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**Publication Date**

2024

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Santa Barbara

*Servingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Joaquín Becerra

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August 2024

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# ABSTRACT

*Servingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions

by

Joaquín Becerra

A growing Latinx population within the United States and California has given rise to an increase in Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and a proliferation of a new and lesser-known institutional type of HSI, the Hispanic-Serving Research Institution (HSRI). With HSRIs historically being identified as predominantly white institutions (PWI) and HSI designation largely decided by a Latinx enrollment reaching 25%, the question of whether HSRIs are simply "Hispanic-Enrolling" or truly "Hispanic-Serving" is worthy of examination. This study explored and analyzed *Servingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions thorough a qualitative multiple case study design with data collection occurring via interviews with key leaders at two HSRIs. Findings reveal that participants identified a strong focus on community building, intentional organizational structure and planning, leadership engagement at all levels of the institution, and leveraging research institution advantages as important factors contributing to *servingness* goals and positively impacting campus climate. Moreover, the findings illustrate multiple implications for practice including: creation of a clear and recognizable *servingness* infrastructure (e.g. Minority-Serving Institution Plans) is critical to meeting *servingness* goals; intentional efforts to engage with local and external campus *vecinos* can be a powerful strategy for building community and positively impacting campus climate; and HSRIs are uniquely equipped to enhance the compositional diversity of the professoriate and higher education administration across all HSIs and throughout higher education.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

# LIST OF FIGURES

**CHAPTER I**

**INTRODUCTION**

With a quickly changing student population, a new institutional identity to contend

with, and little specialized research or tools to rely on, educational leaders find themselves at

the precipice of a decision-- indeed, a great opportunity! -- regarding how to transform their

campuses to meet a historic challenge. We are in the midst of an unprecedented racial and

ethnic demographic shift fueled by a rapidly increasing Latinx[1] population. At the national

level, as of July 2022, the Latinx population stood at 63.7 million or 19.1% of the United

States population, making it the largest racial or ethnic minority group in the country (US

Census Bureau, 2023). The Latinx community is forecasted to reach over 25% of the US

population by 2060 (US Census Bureau, 2023). The growth of the Latinx community is

especially prominent in California, where the US Census Bureau (2023) reports Latinx

Californians to account for 40.3% of the state's population, making it the largest racial/ethnic

group in the state. This demographic shift is further witnessed in California's classrooms,

with Latinx enrollment increasing consistently since 1990, with Latinx students not only

making up the largest racial/ethnic group, but the majority (56.1%) of those educated by the

TK-12 California public school system (CDE, 2023; Jones et al, 2017).

The soaring Latinx population in the United States and our TK-12 educational

systems has subsequently impacted higher education. The increase has led to colleges and

universities reaching a 25% Latinx student enrollment population parameter leading to

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[1] The terms Hispanic, Latino, Latine and Latinx are used interchangeably throughout this work. The terms refer to individuals that identify as being from Mexican, Central American, Southern American, or "Spanish" Caribbean origin or descent. Given the tangential, complex, and political nature of racial and ethnic terminology, this will not be explored in this work. Please refer to Alcoff (2005) and Ballysingh et al. (2018) for more information.

Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) classification. Since 1997, the number of HSIs has increased from 40 institutions to over 570 as of 2022, with California seeing the largest jump in these numbers (Nuñez, 2015; Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities [HACU], 2023b). Unlike other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), such as Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), which are created with the intentional mission of supporting a specific student population, HSIs receive their designation largely by new and mostly unintentional Latinx enrollment.

This demographic shift has presented a unique challenge to colleges and universities as they contend with a significant institutional and cultural transformation but have not been positioned to serve minoritized populations and have historically identified and functioned as predominantly white institutions (PWIs) (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012). As higher education institutions adjust to an increase in the Latinx student enrollment, they must also grapple with adequately serving a growing Latinx population and the development of a new institutional identity.

## Minority-Serving Institutions

Hispanic-Serving Institutions fall under the umbrella of institutions titled Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). MSIs are divided into two categories: Historically Defined and Enrollment Defined institutions (NASEM, 2019). Historically Defined MSIs were established with the specific mission to provide access to higher education to specific minority groups and include Historically Black College and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) (NASEM, 2019). Enrollment Defined MSIs are federally designated based on student enrollment and institutional expenditure thresholds and include Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving

Institutions (ANNHIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving

Institutions (AANAPISI), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), and Native American-

Serving, Nontribal Institutions (NASNTI) (NASEM, 2019).

MSI types are established by receiving federal recognition via federal legislation (e.g.

HBCU recognition via the Higher Education Act of 1965) (Espinosa et al., 2017). All MSIs

must be accredited, degree-granting institutions of higher education. Enrollment Defined

MSIs must have low educational and general expenditures and enroll a certain percentage of

low-income students (Espinosa et al., 2017). Meeting federal institutional eligibility criteria

allows qualifying institutions access to MSI grants from the Department of Education under

Title III and Title V of the Higher Education Opportunity Act with the purpose of improving

the institutions' academic quality and to provide expanded educational opportunities for low-

income students (NASEM, 2019).

MSIs are quite diverse and have distinct and specific needs by type and could

potentially identify with more than one MSI category (Espinosa, et al., 2017; O'Brien &

Zudak, 1998). Additionally, MSI diversity does not only exist between MSI types but there

are significant differences among the institutions within a specific MSI designation

(NASEM, 2019).

### Hispanic-Serving Institutions Foundation and Designation

To better understand HSIs in the context of MSIs more broadly, it is important to

explore their creation and designation. Identifying institutions of higher education with high

enrollment of Hispanic students was first mentioned and acknowledged at the federal level in

1983 at a series of Congressional Hearings on Hispanic access to higher education (Santiago,

2006). The primary focus was on increasing the capacity of higher education institutions to

successfully matriculate Hispanic students (Santiago, 2006). Although these hearings did not yield changes to educational legislation, they were the impetus for leaders from Hispanic-enrolling institutions to form the Hispanic Association of College and Universities (HACU) in 1986 (Santiago, 2006). It was HACU that coined the term "Hispanic-Serving Institution" (Santiago, 2006). Ten years later, with the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act of 1992 under Title III that HSIs were finally recognized at the federal level (Santiago, 2006; Mendez et al., 2015). Federal funding for HSIs would now be accessible to qualifying institutions through the Developing Institutions Program, which created a competitive grant program to enhance HSIs' efforts to support Hispanic and low-income students (Santiago, 2006; Mendez et al., 2015). With the 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, critical changes to the Developing Institutions Program formed the HSI identification we know today as The Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions (DHSI) Program, which was moved from Title III to its own section under Title V (Santiago, 2006; Mendez et al., 2015).

Being identified or designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution under Title V is as simple as accepting the label of HSI and participating in the DHSI Program. The DHSI Program is defined by the United Stated Department of Education (2018) as a program "to assist HSIs to expand educational opportunities for, and improve the attainment of, Hispanic students. These grants also enable HSIs to expand and enhance their academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability." Accredited institutions are eligible to participate if they meet the following conditions: (1) full-time undergraduate student enrollment of at least 25% Latinx students and (2) at least 50 percent students are eligible for need-based financial aid (DOE, 2018, HACU, 2018).

## Hispanic-Serving Institution & Classification

Hispanic-Serving Institutions are not a monolith. They are a diverse group of colleges and universities that vary greatly in constituency and mission. The Carnegie Classifications is one of the prevalent classification systems used to organize degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States (IUCPR, n.d.). Carnegie Classifications have seven main groups: Doctoral Universities, Masters Colleges & Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges, Associate's Colleges, Special Focus Institutions, and Tribal Colleges & Universities (IUCPR, n.d.). HSIs fall into all of these groups and although the Carnegie classification system has been found useful to gain some understanding of similar institutional grouping, colleges and universities with more complex and non-traditional identities, like HSIs, have found this model limiting (Prescott, 2011).

Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo (2016) offer a classification system that helps us better organize and understand HSIs. They group HSIs into six clusters (ordered from least common, to most common): Urban Enclave Community Colleges, Big System Four-Years, Puerto Rican Institutions, Rural Dispersed Community Colleges, Small Communities Four-Years, and Health Science Schools. This typology, explored in more detail later in Chapter II, provides an improved understanding of the complexity of HSI institutional identity.

## Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions

As we continue to zoom in further and further, we can focus on a very small grouping of Hispanic-Serving Institutions known as Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs) (Marin & Pereschica, 2018). HSRIs are considered Big-System Four schools in HSI Typology (Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016) and as Doctoral Universities with Very High Research Activity Institution (R1) within the Carnegie Classifications system (IUPDS, n.d.).

As of 2023, there were only 21 institutions of higher education that uniquely hold both the R1 classification, indicating a high level of research activity, and the HSI designation. These institutions are part of an exclusive group that not only meets the criteria for being recognized as HSIs but also ranks in the top 5% of universities nationwide for research (Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Universities, 2023).

## The Problem (and Opportunity): Servingness at HSRIs

Unfortunately for Latinx students, educational leaders have struggled to reshape institutions of higher education that are historically dominated by a white, male, middle-class norms (Bush, 2012; Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Because HSIs are classified largely by an arbitrarily defined 25% population parameter, the question of whether an institution is intentionally supporting Latinx students and truly being "Hispanic-Serving" or just simply "Hispanic-Enrolling" is significant. Understanding how an institution adjusts to HSI designation and adequately meets the needs of their Latinx population, or its *servingness*, distinguishes whether the designation is reflected in the fabric of the institution, thus impacting the actions of all institutional players, or is simply a hollow label for financial gain (Ballysingh et al., 2018; Garcia, 2018a, 2018b; Garcia & Taylor, 2017).

