative guidance has caused confusion in requirements and understanding needs of the students. Although all institutions are required to have a single point of contact for foster youth who qualify for the fostering independence waiver, this does not automatically extend into serving homeless youth in the same way and make it confusing as to who these administrators should be targeting. There were also participants from this study who explained that although they would still serve housing insecure students the same way they would serve students coming from foster care the single point of contact has only been established for foster youth. This discrepancy means there can be a lack of access and awareness for housing insecure students who may need the same resources but do not have the same level of outreach targeting them.

Another challenge that comes with not knowing all the students is that participants are trying to serve is this prevents having clear means of identifying students both during the application process and while they are currently enrolled students. Within the results of this study, I learned that none of the colleges could confirm if students could self-identify as homeless on their college admissions application. However, even if they could, that might not be enough if the single point of contact on their campuses are looking for foster youth only for their support services. Also, I learned while reviewing prior research for my literature review that not all students who qualify for McKinney-Vento support services identify as homeless as they are staying in some type of shelter or doubled-up situation. Also, since determinations can include at-risk of homelessness forming a question that captures all students with housing and food insecurity seems to be part of the challenge Admissions offices are facing when trying to identify students who can be using support services on their campuses. The real question is should this population be inclusive of all students who are determined to be facing poverty, which can be done by focusing on those who qualify for a Pell grant. I have to consider this after learning that living in poverty can result in living paycheck to paycheck and as a result students would be adopting a survival mentality versus having the luxury to save, plan, and rely on social networks to support advancement in careers. These are the types of students and scenarios participants were describing during the course of this study when speaking to why they formed the support services their campuses offer. Yet, most participants still were targeting a unique population within their larger population of independent or Pell eligible students as they believe that designated group of students need help more than others. However, while learning where some were serving more and others less the question remains why use labels at all. I found that it might be best to make resources known to all since the issue of housing insecurity, McKinney-Vento determinations, Chafee eligibility, and dependency overrides are so complex. Understanding these complexities within housing insecure populations will allow practitioners to make more accurate determinations about who qualifies for support (Hallet et al., 2019, p.3). This means understanding those who may have somewhere to go at the end of each day but asking if that location is fixed or temporary, because if temporary these are the students who are at-risk of requesting housing support or financial support for housing mid-year. Investing in this research and helping students connect with on-campus housing or more stable options locally can also help with budgetary planning and retentions strategies as, the cost of living now accounts for about half of a student's cost of attendance (HUD, 2015). Even for groups of foster and homeless youth students who are being targeted with campus support services, the GAO’s report from 2016 I reviewed within chapter two explains that the nation is still seeing concerning outcomes for both rates of accessing a college and completing a college education. Results for this report also proved to be inconsistent when comparing the level of support state governments are offering colleges and how that relates to colleges' level of service. This brings me to the next theme that evolved during data collection and analysis, which is the formation of networks as a means to address gaps in current policies and as an acknowledgement that some participants also experience mismatches between services and those served as reviewed within my results.

The final theme that emerged from findings within this report is the one that most relates to the research question I presented at the beginning of this study, are state efforts to support institutions of higher education resulting in improved service levels for homeless students on college campuses. This goal of my research report was to initially find if levels of effort measured within state governance activities related to the measurement of service levels found on college campuses using responses from participants from a sample of each case study's institutions. Results show that unfortunately the level of state support measured by looking at number of resources offered, such as assigning single points of contact, have led to inconsistent efforts on college campuses. Therefore, these state efforts prove to not be enough to create consistent service levels for homeless youth at institutions within that state. However, a phenomenon that was discovered and did seem to have more impact than other efforts was the formation of state networks in both case study A and case study C. These state networks surfaced because of vague federal directive within policies which resulted in policy gaps when trying to support homeless students. After collecting data and forming three case studies via web searches as part of the preliminary research conducted, state networks were discovered to provide more information than state government websites for both Georgia, case study A, and Pennsylvania, case study C. Georgia's network has its own website, branding (Embark), annual conference and training opportunities, a single point of contact directory, and responses from this study revealed that students are more likely to have a single point of contact available to connect them to resources if the university is part of a network or has passed legislation requiring them to do so. With that said, North Carolina and Georgia both had more established roles dedicated to supporting homeless youth than Pennsylvania whose colleges were more focused on foster youth when asked about single points of contact. This does not come as a surprise though as Pennsylvania recently passed state legislation that requires singles points of contact for foster youth at each post-secondary institution within the commonwealth. This proves that these measures for accountability are necessary if we want all institutions of higher education to provide the same opportunities to this at-risk population. If federal legislation is not going to address the inequities in how McKinney-Vento benefits students in secondary but not in higher education, then network formation is the best way for higher education administrators to share lessons learned and create a hub for collaborative solutions. This was found not only in reviewing the results of web searches for each case study but also in hearing feedback of how state level efforts were impacting work. Participants from Georgia seemed more confident that the existence of the Embark network was having an impact on their work compared to responses received from North Carolina and Pennsylvania participants about state level support. Pennsylvania seems close to having a formal network, but there seems to be a struggle going on about who this network will serve (foster youth only or homeless youth as well) This conflict ties back to our second theme of discovery which is that population mismatch with services is a limitation of serving homeless students on college campuses.

Summary

In conclusion, results from interview responses and case study analysis demonstrate that there is no correlation between the level of state resources and college service levels for homeless students. If this relationship existed, we would expect participants from case study A, Georgia, to consistently provide more supports to homeless students than participants from the other two case studies since Georgia offered the most resources to colleges. However, participants from North Carolina and Pennsylvania had responses that showed similar and at times stronger service levels to those in Georgia. Also, service levels themselves proved to be inconsistent when reviewing the three categories of support: access, basic needs support, and formal support offerings for homeless students. Participants with strong levels of support for one or two areas still had deficits in other areas. Most frequently those deficits were seen in supporting homeless students in accessing their college due to low levels of support within admissions, financial aid, and website resources. After reviewing results both for institutional performance and within case study analysis three themes surfaced as findings from this exploratory study. The first theme was a mismatch in needs and services being provided. Although some of the strongest results came from basic needs service levels the types of services being provided were still limited in scope and provided a short-term solution to large scale issues such as food and housing insecurities. The second finding of this study was that the populations being served by both colleges and states did not reach all students who suffer from housing insecurity. Colleges and states either limit resources to foster youth alone or students who were considered unaccompanied homeless youth alone. However, identifying students with at-risk circumstances in both populations as well as those who are escaping abuse and abandonment resulting in mid-enrollment overrides of statuses is a recognition that all students should receive the same service level as they all face the same needs including stable housing and access to food. Finally, the third finding that I discovered after reviewing results is that states should replicate Georgia's state network as a coordinated public management solution to responding to policy gaps found at the federal level. This final theme emerged after reviewing responses about state level support and interest in legislative action as well as a review of recently passed legislation in Pennsylvania. Participants who had other outside administrators and agents to partner with to find solutions to an array of challenges and barriers facing homeless students seemed to be more impacted by the state level resources available. Results and findings of this study were impacted by changes taking place over the course of this study and therefore I hope that continued future research can help confirm or deny the themes that were found during the analysis of results within my report.

It is also important to note while reviewing findings in this report, that during this research study the COVID-19 pandemic swept through our nation and caused some additional barriers for both students and universities in providing basic needs resources. Colleges and universities nationwide had to shut down their campuses and shift learning to a remote or hybrid model including those coming from at-risk situations with unstable lives outside of college. This resulted in not only financial concerns but also an increase in mental health concerns for students including increased cases of anxiety and depression (Amechi, M., 2020). Response to COVID was the loss of dining facilities resulting in more students needing to be equipped to feed themselves whether through funds to have food delivered and or making sure they had basic kitchen supplies and access to a kitchen to cook for themselves. Pantries also proved to be essential during this critical time as meal plans and some restaurants who may have taken meal plans swipe cards were no longer available. CARES Act funding did provide a very much needed resource for colleges to pull from to support students with direct payment of emergency funds to assist with expenses related to the COVID-19 pandemic (Black, L., & Taylor Z. W., 2021). Finally trying to quarantine campus residents and students in general created additional concerns over mental health as students within this population are already lacking in social capital. These changes are certainly necessary but only support on of the at-risk groups that were considered in this study while leaving colleges to try to address additional support for their homeless youth that were not coming through foster care. During one interview, that took place only a few weeks after the national emergency declaration and passage of the CARES Act, a participant explained that emergency funds had to be extended to purchase 20 laptops to students who would not have access to computer labs on campus to prepare for remote learning. Several interviews that happened in the following months notated how their housing offerings usually would be more targeted and limited during breaks, but in a time of crisis they have learned to be more flexible and accommodating in order to avoid risk to both the student and the individuals of the living situations they may be returning to. Another participant explained that when emergency housing was announced after the shutdown of their campus, they learned of two more students that were homeless and qualified for their program as they explained they had nowhere else to go. Still there is also another group who is newly identified as housing insecure due to lost employment and income and is now facing homelessness because of the pandemic. Community colleges in general are difficult as few offer dormitories on campus and therefore have to rely on making referrals to affordable housing or shelters within their region. Crutchfield et. al. (2019) confirms this is concerning after explaining that housing insecure students are 60 percent more likely to attend community colleges than their peers who have stable housing (p. 6). This participant also explained that he was recently contacted about data on how many of his students were parents and using these services and his response was that 100 percent of his students who either had children or got pregnant while enrolled chose to leave school and therefore he had a “chicken and the egg situation...” meaning students were not staying because they did not have affordable options and therefore could not report how many would use them since there are no current students who would qualify. If this is the case, without affordable options in place for childcare proper assessment cannot be done on whether students are more likely to be successful with these resources. These examples all demonstrate how changes in life outside of campus can disrupt and create new challenges for vulnerable homeless students who rely on campus for much of their daily support. Therefore, by identifying themes such as a mismatch in services and needs, limitations in who is being served, and the need for more collaborative support efforts in the form of networks my research is shedding light on the foundational issues that colleges should question while building out campus supports.