### *Servingness*

*Servingness*, or the concept of adequately serving the educational needs of Latinx students, is one of the most prolific research areas in the study of HSIs. Many educators and researchers believe that the Title V definition of HSI should not simply exist as a naming convention for federal legislation, but as an institutional identity that colleges and universities take on to affirm their obligation to support Latinx students (Ballysingh et al., 2018; Garcia, 2018a; 2018b; 2020, 2023 Garcia et al., 2019; Garcia & Taylor, 2017;

6

Mitchneck et al., 2023). Garcia (2020) presents the following definition of *servingness*,

which establishes the conceptual framework and understanding of this concept within the

current study:

> "the ability for colleges and universities that meet the 25% Latinx and 50% low-income enrollment threshold to become HSI to enroll and educate Latinx students through a culturally enhancing approach that centers Latinx ways of knowing and being, with the goal of providing transformative experiences that lead to both academically and non-academic outcomes." (p. 1-2)

Garcia (2020) identifies that adequately serving Latinx students is not simply an academic

pursuit. The definition and corresponding framework offers the following dimensions:

organization structures of serving, outcomes (academic and non-academic), experiences

(from students and non-students), internal organizational dimensions (leadership, curriculum,

and practices) and external forces, while taking into account the impacts of white supremacy.

As Hurtado & Ruiz (2012) point out, there is "very little research to draw from that is

directly focused on Hispanic-serving institutions and we draw more generally on case study

research in higher education, organizational theory, studies of diversity in higher education,

and use examples from research on HSIs where possible" (p. 9). This lack is especially

salient when considering Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions where little research or

understanding exists (Marin & Pereschica, 2018).

## The Study

This study investigates s*ervingness* and campus climate within Hispanic-Serving

Research Institutions. A qualitative methodology was utilized, and information was collected

through semi-structured interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators from two Hispanic-

Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs). Informants are key leaders positioned within their

organization to support HSI *servingness* dimensions. The study explores and analyzes their

perceptions and experiences in relation to their institutions' *servingness* goals.

**Research Questions**

This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What strategies and initiatives have or will be implemented to realize *servingness* goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions?

2. What perceptions do HSRI leaders hold on dimensions of *servingness* their organization provides, including the specification of *servingness* goals?

**Significance of the Study**

This dissertation is significant because it continues the important and necessary

tradition of research on the impacts of racism on a critical and underserved group: Latinx

students. This dissertation investigates Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs)

which are a relatively new, exclusive, and small grouping of institutions where little to no

research exists (Marin & Pereschica, 2018; Serrano, 2022). The interest on the impact of

students' race and ethnicity on their higher educational dates back to immediately after the

abolition of slavery, with a newly "desegregated" America reading periodicals such as

"College Education and the Colored Race" (1868). Research on the racial and ethnic identity

of students of color in higher education can be found as early as the Reconstruction era in the

United States with calls for colleges and universities to address the democratic and social

maladaptation of Black Americans (Good, 1942). During the Civil Rights movement of the

mid-20th century, calls for justice in higher education continued, as university campuses

became a fierce social battleground for Black, Latinx, and multiple other student populations'

slow integration into higher education (Bell, 1980; Gaston-Gayles, 2008). The tensions and

remnants of America's racialized and segregated founding are not relegated to the past, as evidenced by recent legislative efforts disadvantaging students of color to wear away at the educational attainment of previous social successes (Samayoa, 2018). Even in a post-George Floyd era, Toraif et al. (2023) finds that college and university ideology and communication are still riddled with colorblindness, systematic oppression, and lack of accountability.

The higher education experience for minoritized students continues to be burdened with disparities that promote and further the very class inequities colleges and universities were intended to combat, showcasing the need for further advancement and understanding on how to best support minoritized students within the college campus (Reay et al., 2001).

## Assumptions, Limitations & Delimitations

### Assumptions

This study is underpinned by several important assumptions. As key leaders within their institutions and contributors to HSI efforts, informants' perceptions are representative of their general area of oversight. Additionally, the interview protocol elicits perspectives of *servingness*.

### Limitations

The following limitations for this study should be noted. Given the focus on the unique institutional type of Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs), the small sample size of two universities in the west is a study limitation.. A selection of universities from other geographic regions and/or of different sizes may have yielded different results. Furthermore, convenience sampling was chosen as the sampling method, which results in informant selection bias and impacts internal and external validity. This study is dependent

on self-reported data on an aspect of campus climate and its validity may be susceptible to social desirability, institutional positionality bias, and recall bias.

**Delimitations**

The following delimitations exist for this study. The study exclusively examines institutions affiliated with a singular public university system situated within one region of the United States. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings is confined to this subset of academic institutions. Additionally, personal identity information of the study's informants was not gathered for this study and only documented if voluntarily disclosed during data collection. Thus, demographic data has been omitted from this investigation.

## Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter I introduced the study, and includes the research problem, study significance, and limitations. Chapter II provides a review of relevant literature that includes background on HSRIs, educational leadership literature with implications for organizational change, and organizational change in support of marginalized students. The methodology of the study is discussed in Chapter III, including the research questions, case study design, steps to identify, contact, and interview participants, and methods for analyzing the interview data. Chapter IV presents the study findings, and Chapter V discusses strategies pursued in the HSRIs that include community building, intentional organizational structure, multi-level leadership, and the leveraging of research institution advantages, as well as implications of the study.

# CHAPTER II

## LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews guiding literature informing the theoretical foundation of this study. It serves as essential background and context for understanding the research topic but does not cover the entire scope of the vast and continuously evolving research areas explored. The following areas will be discussed: Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI) including Latinx Special Interest Groups, ,HSI typology, educational leadership including a four-frame model, organizational change in support of marginalized students,  campus climate with a focus on diverse learning environments, and s*ervingness*.

### Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Title V of the U.S Higher Education Act is a mechanism to identify institutions eligible for funding programs. Programs in this construct are created to develop a framework for eligibility, proposal review, acceptance, funding distribution, and program review (DOE, 2006). Higher education intuitions that meet the eligibility criteria to be classified as Hispanic-Serving Institutions are eligible for multiple grants administered by the DOE under the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program (DOE, 2018). The Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions program is "a federal competitive grant program that awards eligible institutions five years of funding for a comprehensive development plan." (Santiago, Taylor, & Galdeano, 2016, p.10). The two main purposes of the program are as follows (Santiago, Taylor, & Galdeano, 2016):

1. To expand educational opportunities for and improve the academic attainment of Hispanic students.

2. To expand and enhance the academic offerings, program quality, and institutional stability of colleges and universities that are educating the majority of Hispanic college students and helping large numbers of Hispanic students and other low-income individuals complete postsecondary degrees.

Under Title V a "Hispanic-Serving Institution" is defined as follows (Santiago, Taylor, & Galdeano, 2016):

> The term "Hispanic-Serving institution" means an institution of higher education that— (A) is an eligible institution; and (B) has an enrollment of undergraduate full-time equivalent students that is at least 25 percent Hispanic students at the end of the award year immediately preceding the date of application.

The Higher Education Act of 2006 determines eligibility for the Developing HSIs program and requires that institutions meet three criteria to acquire funding:

1. Enroll a high concentration of Latino undergraduate students: To be eligible, HSIs must be accredited and degree-granting public or private nonprofit institutions of higher education with 25 percent or more total undergraduate Hispanic full-time equivalent (FTE) student enrollment.

2. Enroll a high concentration of needy (low income) students: To be eligible, HSIs must enroll a high concentration of students who receive federal financial aid to pay for college. The U.S. Department of Education determines the eligibility threshold.

3. Have low educational and general expenditures (core expenses): To be eligible, HSIs must have a low level of total expenses for the essential education activities

of the institution. The U.S. Department of Education determines the eligibility

threshold.

Title V and the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program are described in detail to highlight that HSIs by federal definition are a logistical descriptor to identify institutions and distribute funds. Since the DOE only uses the institutional information for funding purposes, they do not actively assign a designation of "Hispanic-Serving Institution" to colleges or universities. A public list of institutions identified as eligible for funding was made public in 2016 (DOE, 2018), but only upon the request of Latinx higher education advocates and lobbyists (DOE, 2018; HACU, 2018). Funding is a critical component in supporting institutions, but it is important to understand that the function of an appropriation mechanism does not ensure Latinx student success and educational attainment (Garcia & Morgan, 2017; Gross, 2016). This begs the question of whether Title V programs created with the aim to support institutions that are "Hispanic-Serving" are missing their intended outcome. Higher Education Latinx Special Interest Groups have helped fill a much-needed gap between Title V administrative-based definitions of what it means to be an HSI, and an understanding centered on Latinx student support.

**Latinx Special Interest Groups**

Latinx Special Interest Groups such as the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU) and Excelencia in Education have played critical roles in supporting development of Latinx Institutions and Latinx students by enhancing Latinx student outcomes, conducting relevant HSI research, developing institutional practices, and creating community among the HSI campuses.

**Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU)**

The Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU), created in 1986, was pivotal in promoting legislation in support of colleges and universities with high enrollment of Latino students that would later develop into what we know as Title V HSI programs (HACU, n.d.; Mendez et al., 2015). Upon its creation, HACU "defined its mission to engage in activities that heightened the awareness among corporations, foundations, governmental agencies and individuals of the role that member colleges and universities play in educating the nation's Hispanic youth" (HACU, 2018). With this mission in mind, HACU promotes an agenda that is supportive of HSI federal funding, as well as institutional support for Latino student educational attainment. HACU differentiates between two types of HSIs: Title V Eligible Institutions and HACU Member Institutions. HACU (2018) describes this difference as follows:

1. Title V Eligibility: The "List of HSIs" follows the criteria set forth in Title V of the Higher Education Act. HACU often is asked for an "official" list of Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). In following this definition, HACU has only included non-profit institutions that are eligible for Title IV (federal student financial aid) funding.

2. HACU Membership: HSIs are defined as colleges, universities, or systems/districts where total Hispanic enrollment constitutes a minimum of 25% of the total headcount enrollment. "Total Enrollment" includes full-time and part-time students at the undergraduate or graduate level (including professional schools) of the institution, or both (i.e., headcount of for-credit students).

HACU has developed multiple projects and initiatives with the goal of supporting not only HSIs, but individual students at their member institutions (HACU, 2018). These programs include, but are not limited to: leadership programs, STEM initiatives, climate & sustainability, research capacity, pre-collegiate programs, and information technology (HACU, 2018). In contrast to HSI federal designation within Title V funding processes, HACU's HSI identification illustrates a comprehensive network of support that is not only interested in validating Latinx student enrollment but highlights the importance of intentional support of the Latinx community.

**Excelencia in Education**

Like HACU, Excelencia in Education has been pivotal in spotlighting the issues of Latinx students and HSIs. Founded in 2004, Excelencia in Education is a Latina-led organization that focuses their work on Latinx student success by producing research on the educational status of Latinx students, promoting educational policies to enhance Latinx academic achievement, and organizing a network of professional who focus on Latinx student success (Excelencia in Education, 2023). Their core areas are: higher education in Puerto Rico, Latino college completion, workforce development, and in HSIs. Of note, their research and analysis into HSIs has had a serious impact on the study of HSIs. Their work is cited and referenced in nearly all the HSI-related works reviewed in the creation of this study.

Another example of Excelencia's impact is their work on HSI institutional identity. The Seal of Excelencia is a national certification given to institutions that "strive to go beyond enrollment to intentionally SERVE Latino students" (Excelencia, 2023). The Seal of

Excelencia framework includes the following metrics of Latino student success (Excelencia, 2023):

Data and Practice: Institutions collect, disaggregate, and analyze data AND institutions intentionally implement and advance evidence-based programs and policies for equitable outcomes in these six key areas: Enrollment, Retention, Transferring, Financial, Representation, Completion

Leadership: Institutions demonstrate intentional commitment to improve Latino student success in five leadership areas:

Mission and strategy: where aspects of the institution's mission and strategy are articulated and implemented to intentionally include Latino students' success.

Data and practice: how disaggregated data (by race and ethnicity) and institutional practices are aligned to inform initiatives that improve Latino student success. Human resources: how recruitment, onboarding, and professional development (especially for faculty) prioritize serving Latino students and the institutional community.

Communications: where internal and external communications are leveraged to share information making the intentionality to serve Latino students clear. This can keep momentum building toward goals set by the college and across the institution and community.

Institutional culture: how the institution articulates authentically its intentionality in serving Latino students, including how students are cultivated and supported.

The Seal of Excelencia criteria is showcased in detail to highlight the difference between an administratively defined notion of a Hispanic-Serving Institution put forth by Title V and an intentionally minded conception of what is means to serve Latinx students. Like HACU,

Excelencia in Education highlights the importance of HSIs enhancing Latinx student outcomes or to be Latinx-serving.

## HSI Typology

Another key aspect of understanding higher education institutions is how they are categorized and classified through institutional typologies. Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo (2016) identify four key reasons HSI typology aids educators and researchers: (1) allows researchers the ability to compare like institutions and make HSI research more generalizable to similar institutions; (2) helps higher education leaders and practitioners better identify similar institutions for policy comparisons and partnerships; (3) enables policymakers to measure performance to similar institutions, instead of ones with dissimilar characteristics; and (4) facilitates targeted support for organizations attempting to aid specific groups of Latino students through funding, professional development, or other types of support.

Nuñez (2015) offered the first typology of Hispanic-Serving Institutions, which was later expanded by Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo (2016) with their work on *Mapping Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Typology of Institutional Diversity*, a comprehensive study that explores the diverse landscape of HSIs. The work categorizes HSIs based on their unique institutional characteristics, which are not adequately captured by traditional classification systems like the Carnegie classification. The authors used cluster analysis to examine a population of U.S. mainland and Puerto Rican 2-year and 4-year HSIs. The study considered various factors, including full-time and part-time undergraduate enrollment, to calculate HSI status. The findings highlighted the variability in characteristics among HSIs. For instance, the graduation rate at HSIs varied significantly, with the average institution graduating 27% of first-time, full-time degree or certificate-seeking students within six academic years for a

bachelor's degree (Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo, 2016). The study also found considerable variability in community context characteristics of HSIs, including location, educational attainment levels, unemployment rates, and median annual salaries in HSI communities where the institutions resided.

The six clusters are listed below, are ordered from most common HSI Type to least common:

- <u>Urban Enclave Community Colleges</u>: Public institutions offering associate degrees or certificates, concentrated in large metropolitan areas with traditionally large populations of Latinos.

- <u>Big System Four-Years</u>: Mostly campuses of large, public institution four-year systems, often located in cities and in the Southwestern and Western regions.

- <u>Puerto Rican Institutions</u>: Located in Puerto Rico, the majority are private, with a nearly exclusive presence of Hispanic faculty and students.

- <u>Rural Dispersed Community Colleges</u>: Public institutions offering associate degrees or certificates, concentrated in towns and rural, isolated areas, often in the Southwest. Lower student enrollment, especially compared with Urban Enclave Community Colleges.

- <u>Small Communities Four-Years</u>: Mostly private, smaller campuses that offer bachelor's degrees or higher. More selective than other four-year institutions. Include many smaller liberal arts institutions and several small religious institutions. Located in urban and suburban areas, primarily in the West and South.

- <u>Health Science Schools</u>: Focused on health sciences and medical studies, these have relatively low enrollment, are highly selectivity, and have higher levels of institutional funding.

Of particular interest to this study, and worthy of further exploration, is the Big Systems 4-Year Institutions cluster. This type represents a significant segment of HSIs encompassing 21% of HSIs (Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo's, 2016). They are characterized by large student enrollments, making it the cluster with the largest student bodies among the six identified types. These institutions are primarily part of state public university systems,  with large and usually diverse student populations and  primarily  full-time faculty.

One subgroup of the Big System 4-Year cluster, and the focus of this study, are Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs). HSRIs can be identified as a Big System 4-Year and as Doctoral Universities with Very High Research Activity Institution (R1) within the Carnegie Classifications system (IUPDS, n.d.).   These 21 institutions meet the criteria for being recognized as HSIs and rank in the top 5% of universities nationwide for research (AHSRU, 2023). HSRIs belong to voluntary alliance named the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Research Universities (AHSRU).

Although Núñez, Crisp, & Elizondo's (2016) HSI Typology is a significant work and creates a common understanding comparing HSI groupings, it is not beyond critique. The typology is limited since it only relies on the structural elements of an institutional and student outcomes like graduation rates and enrollment, which excludes cultural, identity, and environmental measures critical to serving Latinx students (Garcia, 2017). Garcia (2017) introduces a typology that considers organizational and cultural outcomes for Latinx students through her work on the Typology of HSI Organizational Identities. Garcia (2017) finds that

HSIs that solely base their Latinx *servingness* goals on educational achievement can find varied results when only measuring those outcomes. Alternatively, a cultural perspective focuses on the social order and practices within HSIs that connect and support Latinx students. This approach includes elements like Spanish-speaking faculty and staff , fostering a salient racial/ethnic identity, and promoting participation in ethnic studies and culturally relevant pedagogy.

The Typology of HSI Organizational Identities (Garcia, 2017) incorporates theoretical frameworks of organizational identity from institutional and cultural lenses. From an institutional perspective, an organization's identity is shaped by social norms and the need for legitimacy within its field. This view suggests that HSIs develop their identity in comparison to other institutions, adopting recognizable forms and conforming to established norms. In contrast, the cultural perspective on organizational identity emphasizes the unique cultural context within each institution, where identity is shaped by assumptions, beliefs, and values of its members. The typology was constructed by exploring six Latinx student indicators: graduation rates, graduate school enrollment, employments upon graduation, community engagement of institution, positive campus climate, and support program engagement. The typology sees organizational identities of HSIs as constructed along two axes: 1. institutionalized measures of success (organizational outcomes for Latinx students) and 2. deeply embedded assumptions and values (organizational culture that facilitates outcomes for Latinx students) (See Figure 1 below).

**Figure 1**

*Typology of Hispanic-Serving Institution organizational identities.*

| Organizational Outcomes for Latinxs | High | Latinx-Producing | Latinx-Serving |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Low | Latinx-Enrolling | Latinx-Enhancing |
| | | Low | High |
| | | Organizational Culture Reflects Latinxs | |

Typology of HSI Organizational Identities introduces elements of s*ervingness* into the classification of college and universities. As *servingness* is centered and normative student outcomes are not the only focus of institutional effectiveness, the spotlight shifts from the work of students to the work of institutions and their leaders in transforming institutions.