Chapter V Conclusion

Within this concluding chapter of my report both implications, lessons learned from findings, recommendations, what can be done to address findings, will be presented. Based on the results and findings reviewed in chapter four, there are multiple targeted audiences for this chapter including institutions, legislators, and researchers who could expand upon this work. Implications and recommendations developed from this research are outlined in the same format as the findings in the previous chapter to address all three themes that emerged within my report. However, the recommendations section needed to be done by each targeted audience to address the implications from the themes examined. This approach allows me to be more specific with whom action items should be directed to. This also allows readers from different fields to target the set of recommendations that they have more direct ties to and could potentially implement in their own line of work. For example, college administrators would want to focus on the recommendations within institutional support as they speak to directly serving students. Where readers who work more closely with a governing body or non-profit organization may want to focus more on the recommendations directed toward legislators. With that said, the future research and implications sections of this chapter, are not meant solely for those who would be conducting the research in additional studies, but also for those who are interested on how to best address the limitations outlined in chapter three of this study. Limitations of this study were inclusive of not examining a large enough sample to determine if there is a significant link between state level efforts and campus level efforts. This is also mindful of how the covid-19 pandemic influenced the need for additional research as several new means of servicing students that addressed the need to be flexible while in a public health crisis altered and expanded responses from participants over the course of this research study. Therefore, lessons learned including how types of institutions are limited in service level response are included within both the implications and the recommendations introduced in this chapter. Finally, the conclusion of this chapter will respond to my research questions while presenting a notion for why this study is significant to both the fields of higher education and public administration.

Implications

Institutions

Colleges are learning how to become more responsive to the needs of students outside of the classroom with results from this research showing some of the strongest levels of support are addressing basic needs insecurity. However, there appears to be a disconnect on what is actually needed to provide a long-term solution to both concerns about homeless students accessing colleges and having long-term stable solutions to common issues including food and housing insecurities. Most participants in this study are in the early stages of building out food pantries, single points of contact models, and emergency aid. Therefore, some of the cause behind this finding of a mismatch between service levels and needs could be due to a learning curve administrator still have as this work developing. This also explains some of the responses that led to the emergence of the second finding in my report, colleges do not know who to target or how to identify all students who need the novel support programs they are building. Many hope that by having an open food pantry on campus or an emergency aid application on their website then all students who need resources and funds are finding and completing those forms. There also appears to still be a misguided notion that students without stability outside the classroom will self-identify and ask for what they need to be successful.

However, the findings of this report show that labels and stigma continue to be issues in serving the population of students who need it the most. Students who age out of foster care before attending college do not always know that single points of contact for foster youth programs are for them, students sleeping on friends' couches might not identify as homeless and ask for break housing, and students escaping abuse and requesting dependency overrides might not realize that they also fall under the same at-risk independent student population that should be served by homeless and foster youth campus support programs. Institutions might feel that they are building a successful model, but my findings show there are still concerns overreaching the students who need the services and providing a service that will eliminate barriers to success. Acknowledging students’ day to day challenges with basic needs is the understanding that housing and more importantly the lack of adequate, stable, and safe housing contributes to the academic performance of students in higher education. Related to the challenges of not asking for students to identify early in the admission process as well as not having a known point of contact for them to identify with is the lack of research being done on university campuses about the level of housing security being experienced by their student population Responses from participants revealed that many support services were not being avoided because of lack of interest from the college administration but instead due to limited resources and concern with administrative burden leading to inconsistent efforts. These findings are why the final theme of needing a state network to support administrator is an appropriate response to these continued barriers in service.

Additional challenges can be explained just by looking at the type of institution each participant was working at. For example, private institutions tend to be more expensive and therefore without increased access to federal and state aid programs the institution must provide larger discount rates to homeless independent students to make themselves an affordable option. Another example is very few two-year institutions offer campus housing options and therefore struggle with providing what would appear to be the most crucial resource to help homeless students. Before policy can be used to address gaps identified both in prior reports, such as the GAO report, and my own research, a better understanding of what is needed, and an informed policy window would need to exist. Since responses to interview questions and case study findings have resulted in learning of inconsistent service decisions and concerns over matching services to students in need more work still needs to be done to better understand best practices. This includes a clear need for training as many participants were assigned a single point of contact title as an add-on to a job description that may or may not be relative to the work. Participants seemed to be learning from the questions being asked in many cases instead of sharing the best practices from their experiences and what they have learned. If participants are not aware of who to serve, what they need, and what others are doing to measure success in serving homeless students than having resources built out is not enough to make an impact on concerning access and success rates of homeless students in higher education.

State Governments

State governments seem to accept that there is a policy gap in servicing homeless students in higher education as all three case studies had at least one example of providing a resource to colleges and universities. Based on the findings presented in this study the level of support participants are receiving from their state governments does not directly correlate to the level of service they are providing homeless students. In addition, there is an inconsistent service model being presented to colleges so even if there was a direct correlation there would be a nationwide concern of inconsistent impact on the overall success rates of homeless students looking to earn a college degree. This is not to say there is a measurable impact in state's efforts, but as demonstrated in Case Study B's finding colleges are still finding ways to provide resources and support homeless students even if they are not provided a statewide network, policy, or financial support to guide them in their practices. Although only recently passed during the course of this study, the statewide legislation passed in case study C, Pennsylvania, also did not lend itself to consistent enough findings amongst the four participants to argue that legislation in place of a statewide network would prove to be effective on its own. Participants in this state still felt they had much to learn and had questions about the interview questions being presented. States also seem to be learning as they go based on the findings of this report as some are developing websites designated to serving students who identify as homeless where others re adding resources targeting colleges and what they may need to support homeless students. One population that did not get a voice in my research study is administrators who work for the state in the secondary public education system. These could be district workers who are assigned the mandated McKinney-Vento liaison role or guidance counselors who tend to be the only adults in homeless students' lives who are presenting the idea of college. States would benefit to connect these two populations to of administrators, those in secondary and those in higher education, to not only help them learn from each other but learn what is needed to support both systems. McKinney-Vento and ESSA policy guidance focus more on homeless students being able to stay in school and complete high school, but little is done to support students in preparing for adulthood when compared to legislative guidance directed at students in the foster care system. There is no funding for independent living and tuition costs and no extension of services that go beyond high school or a student's eighteenth birthday. Recognition of the overlap in needs between homeless students and students in foster care is not reflective in the policies published to guide educators in serving them. This leaves educators at the secondary level to be on their own as well in deciding how to best guide and navigate what homeless students should be doing outside of the classroom or after graduation. These implications of my findings demonstrate why networks are part of the final theme emerging from this study's results. It is clear to see there is a need to bring educators from high schools and colleges together with other non-profit and agencies that support foster youth as well as those who serve people who are housing and food insecure.

Federal Government

There was one consistent concern when participants responded to questions about what can be done to help improve knowledge of and service for homeless students and that was "one size does not fit all". This concern makes sense after reviewing the implications of how different types of colleges and universities have diverse needs and barriers when trying to support homeless students. The feedback from participants is a concern that policies do not take these differences into consideration which can result in causing more harm than good. The 2016 GAO report does provide a set of recommendations based on their findings on how institutions can address gaps in access and completion rates for homeless and foster youths in college, but they also do not address how different colleges might have to address these recommendations differently. For example, larger institutions may need more than one single point of contact or may need to expand that model into a full department in order to best serve their larger population of students. Academically competitive institutions may need to consider transparency in what criteria is needed to be accepted or promote any alternative pathways to their institutions such as a summer bridge programs or partnerships with community colleges for students looking to transfer. Another consideration is how the location of campuses influence the resources that they offer. For example, campuses located in suburban and urban regions are more likely to be located closer to grocery stores and therefore can offer gift cards or monetary contributions to purchase groceries, but campuses in rural areas might be in what are known as food deserts and therefore a more critical need could be transportation to grocery stores. Understanding that different types of colleges create unique needs is the reason so many participants worried that a policy would be too general and not address different challenges faced by a diverse landscape of higher education institutions. Therefore, participants from this study seemed more interested in financial and training resources that could be provided at the federal level instead of legislation. If the street level bureaucrats who are expected to implement policies are not supportive of amended or new policies that require support for homeless students, then there is argument that there is not enough to support for a policy window to welcome new legislation.

Recommendations

Institutions

As noted within findings one theme from this research study is the mismatch in services being offered and the needs those services are aiming to address. The implication of this mismatch is colleges are wrongly reporting that they support homeless students but are potentially not reaching the students who need help or are not providing the right kind of support to lead to systemic change. For example, an established single point of contact was one of the more frequently reported resources by participants in this study. However, those single points of contact also admitted they did not have enough time to dedicate to the level of support that is needed by homeless students as this duty was not a primary task within their job description. To address this administrative burden as well as the gap in services, each university should include multiple areas of campus administration and faculty in the development of a formal campus support program. Hallet et al. (2019) recommends the following areas to be included: Admissions, counseling, academic affairs, financial aid, faculty representation, financial aid, and the registrar's offices. These areas would help with duties such as identifying students in a timely fashion and connecting them to critical resources such as housing, need-based aid, prioritizing registration, and academic supports including tutoring and writing centers. For departments that are not directly supporting members of the campus support program, training opportunities should be made available to teach how to identify students and have a better understanding of their needs to help avoid issues with academic performance and completion. Naming conventions are also important when building these campus support programs as the right name can assist with reducing stigma. By creating unique institutional names for programs that highlight supporting students facing housing insecurity instead of using the word homeless in their name of the program (Hallet et al., 2019). Providing students' voices in the continuous development of campus support programs will also promote positive experiences and an ongoing understanding of their changing needs. Based on the research provided by Becker et al. (2009), it is important to have a variety of voices engage with the planning and implementation of resource services provided by the campus support program. Many students who qualify for a McKinney-Vento determination do not identify as homeless so by including the word "homeless" in a program title, administrators may be turning students off to the notion of engaging. For example, some students may still have extended family, friends, or coaches to turn to where others may not and therefore levels of need and types of resources may vary from student to student. This point leads to another important recommendation to address mismatch in service levels and needs, the importance of improving support for access to institutions. Results from this study showed that most participants had low levels of support for homeless students during the application stage. This included not having a way to identify on applications, not having a trained admissions staff to help address what resources can be used to assist with needs like break housing, and not having a financial aid resource available to help with completing applications and navigating costs. Based on these results I recommend that institutions take three steps to help identify students and promote their campus offerings to unaccompanied homeless students. These include adding a question to any type of questionnaire or original enrollment intake that asks students to identify as housing or food insecure, working with financial aid to communicate campus offerings for foster and unaccompanied homeless students to those who have identified as either or on their FAFSA, and publishing the contact information for their single point of contact as well as information about a campus support program within a resource library that can easily be found using a search tool on the institution's website. These recommendations will help institutions better learn of the demand they are facing with exceptional housing needs and food services as well as help the students acknowledge avenues of support early on in their career and not only when they are in crisis.