### Educational Leadership: The Four-Frame Model of Leadership

Understanding educational leadership is essential to this study, as educational leaders significantly impact the achievement of HSI *servingness* goals in Hispanic-Serving Institutions. The role of leaders within colleges and universities in shaping institutional policies and positive climates is crucial for the effective implementation of initiatives tailored to Latinx students (Garcia, 2020). Bolman and Deal's (2017) Four-Frame Model of Leadership offers a valuable framework for understanding the complexities of higher educational leadership. The Four-Frame Model of Leadership has been applied to a wide range of areas and groups in the academy, including, but not limited to: academic leadership (Vuori, 2018), student affairs administration (Becerra, 2017; Sriram & Farley, 2014), STEM disciplines (Reinholz & Apkarian, 2018), international higher education (Shirbagi, 2007), community colleges (McArdle, 2013) and diverse communities of leaders (Omachonu,

2012). The four-frame model has also been modified and expanded upon by a number of scholars including Birnbaum (1988) and Berger and Milem (2000).

The leadership frames are mental models or a set of ideas or assumptions that help individuals understand and navigate their surroundings and are to be used to help leaders understand what questions to ask and what solutions to consider (Berger, 2014). The idea of relying on or understanding leadership from multiple perspectives is called "reframing" (Bolman and Deal, 2017). The importance of having multiple tools and leadership perspectives to best identify methods to tackle leadership problems is of critical importance to today's higher educational leaders (Bryman, 2007). Bolman and Deal (2017) describe the function of the frames as follows:

> Learning multiple perspectives, or frames, is a defense against thrashing around without a clue about what you are doing or why. Frames serve multiple functions. They are sources of new questions, filters for sorting essence from trivia, maps that aid navigation, and tools for solving problems and getting things done. (p. 23)

The frames provide a multifaceted lens through which the actions and influences of leaders in HSRIs can be more thoroughly understood and assessed. Each frame offers a unique perspective, considering aspects like organizational structure, people's needs, power dynamics, and cultural symbols, thereby enabling a comprehensive analysis of leadership styles and their impact on institutional effectiveness. The Four-Frame Model consists of the Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic Frames (Bolman & Deal, 2017). In the subsequent section, I will review each individual frame in greater detail.

**Structural Frame**

Bolman & Deal's Structural Frame views organizations through the lens of social architecture. This frame views organizations not just as physical structures or systems, but as entities shaped by their goals, roles, relationships, and methods of coordination. An organization may organize itself more vertically, relying heavily on authority, policy, planning and control systems. Alternatively, it may organize more laterally, focusing on meetings, task forces, coordinating roles, and authority-based systems with more flexibility. Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasize that the design of an organization's structure depends on its specific circumstances, goals, strategy, technology, and environment. So vertical and lateral coordination are not mutually exclusive and a hybrid organizing structure may result when new circumstances necessitate revisions. Bolman and Deal (2017) offer the following when considering organizational coordination:

> Organizations have to use both vertical and horizontal procedures for coordination. The optimal blend of the two depends on the unique challenges in a given situation. Vertical coordination is generally superior if an environment is stable, tasks are well understood and predictable, and uniformity is essential. Lateral communications work best for complex tasks performed in a turbulent environment. Every organization must find a design that works for its circumstances, and inherent structural tradeoffs rarely yield easy answers or perfect solutions. (p. 61)

**Human Resource Frame**

The Human Resource Frame examines how organizations and people work together. It sees organizations as more than infrastructure or policy, but as places that meet the needs of people. Both the organization and its constituents benefit from this symbiotic relationship.

This idea is contrary to the sometimes traditionally held view of seeing people as tools or simple labor. The Human Resource Frame emphasizes making all individuals in the organization feels involved and included.

The Human Resource Frame also looks at how people get along and work in groups and focuses on meaningful relationships, not simply transactional ones. Bolman and Deal (2017) share that "when the fit between people and organizations is poor, one or both suffer: individuals may feel neglected or oppressed, and organizations sputter because individuals withdraw their efforts or even work against organizational purposes" (p.133).

**Political Frame**

The idea of politics in organizations creates negative images and an undesirable aspect of organizations. However, the political frame (Bolman and Deal, 2017) suggests a different view, placing politics at the heart of decision-making.  Politics are seen as a realistic process necessary for making decisions and allocating resources amidst scarcity and divergent interests, focusing on the constructive side of politics within an organization. This frame focuses on dynamics of power, conflict, and coalition as fundamental elements to leadership. Bolman & Deal (2017) share the following on the natural tension that exists in this complicated space:

> There is no guarantee that those who gain power will use it wisely or justly. But power and politics are not inevitably demeaning and destructive. Constructive politics is a possibility—indeed, a necessary option if we are to create institutions and societies that are both just and efficient. (p. 199)

Additionally, it is essential for a leader to be an effective organizational politician which includes the following skills: setting agendas, mapping the political terrain, networking,

building coalitions, and negotiating. The political frame emphasizes that organizations are both arenas for political contests and active political entities themselves. In this dual role, organizational politics substantially influence the rules of engagement and can be powerful tools for achieving the agendas of those in control (Becerra, 2017). Politics are an inherent and inescapable aspect of the leader, shaping the actions and outcomes of individuals and institutions alike.

**Symbolic Frame**

The Symbolic Frame is concerned with the intangible aspects of organizations. The symbolic frame holds five assumptions (Bolman and Deal, 2017, p. 241-242):

1. What is most important is not what happens but what it means.

2. Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience situations differently.

3. In the face of uncertainty and ambiguity, symbols arise to help people resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.

4. Events and processes are often more important for what they express or signal than for their intent or outcomes. Their emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.

5. Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends.

This frame has a large focus on organization culture with a focus on the myths, visions, symbols, and values of an organization help "explain, express, legitimize, and maintain solidarity and cohesion" (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Similarly important are the heroes and

25

stories held and shared by an organization, as tools that convey what the organization values.

Ceremonies and rituals are utilized to both celebrate success and overcome adversity. In

addition, metaphors, humor and play offer escape and help the organization access creativity.

In higher education, Berger and Milem (2000) demonstrated the importance of "symbolic

cues" within the symbolic frame. In an analysis of student effects, they stated that "the

weaker the symbolic dimension at a campus the more we expect that symbolic cues have a

diffusing or fragmenting effect on students, whereas stronger symbolic environments tend to

have a more integrating and conforming effect on students" (p. 313). Above all, this frame

emphasizes the critical role that culture, as both product and process, plays in the success and

health of an organization.

**Extensions and Adaptations of the Four-Frame Model**

Scholars have modified and/or extended the four-frame model in their examination of

colleges and universities. Birnbaum (1988) proposed five models of institutional

organization: (a) bureaucratic, (b) collegial, (c) political, (d) anarchical, and (e) cybernetic. In

explaining the cybernetic perspective, Birnbaum (1989) indicated that the coordination of

complex social systems such as universities is accomplished through cybernetic controls. He

defined cybernetic controls as "self-correcting mechanisms that monitor organizational

functions and provide attention cues, or negative feedback, to participants when things are

not going well. Systems of negative feedback detect and correct errors so that … [when a

university moves] in an undesirable direction, something else automatically happens to bring

it back on course" (Birnbaum, 1989, pp. 240-241). Berger and Milem (2000) summarized

critiques of this cybernetic frame, indicating a debate over whether it should be included as

an additional frame. To provide overall descriptions, these authors indicate that "Birnbaum

asks too much of his cybernetic frame" (Castro, 2024, p. 21). Although a cybernetic

perspective can help university leaders and actors "better understand and manage the

complex, dynamic nature of higher education institutions," it may overemphasize

quantitative data, oversimplify human complexity, and overemphasize bureaucracy. Berger

and Milem (2000) proposed another fifth frame in their formulation: systemic. Their

multidimensional model includes the frames of (a) bureaucratic, (b) collegial, (c) political,

(d) symbolic, and (e) systemic. The systemic dimension addresses the drawbacks of

structural and cybernetic approaches taken alone, for instance, while more fully incorporating

the tenets of institutional theory to fully embrace an open systems perspective. Castro's

(2024) analysis of presidential leadership during critical and significant campus incidents, for

example, demonstrated a systemic approach by articulating how presidents leverage collegial

and systemic responses while working through bureaucratic requirements.

**The Four-Frame Model & Organizational Change**

Boleman and Deal (2017), and the alterations and enhancement of the model above,

offer a process to explore and understand organizational change through multiple leadership

dimensions. Boleman and Deal (2017) posit that change inevitably generates four problems:

1. Change affects individuals' sense of effectiveness, value, and control.

2. Change disrupts established patterns of roles and relationships, leading to confusion
   and uncertainty.

3. Change often results in conflict between those who benefit from the change (winners)
   and those who do not (losers).

4. Change can lead to a loss of meaning for those who are affected by it.

27

Organizational change is often not successful when reason and structure are too heavily

relied upon and human, political, and symbolic elements are ignored (Bolman and Deal,

2017). In collaboration with John Kotter, Bolman and Deal (2017) offer an eight-stage model

for engaging in successful change that can be utilized in conjunction with a multiple-frame

leadership approach:

1. Creating a sense of urgency

2. Pulling together a guiding team with the needed skills, credibility, connections, and authority to move things along

3. Creating an uplifting vision and strategy

4. Communicating the vision and strategy through a combination of words, deeds, and symbols

5. Removing obstacles, or empowering people to move ahead

6. Producing visible symbols of progress through short-term victories

7. Sticking with the process and refusing to quit when things get tough

8. Nurturing and shaping a new culture to support the emerging innovative ways

Figure 2 below (Bolman and Deal, 2017, p. 382) lists the eight stages of change and provides

the actions leaders can engage in within each frame to successfully navigate change from a

multi-frame approach.