Since most institutions are concerned that having a question on their admissions application could cause concern with equity in application review and potential concern over stigma, including housing and food insecurity questions within a questionnaire that is requested from all students after they matriculate negates these concerns. A private institution in PA who includes housing security questions on their new student questionnaire explained that by doing so they can assess who will need access to the dorms that stay open over breaks before move-in. This proves to be helpful the administrator explained since otherwise students were not identifying needing housing over breaks until the first break period in housing. Many first-generation students would not even know to ask for this early on as they lack the knowledge of a college experience that would typically be passed down by parents who attended college (Becker et al., 2009). With that said, based on the findings of this research it is still recommended that every single point of contact at least have a colleague within Admissions that is trained on how to identify unaccompanied homeless youth and kept informed on the exceptions and resources that are made available. This administrator will then be able to not only inform applicants and high school guidance offices of opportunities for unaccompanied homeless youth but will then also introduce students who may have more questions directly to the single point of contact. If districts have identified a group of students who are graduating or getting ready to apply to college this Admissions representative may also want to offer an information session or more targeted high school visit to support this population and address any concerns that may be more unique to their inadequate or flux living situations. Also, by having a contact in Admissions the institution can better assist with application expenses such as waiving the cost of application fees and connecting the student with the single point of contact or campus program administrator who may have emergency funds to assist with all application expenses including transcript fees and accessing waivers for exam fees. Klitzman (2018) explains that not all campuses have access to the same resources including staffing and access to the same types of community support but without someone to guide students to the resources that are in existence, homeless students are left to navigate these complex infrastructures by themselves. Therefore, single points of contact should compile the resources they do have including staff with information about basic needs support to help create a proactive support program and resource guide for homeless students.

State governments: A primary challenge of gaining support for homeless youth in higher education is that it is not considered a “legitimate political issue...” and therefore legislative efforts presented in the past have fallen flat to generate a consistent national policy for universities to operate under (Klitzman, 2018, p. 592). This is because homeless students only make up a fraction of both the total homeless population in the nation as well as the total low-income and therefore at-risk college student population (Klitzman, 2018). Universities should not feel they have to operate alone in developing support programs and creating resources for students facing housing insecurity, instead connections with local and state resources that serve the needs of individuals facing basic needs and housing insecurity should be made. Therefore, states should not only be working to provide directories of contact information at each college or university in their state, but also making sure they have created a network of support that provides opportunities for sharing resources including trainings, funding opportunities for students and to support formal campus support programs. Directories of who single points of contact tend to be targeting homeless students and their advocates more but if anything, Embark in Georgia is a strong example, but they are also based within an institution that received grant funding to initiate work. For future networks, states should fund these initiatives themselves and house information in a neutral location that is managed by state employees such as their state department of education departments. If states already have webpages or resources that are focused on McKinney-Vento liaisons including webpages or conferences these resources should be expanded to points of contact within higher education institutions. Administrators from North Carolina confirmed they were aware of their information being shared on a public website but were concerned that was the only support coming from their state. Pennsylvania’s PHEAA website explains the requirements of points of contact within colleges for foster youth but does not provide any training material or opportunities for shared information. Therefore, in order to provide consistency in what both students and administrators have access to the Embark model of information sharing, funding opportunities, and annual trainings should be the model for each state government when expanding out McKinney-Vento liaison resources to be inclusive of higher education. Annual meetings and data sharing especially are key practices that should be replicated as it provides a means to create a statewide plan and trend analysis that can be used to guide the support for all students no matter their choice in institution or academic plan. It will also help the state determine what shortfalls in support or funding need to be addressed to support points of contact and liaison at the secondary level simultaneously.

Although we saw participants from each case study have already started to formulate and target services via formalized campus support programs for homeless youth, these campuses should be given a platform and incentive to report out data of student performance to guide policy revisions and support requests for targeted federal aid for this population. Embark provides an avenue for this during their annual conference in Georgia, but if states were to collect data from every college on how many homeless college students are being served, how many are coming from foster care, their cumulative grade point average, cost and debt information, as well as a summary of the types of support they needed to stay enrolled then states could perform analysis of what is being seen on campuses in order to better inform practices for colleges and make policy recommendations to federal government. Establishing a network for colleges to participate in will also give them the ability to share information and guidance between each other to learn how each is addressing challenges that may not be unique to their institution. For example, community colleges still have a difficult time offering stable housing as few have their own dormitories on campus and have to rely on making referrals to affordable housing or shelters within their region. Crutchfield et. al. (2019) confirms this is concerning after explaining that housing insecure students are 60 percent more likely to attend community colleges than their peers who have stable housing (p. 6). Another example of a challenge that seemed to be evident for all participants in this study is supporting students who are parents and trying to balance how to provide resources when it comes to childcare or even flexible coursework delivery so there is less of a need for full-time childcare. One participant from this study explained that he was recently contacted about data on how many of his students were parents and using these services and his response was that 100 percent of his students who either had children or got pregnant while enrolled chose to leave school and therefore he had a "chicken and the egg situation..." meaning students were not staying because they did not have affordable options and therefore could not report how many would use them since there are no current students who would qualify. If this is the case, without affordable options in place for childcare proper assessment cannot be done on whether students are more likely to be successful with this resource. Networks are a helpful tool when looking to solve these types of complex problem as change agents and outside providers can teach campus professionals of other options such as subsidies for childcare and transportation, transitional housing, benefit information, etc. Sometime the resources are there to resolve the barrier to students being able to earn a college degree but both campus professionals and students are not aware of them. This knowledge and solution sharing could then not only assist homeless students but all low-income students on their campuses who may face changes in their personal lives that result in them needing very similar resources.