**Figure 2**

*Reframing Kotter's Change Stages.*



| Kotter's Stage of Change | Structural frame | Human resource frame | Political frame | Symbolic frame |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Sense of urgency | | Involve people throughout organization; solicit input | Network with key players; use power base | Tell a compelling story |
| 2. Guiding team | Develop coordination strategy | Do team-building for guiding team | Stack team with credible, influential members | Put chief executive and organizational heroes on team |
| 3. Uplifting vision and strategy | Build implementation plan | | Map political terrain; manage conflict; develop agenda | Craft hopeful vision of future rooted in organization's history |
| 4. Communicate vision and strategy through words, deeds, and symbols | Create structures to support change process | Hold meetings to communicate direction, get feedback | Create arenas; build alliances; defuse opposition | Visible leadership involvement; kickoff ceremonies |
| 5. Remove obstacles and empower people to move forward | Remove or alter structures and procedures that support the old ways | Provide training, resources, support | | Public demotion or discharge of opponents |
| 6. Early wins | Plan for short-term victories | | Invest resources and power to ensure early wins | Communicate and celebrate early signs of progress |
| 7. Keep going when going gets tough | Keep people on plan | | | Hold revival meetings |
| 8. New culture to support new ways | Align structure to new culture | Create a "culture" team; broad involvement in developing culture | | Mourn the past; celebrate heroes of the revolution; share stories of the journey |

**Exhibit 18.2.**
**Reframing Kotter's Change Stages.**

## Organizational Change in Support of Marginalized Students

The Four-Frame Model of Leadership is a helpful tool in understanding how leadership within higher education effectively engage in organizational change from multiple perspectives, both generally and specifically. It can also be applied during the implementation of efforts to change the outcomes of students with marginalized identities, such as Latinx students, when seen through the Political Frame of the Four-Frame Model of Leadership (Kezar, 2001; 2008). Although implementation of new initiatives is not a new phenomenon for higher education leaders, dealing with institutional transformation surrounding the diversification of student populations, such as HSI designation and enacting

*servingness* goals, comes with heavy expectations from multiple stakeholders and higher education leadership is pressured to respond appropriately. As Hurtado & Ruiz (2012) note, "rapid diversification of the student body presents new challenges and opportunities that require more coordinated responses that transform the structure, climate, and culture of an institution" (p. 3). In reacting to this leadership challenge, leaders must be prepared to effectively create new policy and direction for their organization as they are pushed and pulled in divergent directions by multiple stakeholders in the highly political environment of the higher education.

Kezar (2001; 2008) posits that colleges and universities function, at a core level, as political organizations, and enacting changes in these systems can be seen as political, especially when considering any identity-based issues. Higher education studies have found that academic organizations contain multiple sub-groups with conflicting interests and competing factions (Kezar, 2008). Change, or attempts at change, in these settings can be difficult as the multiple stakeholders (students, staff, senior leadership, academic affairs, etc.) have diverse opinions on the institution's direction and hold differing or even opposing values that inform those opinions. Furthermore, because of the political nature of higher education, university officials do not often mandate change and, as Kezar (2008) suggests, "persuasion and power have emerged in the place of authority." HSI designation and enacting *servingness* goals by Hispanic-Serving Institution leadership, can be identified as one such diversity effort impacted by politics.

Kezar (2008) identifies a framework for campus leaders to enact the complicated task of creating inclusive campus environments. Kezar (2008) identifies six strategies that are critical in moving forward diversity agendas (p. 420):

1. Develop coalitions and advocates

2. Take the political pulse regularly

3. Anticipate resistance

4. Use data to neutralize politics and rationalize the process

5. Create public relations campaigns and showcase success

6. Capitalize on controversy for learning and unearth interest groups.

When considering the development of coalitions and advocate strategy, several groups can be critical of new diversity changes including the external community, legislators, and student groups. Fostering relationships with these critical groups and relying on support from internal and external groups advocating for change is important for successful implementation.

Kezar (2008) suggests that mapping the political terrain should be done regularly by having a current and constant understanding of how students, faculty, and staff feel about the diversity agenda in question. It can be useful to have informants within these groups who can give you consistent and current information. Kezar (2008) also shares that taking the political pulse regularly is important for:

1. Knowing when to tap allies

2. Identifying when they are pushing the agenda too hard or fast

3. To anticipate resistance and development of proactive strategies

The strategy of anticipation is helpful as some resistance can be assessed and addressed by simply understanding how a particular institution functions or by tackling issues that are already known quantities from previous efforts within diversity effort. The strategy of using data helps to create a common understanding and convincing information in support of the diversity reform. Using public relation campaign strategies allows leaders to showcase

success stories and control the narrative about the change in question. Lastly, the strategy of capitalizing on controversy for learning and unearth interest groups is a practice of helping oppositional group find common ground when conflicts or similar issues arise that potential bond the groups over their new shared experience (e.g. two separate student groups of color coming together after an incident of bias that impacted both communities similarly).

Kezar (2019) expands further on higher educational leadership's necessary efforts when enacting change for diverse populations with her work *Creating a Diverse Student Success Infrastructure: The Key to Catalyzing Cultural Change for Today's Student*. This report offered a framework entitled The Diverse Student Success Infrastructure (DSSI) (see Figure 3) a roadmap to lead, "institutional transformation that creates equitable opportunities, experiences, and outcomes for those student populations traditionally underserved by our educational and other systems" (p. 1) and sustaining long-term cultural change on a college campus.

**Figure 3**

*Diverse Student Success Infrastructure Model*



Diverse Student Success Infrastructure
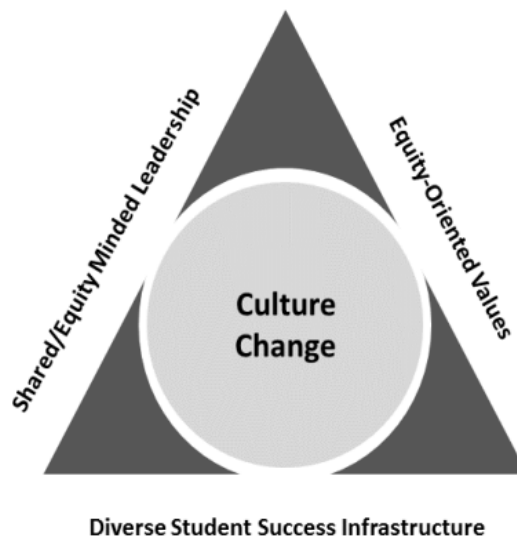
The DSSI  assumes that equity-oriented leadership is critical to the success of organization transformation. Kezar (2019) states that leadership shapes an organization's core values, strategic direction, and key priorities and is the driving force behind an institution's capability and commitment to a strategic plan centered on student success. Thus, leaders' roles do not simply include setting a diversity agenda, but actively communicating the agenda, incentivizing stakeholders, coordinating institutional resources, making pivotal decisions, and accepting responsibility for measurable progress. Through this framework, leaders are considered to be prioritizing student success when they foster an environment conducive to transformative changes in the institutional infrastructure and should continue to be equity-oriented leaders.

Equity-oriented leadership engages in the following actions: addressing disparities, acknowledging historical dynamics of power and privilege, and probing the underlying causes of present-day inequities. Equity-minded leaders assume personal accountability for the issues affecting students and recognize the failings of existing practices and policies. They proactively seek and implement reforms to mitigate these inequities. Additionally, equity-oriented leadership must create peace among the various elements of the diverse student success infrastructure, ensuring a cohesive and effective approach.

The DSSI supports three core areas related to organizational transformation: implementation of the change, sustaining change interventions, and ultimately helping lead to a culture change (Kezar, 2019). The DSSI has eight central aspects, shared in more detail below. These central aspects consist of planning; governance and decision-making; policy; finance/resource allocation; information and institutional research; facilities and information technology; human resources/development; incentives and reward structures; and

metrics/accountability which are interdependent and to be engaged collectively (Kezar, 2019).

**Planning**: "Campus processes were traditionally developed without an understanding of diverse student needs." (p.11) Thus, campus planning is crucial for aligning activities with institutional values and addressing the needs of diverse students. It shapes budget priorities and integrates student feedback and data for continuous improvement.

**Policy**: Policies shape faculty and staff actions, impacting student success. Regular reviews of policies help modify those that hinder diverse student success.

**Finance/Resource Allocation**: Resource allocation reflects a campus's commitment to student success. Budget processes that include diverse inputs and focus on student success are essential for effective financial decision-making.

**Information and Institutional Research**: Institutional research provides critical data for guiding student success initiatives. This information supports decision-making and helps refine governance, planning, and policies.

**Facilities and Information Technology**: Facilities and IT infrastructure are key to delivering education and support services inclusively. Effective management in these areas ensures alignment with student success objectives.

**Incentives and Reward Structures**: Incentive and reward systems that focus on student success drive institutional transformation. These systems must align with student success goals, sometimes requiring a shift from traditional reward structures.

**Human Resources/Development:** Human resources and development practices are crucial for fostering student success. They involve hiring and training faculty and staff to effectively meet the needs of diverse student populations.

**Metrics/Accountability**: Metrics and accountability systems are vital for tracking and achieving student success goals. A balanced set of metrics, including qualitative assessments, is necessary for true accountability and progress.

Additionally, Kezar (2019) puts forth that central aspects of the DSSI must be re-oriented and enhanced to better support students. The following shared features of effectives within the DSSI include equity, broad stakeholder engagement, collaboration, clarity & transparency, learning, and alignment. An example of how each feature can be applied in a given infrastructure is shared below (p.16):

Equity: disaggregate data by race and gender

Broad stakeholder engagement: involve faculty, staff, and students in planning on data collection for student success

Collaboration: interpret and explore data with various stakeholders' input

Clarity & transparency: develop shared metrics and definitions of student success and the creation of unit wide dashboards

Learning: consider new forms of data to inform student success, such as new survey questions and focus groups

Alignment/integration: provide cross-campus data forums that bring together stakeholders to ensure conversation related to data collection processes in various units

Kezar's (2001; 2008; 2019) work on higher education leadership's role in the enactment of organizational change to better serve diverse student populations offers a helpful framework to understand how leaders engage in politically charged work with the aim to create transformational change. Although helpful, these and similar frameworks, do not adequately address the needs of organizations designated as Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Study of HSI organization identity and HSI leadership challenges has a short history, only being reviewed in the last decade (Cortez, 2015). Cortez 2015) engaged this gap in the research due to the need for HSI-specific strategic interventions, as previous work focused solely on challenges faced by leaders and not strategic interventions. He offered three institutional practices critical to create a supportive campus environment for Latinx students to aid HSI leadership in creating organizational transformation. The first is culturally sensitive leadership, or having leaders engage in a way that is sensitive to the needs of student, relatable to students and act as both role models and advocates. The second practice is a focus on student-centered services with assessment and constant improvement of these services by eliciting student feedback. The third practice is intensive academic and career advisement for students transitioning to an HSI and as they embark on their next professional or academic journey from the institution. This early work centering HSI needs by scholars like Cortez (2015) set the stage for more intentional HSI-specific research in support of this unique institution shift.

As opposed to more general organizational frameworks, HSI-specific organizational identity and institutional transformation have also focused more intentionally on race (Garcia 2018). Researchers in this area also hold that being designated as HSI and successfully engaging in *servingness* goals includes taking on a racial justice organizational identity,

which requires practitioners within HSIs to become race-conscious as well as equity-minded (Bensimon, 2012; Petrov & Garcia, 2021) because, as Petrov & Garcia (2021) state, "getting the [HSI] funds does not ensure that the organizational identity for serving Latina/e/o/x, low income, and BIPOC [Black, Indigenous, People of Color] students will change." (p. 466)

Petrov & Garcia (2021) offer a set of three recommendations to leverage HSI designation by utilizing grant funding to enact change with organizations that take on a racial justice approach. These recommendations, as well as others offered, can serve as a complement to the previously discussed frameworks that lacked racial justice perspectives. The first recommendation offered was the need to disrupt whiteness as HSI educators are often predominantly white, committed to whiteness[2] and students at HSIs face various forms of discrimination. They contend that this can be accomplished by prioritizing the hiring of people of color, training on challenging white supremacist norms, and enhancing diversity initiatives such as language justice initiatives, just to name a few. The second recommendation focuses on training and development. This is accomplished by using grant funding to train faculty and staff on racial justice and racially just practices such as creation of antiracist curriculum development. The third, and last, recommendation is the empowerment and trust of grassroots leaders. Grassroots leaders are leaders that "agitate the system and push for change" (p.465) by disrupting whiteness, pushing for change, redistributing resources equitably, and holding the institutions accountable to its values.

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[2] "Cabrera et al. (2017) states that whiteness operates through the lens of color neutrality (i.e., we do not see race), epistemological ignorance (i.e., a willful aversion to systemic white supremacy), ontological expansiveness (i.e., white entitlement to every aspect of the campus), whiteness as property (i.e., white privilege and power), and assumed racial comfort (i.e., assuring white people are comfortable while dismissing racialized aggressions toward people of color)." (Petrov & Garcia, 2021, p. 463)

**Campus Climate: Multicontextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments**

The aforementioned research provided useful frameworks for leaders to engage in the work of creating organizational change in support of marginalized students. A concept critical and complimentary to that aim is campus climate. A helpful and widely used framework for understanding the complex nature of campus climate is the Multicontextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments (MMDLE or DLE) (Hurtado et al., 2012). The DLE is a framework grounded in social identity theory created to enhance understanding and improve the educational experience and outcomes within higher education institutions. The DLE takes into account student and non-student identities and is explicit about the multiple and complex contexts at work influencing education and student outcomes (Hurtado et al., 2012). Campus climate from this perspective encompasses both curricular and co-curricular activities that collectively and dynamically influence all institutional actors, and affect individual student outcomes and social transformation. The DLE posits that campus climate involves five dimensions (historical, compositional, organizational, psychological, and behavioral) functioning at both institutional and individual levels, taking into account internal contexts (curricular and co-curricular, and their process interactions) and macro-level contexts (community & external commitments, policy, and sociohistorical).

**Figure 4**

Multicontextual model for diverse learning environments
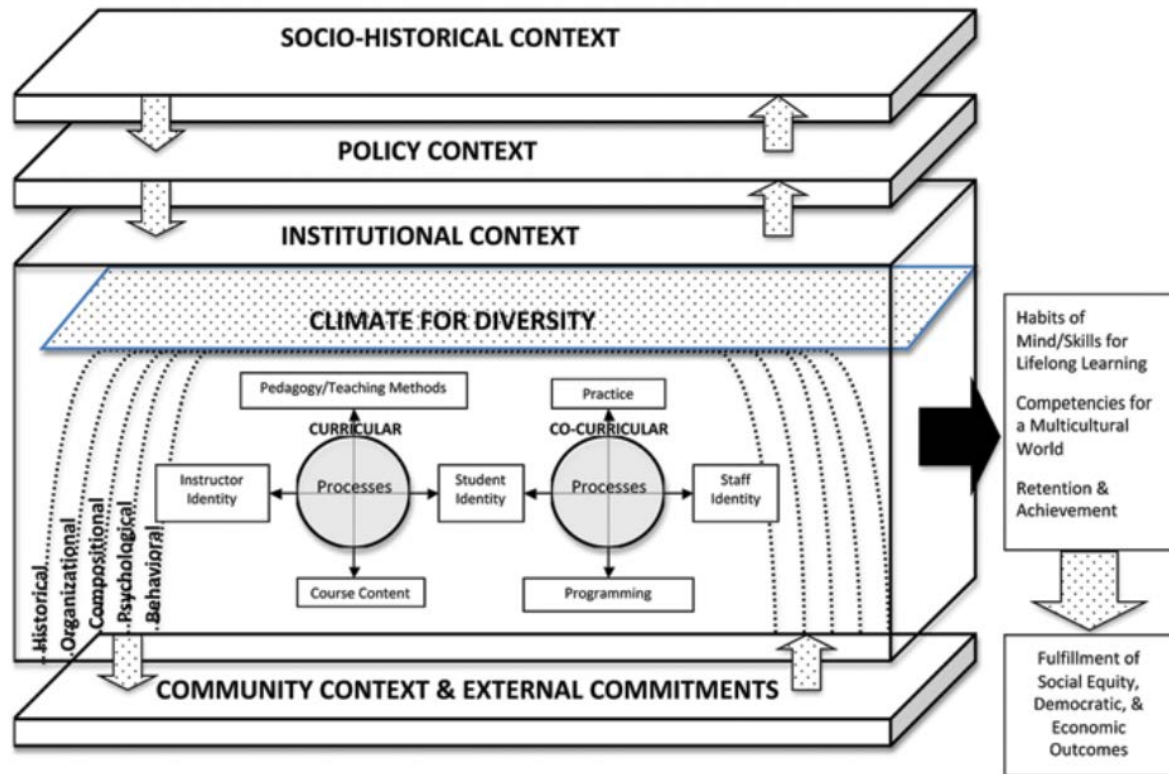


Within the institutional-level dimension of climate, Hurtado et al. (2012) identify the following dimensions: historical, organization/structural, and compositional.  The historical dimension is concerned with how past practices of exclusion continue to impact current campus environments. Many traditionally white institutions have historically limited access for various groups, including, but not limited to Latinx community members. The organizational/structural dimension focuses on how certain structures and processes within a college or university can unintentionally support privilege for some groups while oppressing others. The compositional dimension involves the diversity of students, faculty, staff, and administrators. The DLE finds that diversity is key to creating an environment where successful learning can happen. Hurtado et al. (2012) point out that students and staff who

are not represented broadly can suffer impacts to their academic and professional

performance.

The individual-level dimensions of climate are behavioral and psychological. The

behavioral dimension is interested in how well and how often different social identity groups

interact on campus. These interactions can be formal, like those facilitated by the campus in

classrooms or co-curricular settings, or informal, occurring in everyday situations outside

structured educational activities. Both formal and informal interactions are linked to student

outcomes and perceptions of campus climate. Hostile climates, created by real and perceived

negative interactions by underrepresented students, are considered in both the behavioral and

psychological dimensions as damaging to campus climate. The psychological dimension

involves how individuals perceive their environment, view intergroup relations, and

experience discrimination or racial conflict. Students of color can perceive feeling less safe

on college campuses than white peers. This perception impacts their educational outcomes.

The model emphasizes the importance of better understanding students to support their

success inside and outside the classroom.