Federal government

The recommendations for the federal government I make within this section are a result not only from the themes that emerged out of this research, but also the clear policy gaps when it comes to being inclusive of higher education in current legislation that aims to support homeless students. Lawmakers need to be more intentional about including higher education guidance within amendments and reauthorization to existing policies that aim to serve both foster and homeless students. These policies should also address the needs of both students and colleges outside of the classroom/ Although the McKinney-Vento Act addresses the need to provide additional support for college access to unaccompanied homeless youth, the federal government has not passed legislation that requires post-secondary institutions to support housing insecurity. In addition to offering year-round housing upfront to students who identify as housing insecure early on it is also recommended not to charge students for the additional break housing. Students are more likely to take advantage of year-round housing and provide themselves with a stable long-term arrangement if they do not have to find additional funds to pay for extended stays on-campus. This will also allow them to save any earnings made during those breaks in enrollment to help cover other educational and basic need costs such as books and their next tuition bill. Therefore, by not only offering break housing but avoiding additional charges institutions may also be saving fund during the academic year with fewer emergency aid and book scholarship requests as well as increasing their persistence rates for this at-risk group of students. On the surface this sounds like an institutional recommendation, but my proposal is that this be a federal program that provides funding to colleges to subsidize this additional cost as the GAO report already has laid out the risk of not providing stable long-term resources to this population. In addition to this incentive program there should also be some additional reconsiderations of how to aid homeless students with financial programs including adding emergency funding to title IV programs. All three rounds of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) from both the CARES and CRRSAA demonstrate the need to use emergency aid to support students at risk of dropping out due to changes in personal lives that impact basic need security. In addition, the CARES act allowed for a long-standing title IV program the Federal Supplemental Education and Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) to be used to award emergency grants with little requirements or restrictions. This shift in flexibility of awarding campus-based funding should be part of reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to support needs of low-income students beyond their direct costs.

Another area of federal policy that needs to be addressed based on the findings of this report is who is being served by federal legislation. Many of the participants who responded to interview questions in this study were either directly working with foster youth programs or more familiar with research associated with the needs of foster youth. Although Hallet et. Al (2019) explains that “individuals who have been in the foster care system experience increased likelihood of experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity as adults” (p.26). Since only 28 out of 50 states in our country provide an option for extended foster care support to young adults after the age of 18 which caused for greater concern about where these students would go and who they would be able to ask for assistance with stable housing, internet access, and medical care if they contracted COVID-19. Fortunately, nine states did pass an extension of care in response to COVID-19 including one of the states within this research study: Georgia (Amechi, M., 2020). This maximum age extension or moratorium of youth in care are important as it reopens access to not only Chaffee grants for tuition and fees but also up to $5000 per year in ETV funds that can be used for food, transportation, rent, and insurance premiums (Amechi, M., 2020). In response to the acknowledged needs, Congress introduced and passed the “Supporting Foster Youth and Families through the Pandemic Act” which also allowed for an extension of awarding of Chafee grants by removing some limitations in awarding procedures.

Future research

The findings of my study have resulted in multiple administrative recommendations and institutional best practices outlined within the last two chapters. However, one finding of this study was not the direct result of a research question, but instead was discovered after learning of how each institution was identifying and defining their eligible populations of students for their programs. Therefore, my recommendation is that future research should be done on independent students, without limitations on what made them independent, and instead observed as one at-risk population and not breaking these students down into subgroups. This also holds true when assessing the need for community support, state networks, and federal legislation. By separating foster youth, unaccompanied homeless youth, and student parents into three populations with unique needs we are limiting the number of students who could potentially be served with resources that are needed by all. For future interview questions should be revised to ask about their independent student population as a whole and whether each subgroup has the same level of access to resources including a single point of contact, emergency funding, housing, and other recommended supports. Additional research can also inquire if these consistent resources to address basic need, insecurity and access are really the only means to supporting student success in higher education. Many lessons learned during the covid-19 pandemic and reviewing some causes of concern from administrators who have worked with at-risk youth suggest that flexibility in scheduling of course delivery and remote options may be a new offering college may want to review. Giving students more flexibility to take few courses in a short amount of time or offering remote learning and employment opportunities may help them balance more of the external challenges they are facing such as parenting, not having adequate transportation, and of course housing insecurity.

In addition, a wider scope of varying types of universities should be interviewed to get a better grasp on how size, location, and type of institution influences outcomes. For this study, only one private institution participated, however that institution made a sound argument as to why they are better prepared to provide students with personal attention and smaller class sizes that could help students thrive. The other side to that offering is that private institutions tend to come with a larger price tag which could mean a larger gap and more prominent barrier for these students to overcome before they can access that level of service. Also, it was revealed that location influences the types of resources that are needed on campus to improve quality of live and increase completion rate. Therefore, asking schools directly how location influences what they offer in regard to basic needs support would be an additional research question to add to a future study. A community college in a rural area with limited affordable housing may have a harder time developing support programs for housing insecure students than community colleges in urban areas that have access to community agencies and transitional housing opportunities. Participants should also be asked to share more identifiers about themselves including age range, gender, and race in order to be mindful of how personal biases and experience influence professional decisions and behaviors.

Finally, Klitzman (2018) asked the crucial overarching question of whether "encouraging low-income individuals to attend college rather than tackling the specific conditions of poverty underlying their situations..." (p. 602). This question arose after conducting a focus group with eight women who had experience dealing with homelessness during their time in college and learning that homeless college students are most likely to succeed if their institutions connect them with necessary supports both on-campus and off-campus (Klitzman, 2018). Although this study does explain many barriers and challenges homeless and housing insecure students face when accessing and completing a higher education degree there are also pathways to security identified such as stable housing throughout the year, access to mentors and counseling, career service training, employment opportunities with flexible hours through programs like work study, access to emergency funding to help with living or medical expenses, and the list goes on. Therefore, the findings within my report would suggest that attending college is a means for these individuals to tackle conditions of poverty. With that said, future research could help solidify this thought process and demonstrate pathways are strategies to success and a life out of poverty. This would mean interviewing or surveying individuals who have either completed their degree or stopped out after participating in a campus support program for homeless or housing insecure and learning of the impact their time in the program has had on their current living and employment statuses. Current outcome data will not only help campuses better understand the true needs of independent students including homeless students, but also provide more data and context to support policy.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to determine if state level supports for institutions of higher education that are providing direct services to homeless students are having an impact on the service level campuses are providing. Three case studies, Georgia, North Carolina, and Pennsylvania were studied to determine if there was a relationship between the level of support a state is providing its institutions of higher education and the level of support those institutions are providing homeless students. These qualitative case studies, although limited in nature, aimed to establish a framework for future research and whether or not there is any direct relationship between campus services and states efforts to support homeless students.

During this period of research many factors and changes in both federal and state support influenced the responses collected by participants amongst these three case studies. First, one case study, Pennsylvania, passed state legislation requiring a single point of contact be named on every college campus to serve foster youth. This resulted in more institutions learning more about housing insecure students and these at-risk populations and aiming to learn from other colleges who already had support services in place. Second, a worldwide pandemic swept our educational systems and changed the priorities of what service was being offered to students on a national scale. Colleges were required to pivot to a remote learning model for at least a period of time which came with it learning of more students who did not have somewhere to go during the pandemic, prioritizing the needs for basic level supports such as food, housing, medical assistance, and technology over more extended supports such as programming and social engagement on campus. Finally, in response to the pandemic the federal government recognized a need to disseminate emergency funding nationally via three different rounds of HEERF dollars for lost wages, educational expenses, childcare, and medical expenses. Regulations and flexibilities provided by the federal Department of Education also impacted enrollment patterns and the need to prioritize paying down federal student loan debt. Although these changes in climate did impact responses collected during my interviews for this report, both the immediate impact and potential long-term impact add to the positive findings within this study. For example, at the commencement of this research emergency aid was viewed as trendy and not as commonplace as it now is due to multiple rounds of HEERF funds being managed and distributed as direct payments to pay for the emergency expenses that the pandemic has created. From this experience, institutions of higher education learned how to gauge highest need, build applications for such funds, and in some cases learn how to build rapport with students that enlightened administrators to varying needs for funds outside of the cost of coursework or cost of attendance components. Also, more institutions learned while shutting down residential facilities due to state and federal mandates to lockdown and abide by “stay at home” orders that there were students who did not have places to go and still needed basic support services such as food and shelter to continue as a student or avoid needing to take time off to work to afford to live and eat on their own. This shift in culture although sudden and unexpected and has come with more challenges than not as changed the mindset of many college campuses which could be seen in responses to questions about break housing, food pantries, partnering with off campus resources, transportation support, and especially emergency funds that go beyond paying for tuition bills.

Although changes to the landscape of higher education did influence response it was found that state actions are not enough to create consistent service levels within college campuses for serving homeless students. Some campuses are doing more than their states and others are still doing less even with strong state support to provide resources to homeless students. With all of that said, three findings came out of this research including an understanding of how services forming now on college campuses are not satisfying the long-term needs of homeless students, and how the understanding of who to serve is limited by state guidance or limited training to single points of contact on college campuses, and finally that the need to form statewide networks to address policy gaps is the most impactful framework states are providing now based on the responses and case study analysis done for this report. It has been five years since the Government Accountability Office put out their report calling colleges to act in improving services for homeless and foster youth both regarding access to their campuses but also to help students succeed and earn degrees on their campuses. However, truly little in the shape of reauthorization proposals for the Higher Education Act have included tangible measures or rewards to influence behavior on campuses to meet those demands. Therefore, states can help inform practice and lawmakers by working to build a web presence and network that allows for additional training, data sharing, and financial incentives for colleges to support homeless students on their campuses. My recommendations to improve future research methods as well as data collection methods by current campus support programs should be inclusive of continuing to learn from these networks and state resources.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

How are students identified and do you have any support within the admissions process to help homeless students access your institution?