The DLE highlights two important internal contexts: the curricular and the

cocurricular. In the curricular context, instructor identity, the pedagogy/teaching models

employed, and the importance of inclusive course content is highlighted as impacting campus

climate. Within the cocurricular context, staff identity, practices that intentionally enhance

student success, and the importance of impactful programming are emphasized.

Additionally, Hurtado et al. (2012), identify critical processes, which are described as

occurring "at the intersection of student and educator's identities, and intentional practices

(content, pedagogy, practice, and programming), that advance both diversity and learning to

achieve essential outcomes" (p. 83). These key processes include socialization or resocialization, validation, and fostering a sense of community and belonging. They are described below:

Socialization or Resocialization: Socialization processes compatible with diverse students' experiences, as these processes help underrepresented groups maximize college opportunities.

Creating Community - Sense of Belonging: Creating a sense of community can influence group dynamics. Positive campus climates improve a sense of belonging, affecting students' college transition and retention.

Validation: A supportive process that encourages students to recognize their self-worth and potential. Validation by faculty and staff is important for student success, especially for non-traditional students.

The DLE highlights three important external contexts to consider for campus climate: community context and external commitments, policy context, and sociohistorical context. Community context and external commitments are important as institutions of higher education are engaged in mutual relationships with external communities. These relationships influence campus climates and impact individual and institutional outcomes. External commitments include factors like finances, employment, family responsibilities, and opportunities to transfer. The relationships between institutions and local communities, the community climate, and external factors all affect campus climate. Policy Context is also a critical consideration as local, state, and federal policy shape campuses and student outcomes. Hurtado et al. (2012) highlight the following policy areas especially impactful to student of color outcomes and maintaining a positive campus climate include but are not

limited to the following areas: college access, degree attainment, affirmative action, and financial aid. Lastly, sociohistorical context highlights the sociohistorical changes, such as economic shifts and evolving legal definitions of diversity, create a significant impact for faculty and student outcomes, thus impacting campus climate.

<center>***Servingness***</center>

*Servingness*, or the concept of adequately serving the educational needs of Latinx students, is one of the most prolific research areas in the study of HSIs (Ballysingh et al., 2018; Garcia, 2018a; 2018b; 2020; 2023 Garcia et al., 2019; Garcia & Taylor, 2017). The concept of *servingness* complements and incorporates campus climate considerations and research, including Hurtado et al.'s (2012) Multicontextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments, and is commonly featured in the works of scholars who specialize in servingness (Garcia, 2018a; 2018b; 2020).

The following definition is offered as the conceptual understanding of *servingness* for this study, which she defines as:

> "the ability for colleges and universities that meet the 25% Latinx and 50% low-income enrollment threshold to become HSI to enroll and educate Latinx students through a culturally enhancing approach that centers Latinx ways of knowing and being, with the goal of providing transformative experiences that lead to both academically and non-academic outcomes." (Garcia, 2020, p. 1-2)

Garcia (2020) identifies that adequately serving Latinx students is not simply an academic pursuit. The definition and corresponding framework offers the following dimensions: organization structures of serving, outcomes (academic and non-academic), experiences

(from students and non-students), internal organizational dimensions (leadership, curriculum, and practices) and external forces, while taking into account the impacts of white supremacy.

**Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Framework for Organizing**

Guiding and foundational framework for this study is Garcia's (2018a) Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Framework for Organizing. The framework offers a process to address the needs of Latinx students, engage in a cultural transformation, takes into account a complex set of factors that impact campus climate, and critically addresses whiteness through a decolonization perspective. Decolonization is used in the work to as recognition of "the "colonial matrix of power" that is grounded in historical coloniality and operates in four realms of modernity, including economic, political, civic, and the epistemological realms" (p.133). The framework is grounded in ideology of antiracism and is offered as a means to holistically and effectively fulfill the mission of addressing internal and external aspects of the institution as it engages in serving Latinx and all racially minoritized students. The framework established nine dimensions critical for leaders to address when transforming and enacting *servingness* efforts. The dimensions include: Purpose, Mission, Membership, Technology, Governance, Community Standards, Justice & Accountability, Incentive Structure, and External Boundary Management. They are described in detail below.

The Purpose dimension calls for HSIs to shift from traditional outcomes to a broader purpose for postsecondary institutions. This approach values stresses the importance of developing student's critical and oppositional consciousness, and promoting holistic student development. The Mission dimension posits that HSI missions should embrace antiracist, anti-oppressive, and decolonizing ideologies. They should also include HSI identity within the mission of the institution. The Membership dimension identifies that HSIs should be

43

inclusive and welcoming members from various communities. Membership should include students, faculty, staff, alumni, trustees, and community partners, all united in the mission of decolonization and liberation. The Technology dimension emphasizes that all methods and forms of educational delivery should center the experiences and knowledge of racially minoritized people to encourage students to explore their identities, challenge oppressive structures, and develop consciousness about their communities. The Governance dimension involves a focus on shared, decentralized leadership and decision-making, rejecting traditional centralized and bureaucratic structures. The Community Standards dimension states that members should be allowed to participate in the development of rules, regulations, and policies. Community standards should be complimentary to the decentralized governance structure. The Justice and Accountability dimension calls for justice to be grounded in restorative practices, not criminal or administrative proceedings. The Incentive Structure dimension is concerned with incentivizing all faculty and staff to engage in work that enhances racial and cultural ways of knowing The External Boundary Management dimension calls for HSIs to develop relationships with local communities, others HSIs and HSI organizations such as HACU.

**CHAPTER III**

**METHODOLOGY**

This study investigated S*ervingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions. A qualitative methodology was utilized, and information was collected through semi-structured interviews with faculty, staff, and administrators from two Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs). Informants are key leaders positioned within their organization to support HSI servingness dimensions. The study explores their perceptions and experiences in relation to their institutions' *servingness* goals.

**Research Questions**

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What strategies and initiatives have or will be implemented to realize *servingness* goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions?

2. What perceptions do HSRI leaders hold on dimensions of *servingness* their organization provides, including the specification of *servingness* goals?

**Research Design**

This research study employed a qualitative design methodology, more explicitly, a multiple case study design. Case study designs within educational research involve the in-depth study of a unique educational activity, program, or person of interest and identify a "case" as the object of study within a bounded system (Creswell, 2008). Bounded in this context means "the case is separated out for research in terms of time, place and some physical boundaries" (Creswell, 2008, p. 476). Creswell (2008) finds that case study methodology should be utilized if the problem studied relates to developing an in-depth understanding of the case or bounded system.

45

Case study design was identified to be the most appropriate design due to the unique educational problem being studied. Additionally, the current study meets the case study design criteria as the setting in question, Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions, are unique and the educational activity of enacting HSI *servingness* efforts are of interest to multiple stakeholders. Additionally, the objects of study are bounded by the specific activity of Latinx student *servingness* during and around the time of HSI designation within the specific institutions being studied. For the purposes of this study the cases being studied are the Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs), identified as University H1 and University H2.

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

**Setting**

Given the narrow scope of this study, cases and informants were identified by their classification as a Hispanic-Serving Research Institution, as identified by HACU and Title V designation, as well as classification as a R1 Institution, or doctoral universities with very high research activity, as designated by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (2018). The Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions and key informants for this study were identified by convenience sampling and snowball sampling. Convenience sampling is the process by which the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to participate in the study (Creswell, 2008). Snowball sampling involves asking the participants in your study to identify and involve other participants in the study (Creswell, 2008). Both sampling procedures, nonprobability approaches, impact the generalizability and applicability of findings for the study (Creswell, 2008). Although a known limitation of these sampling techniques, it has been noted that fully informing the reader of the rationale for the

need and sampling process gives readers the necessary context to interpret findings and their applicability appropriately (Coleman & Briggs, 2007). This sampling and selection procedure was deemed appropriate given the small number of HSRIs, the barriers to access to informants, and the political nature of the topic of investigation. At least one informant at each of the two HSRIs studied was known to the researcher due to their work as staff member within one of the HSRIs studied. Research positionality is discussed later in this chapter. The researcher contacted each informant via email requesting their participation in the study. Once participants agreed to participate, they informed of the need for further participants. Informants then shared names of potential participants and contact was made and interviews were scheduled.

Both H1 and H2 are large public universities within a large west coast public college system who achieved HSI eligibility within the last 10 years, and obtained multiple multi-million-dollar grants per the US Department of Education Grant Awards website (2023, n.d.-a, n.d.-b), for the following funding and program areas:

1. Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V

2.  Hispanic-Serving Institutions - Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics and Articulation Programs

3. Promoting Postbaccalaureate Opportunities for Hispanic Americans Program.

**Participants**

Key informants were identified within the selected cases based on their influence on campus climate and policy implementation, traits identified by Hurtado & Ruiz (2012) as key for stake holders in the HSI success. Participants were purposefully selected due to their institutional roles (faculty member, student affairs leader, HSI grant administrator, and DEI

47

leader) that are identified as critical to the implementation of servingness goals (Garcia, 2020).

Through the sampling procedures, the informants were identified and confirmed as being involved, at a formal capacity, with HSI designation planning and/or HSI programming implementation efforts. Informants in each institution involved individuals who were tasked by their institution to work on HSI, campus climate, and/or Latinx student programming efforts. Within each case, at least one informant was a member of a system-wide advisory group who was responsible for being a conduit between system-wide HSI efforts and local university HSI efforts, leader of HSI efforts at the campus level, and national stakeholders on HSI matters.