Is there a place on your college's website where students can learn about how to receive an unaccompanied homeless youth determination from a Financial Aid Administrator in order to access financial aid?

Does your college offer any of these additional student services at your college? Such as any of the following:

- Childcare
- Subsidized Access to Transportation
- Emergency funding
- Targeted counseling or mentorship programs for homeless youth
- Other

How do homeless youth find out about any services provided to them on your campus?

Are you aware of state level supports and have your received any of these supports at your institution?

If a federal law was passed that required these types of services, could you think of some of the barriers your college may face in implementing the following:

- Single Point of Contact
- Year-Round Housing
- Food/Basic need supports (transportation, childcare, or other services you are not currently offering):
- Website Updates with determination information
- Application update asking for students to self-identify.

Follow-up Questions

If not sure about an answer to one of the questions about service, is there another colleague I could reach out to for a follow-up interview?

If not, do you think you would be able to look into that service and send me an email with additional information you can find out about that service?

Appendix B Consent Form

Project Title: Impact of State Networks on Higher Education to Support Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Investigator (s): Tori Nuccio (Primary Investigator) Dr. Kristen Crossney (Advisor)

This research project is being conducted for the year of 2020 and participants are being asked by Tori Nuccio, the primary investigator, to be conduct a one-time phone interview and then be available for any additional follow-up needed until the conclusion of the project in December 2020. The prospective benefit of participating in this research is learning more about other campus programs and state legislations that relate to working with unaccompanied homeless youth. Participating in this student is voluntary and confidential. The subject will be asked questions about programs they administer or support on their own campus as well as their understanding of policy related to unaccompanied homeless youth attending post-secondary institutions. If you would like to take part, you may ask any additional questions of the primary investigator before signing the consent form. With that said, all participants are required to sign the consent form after reviewing the details outlined below. If you choose not to participate there will be no negative impact on the services being provided by West Chester University. If you choose to be part of the study, you have the right to change your mind and stop participating at any time.

1. What is the purpose of the study?
    a. I understand that the purpose of this study is to determine if having an established state network focused on homeless youth accessing higher education impacts the level of support colleges within that state provide to prospective and current students within this population.
2. If you decide to part of the study, you will be asked to do the following:
    a. Participate in a semi-structured phone interview or in-person interview which will be recorded during the time of the interview using recording software than destroyed once transcribed by the primary investigator.
    b. Recognize this interview will take 20-30 minutes of your time.
3. Are there any experimental medical treatments? None.
4. Is there any risk to me and other participants? None.
5. Is there any benefit to me?
    a. Benefits may include the benefit to society by adding to known research about the impact of state networks and the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth in post-secondary educational settings.
6. How will you protect my privacy?
    a. The interview will be recorded but files will be kept on a password protected phone within password protected software. Once the recordings are transcribed the interview files will be destroyed.
    b. The transcribed notes from the interview will also be kept on a password protected computer in a password protected file.
    c. Your records will be kept private on the primary investigator and advisor will have access to these records.
    d. Your name and your institution’s name will not be used in the report.

e. The only information used to identify and reference the institution will be whether or not the institutional is a public or private funded college as well as whether or not it is a 2 year or 4 year institution.
f. All records will be destroyed after the manuscript is completed within four years of the original interview.

7. Do I get paid to take part in this study? No.
8. Who do I contact in case of research related injury?
   a. For any questions about the study, contact the primary investigator: Tori Nuccio 610-436-1058 or tnuccio@wcupa.edu or Kristen Crossney (faculty advisor) at kcrossney@wcupa.edu.
   b. For any questions about your rights pertaining to the research study, please contact the ORSP department at West Chester University at 610-436-3557.
9. Research is ongoing including identifiable data analysis.

I, ______________________ (your name), have read this form and I understand the statements within this form. I know that if I am uncomfortable with this study, I can stop at any time I know that it is not possible to know all possible risks in a study, and I think that reasonably safety measure have been taken to decrease any risk.

Subject/Participant Name Signature:

Date:

Witness Signature:

Date:

Appendix C Institutional Review Board Approval

WCU
WEST CHESTER
UNIVERSITY

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs | West Chester University | Wayne Hall
West Chester, PA 19383 | 610-436-3557 | www.wcupa.edu

Protocol ID # 20171208-A

TO: Tori Nuccio and Kristen Crossney

FROM: Nicole M. Cattano, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)

DATE: 4/16/2020

Project Title: Title - Continuing Review – Impact of State Networks on Higher Education to Support Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
Date of Approval: 04/16/2020

☒**Expedited Approval**

This protocol has been approved for a continuing review, and has successfully transitioned to the new updated 45 CFR 46 common rule that went in to effect January 21, 2019. As a result, this project will not require continuing review. Any revisions to this protocol that are needed will require approval by the WCU IRB. Upon completion of the project, you are expected to submit appropriate closure documentation. Please see www.wcupa.edu/research/irb.aspx for more information.

Any adverse reaction by a research subject is to be reported immediately through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs via email at irb@wcupa.edu.

Signature:

Nicole M. Cattano

Co-Chair of WCU IRB

WCU Institutional Review Board (IRB)
IORG#: IORG0004242
IRB#: IRB00005030
FWA#: FWA00014155