Participants' roles within their HSRI (faculty member, student affairs leader, HSI grant administrator, and DEI leader) were selected intentionally to address different areas of servingness and climate outcomes identified within the Decolonizing HSIs Framework (Garcia, 2018a). HSI grant administrators were included to better understand HSI designation and grant acquisition processes. Faculty members were included to review and discuss academic-based and curricular HSI initiatives. DEI leaders were asked to participate to obtain key knowledge on campus climate impacts of HSI *servingness* efforts. Lastly, Students Affairs leaders were involved to better understand the out-of-the-classroom or co-curricular experience as it relates to HSI *servingness* efforts and campus climate.

Given the prominent roles played by informants on their respective campuses and the political nature of the information being requested by the researcher, the participants' identities and any identifiable information has been omitted from this work. Protecting the anonymity of participants in a study that may have unintended consequences is of critical

48

ethical importance for researchers (Creswell, 2008). As such, participants and institutions were assigned reference codes, and no demographic information was collected or shared as part of this study. Any demographic data shared by participants (social group identity, etc.) was disclosed freely by informants without prompting. Table 1 lists the university, participants code names, and their role within their institution.

**Table 1**

*Study Participants & Roles*

| University | Participant | Role |
| --- | --- | --- |
| H1 | P11 | Faculty |
| H1 | P12 | HSI Grant Staff |
| H1 | P13 | Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Leadership |
| H1 | P14 | Student Affairs Leadership |
| H2 | P21 | Faculty |
| H2 | P22 | Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Leadership |
| H2 | P23 | Student Affairs Leadership |

Fourteen participants within four HSRIs were contacted to participate in the study. Of these individuals, seven individuals within two HSRIs chose to participate in the study and moved forward to the interview process. A general overview for each of the two cases and University H1 and University H2 is provided below. As previously noted, given the political and sensitive nature of the perspectives being shared, minimal background information regarding respondents has been provided to support anonymity of the informants. However,

information regarding participants' institutional positionality and roles to contextualize their involvement with HSI efforts is included.

## University H1

University H1 is a public land-grant research institution. H1 enrolls approximately 25,000 undergraduates and over 2,000 graduate students. H1 is classified as an R1: "Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity," a member of the Association of American Universities (AAU) and was designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) around 10 years ago. Table 2 indicates University H1 participant data including university pseudonym, participant pseudonym, university role, and description.

**Table 2**

*University H1 participants*

| University | Participant | University Role | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| H1 | P11 | Faculty | Director of a research unit with formal HSI leadership role within H1. |
| H1 | P12 | HSI Grant Staff | HSI Grant writer and administrator working with executive officer on HSI initiatives. |
| H1 | P13 | DEI Leadership | Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Leader focused on HSI initiatives with formal role on HSI campus committee. |
| H1 | P14 | Student Affairs | Student Affairs Executive leader with no formal leadership role within H1. |

### H1 Participants

The following section provides an overview of each participant. Participant interview data will be provided later in Chapter IV under the discussion of themes for each university.

*Participant P11*

Participant P11 is a faculty member, serves as the director of a research unit, and has a formal HSI leadership role at University H1. Their involvement with activities associated with HSI designation and HSI programmatic activities began as a personal commitment to supporting Latinx students in other capacities rather than through designated HSI-specific administrative duties. P11 became increasingly proactive, volunteering as a campus representative on multiple HSI committees, and contributing to discussions and planning around the university's HSI status.

They highlighted the transformative potential of the HSI designation, advocating for it to reorganize and influence all university sectors, not just student demographics. P11 is actively involved in embedding the principles of servingness across the institution, including advocating for greater representation among graduate students, faculty, and leadership. They view the HSI status as a catalyst for systemic change rather than a mere statistical milestone, aiming to integrate these goals deeply into the university's operational and academic framework. P11 also highlighted structural challenges in implementing HSI initiatives, notably the lack of a formalized structure or clear leadership within the university to support these efforts. This has led them to push for the establishment of a more recognizable and supportive infrastructure for HSI programs, which would enable more effective and coordinated efforts towards serving Latinx communities. Through their actions and advocacy, P11 is a key figure in driving forward the university's commitment to its HSI status, working towards meaningful integration of Latinx-serving initiatives.

*Participant P12*

Participant P12 is a HSI grant writer and administrator for University H1. Their involvement with HSI initiatives is significant and stems from both a practical and a theoretical interest in the concept of servingness. P12 expanded on the traditional definitions and measures of what it means to be a Hispanic-serving institution, as these definitions can sometimes be overly simplistic and not reflective of the diverse needs and identities of Latinx students. They advocated for a more nuanced and inclusive approach to defining servingness, one that recognizes the complex realities of institutional identities, and the varied ways institutions can serve students. This perspective was informed by P12's engagement with both academic theories and practical applications of servingness. P12 is involved in efforts to rethink and expand the ways in which servingness can be operationalized and institutionalized. They highlighted the importance of broadening the scope of HSI initiatives beyond student success programs to include more comprehensive institutional transformation efforts. Their approach sought to address the structural and systemic aspects of servingness, aiming to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students, not just those who identify as Latinx.

*Participant P13*

Participant P13 serves as a leader in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) division at their university, specifically focusing on HSI initiatives among other responsibilities. Their role is multifaceted, blending administrative duties with active community engagement and assessment efforts. P13 is involved in evaluating how Latinx communities experience the university's HSI designation, questioning whether it substantively changes their campus experience or merely serves as a superficial label. P13's responsibilities also include leading

and organizing the administrative aspects of HSI-related programs, particularly in navigating

grant-seeking processes due to the university's HSI status. This involves ensuring that grant

applications align with the broader institutional goals and ensuring resources are allocated

and used within the institution. P13 plays a crucial role in managing and coordinating

committees and working groups that focus on the HSI initiatives. This includes ensuring that

these groups are effective in their operations and adhering to timelines and action items.

Their work is deeply embedded in both the operational and philosophical aspects of what it

means to be an HSI, striving to bridge the gap between HSI as a funding mechanism and HSI

as a transformative force for inclusivity and equity within the university.

### *Participant P14*

Participant P14 serves as a student affairs executive leader in University H1, and

while they do not have a specifically defined role in HSI efforts, their involvement intersects

significantly with HSI-related activities due to their frequent and major engagement in

diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives on campus. P14's engagement with HSI

began around the time the university was celebrating its official recognition as an HSI. They

were involved in celebrating this status with students and the broader campus community,

highlighting the significance of this designation. Beyond celebratory activities, P14

contributes to the advancement of DEI initiatives that may benefit from HSI-related funding,

working collaboratively with colleagues who manage HSI grants. Their role involves a

broader engagement with DEI across the university, which overlaps with HSI goals,

especially in creating and participating in programs that foster an inclusive campus

environment. P14's contributions are oriented towards enhancing the university's trajectory

in celebrating and educating about DEI, integrating the HSI designation into broader

university initiatives. This involves a strategic application of HSI-related resources to support various student groups, especially underrepresented students, by leveraging available grants and funding opportunities to enhance support systems and educational opportunities across the campus.

## University H2

University H2 is also a public land-grant research institution and part of a larger system of research institutions. H2 enrolls approximately 20,000 undergraduates and around 2,000 graduate students. H2 is classified as an R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity, is a member of the Association of American Universities, and was designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution around 10 years ago.  Table 3 indicates University H2 participant data including university pseudonym, participant pseudonym, university role, and description.

**Table 3**

*University H2 participants*

| University | Participant | University Role | Description |
|---|---|---|---|
| H2 | P21 | Faculty | Chair of an Academic Department with longstanding formal HSI leadership role. |
| H2 | P22 | DEI Leadership | DEI Leader with previous formal roles within H2 and leader of HSI campus climate efforts. |
| H2 | P23 | Student Affairs | Student Affairs senior leader with no formal leadership role within H2. |

**University H2 Participants**

*Participant P21*

Participant P21 is a faulty member and chair of an academic department. They are deeply involved in their university's HSI efforts and have been a part of these initiatives since

their inception. They serve on H2's leadership committee and have co-authored several HSI grants. Their role extends beyond the university as they also represent their campus in a systemwide HSI group. P21 views their role in HSI efforts as an integration of their academic work with their commitment to social justice, emphasizing the transition from merely admitting minority students to ensuring their success and future leadership opportunities. They advocate for a comprehensive approach to servingness that includes not only inclusion but also academic and professional advancement for students, challenging the institution to support these goals comprehensively. In their involvement, P21 has contributed to various initiatives aimed at increasing faculty diversity and supporting students of color. This includes developing materials and training for equitable faculty hiring practices and creating a dashboard to help departments assess and improve their educational outcomes for students of color.

*Participant P22*

Participant P22 holds a formal leadership role within DEI at University H2, playing a pivotal role in shaping the campus climate for inclusivity with students, staff, and faculty. Originally involved in foundational efforts following the university's designation as an HSI, P22 contributed significantly to grant proposals and program implementation aimed at enhancing the support and success of Latinx students. Their work included organizing regional family conferences and serving on HSI steering committees, which were crucial during the early stages of the university's adaptation to its HSI status. As the initiatives grew, P22 transitioned to focus more on broader DEI strategies, aiming to create systemic changes across the university. Their responsibilities encompass not only student-focused initiatives but also the recruitment and support of staff and faculty, ensuring that DEI principles are

integrated into all levels of the institution. This role involves strategic oversight and implementation of policies and practices that foster an equitable environment, reflecting the diverse demographics of the university community and enhancing the representation and inclusion of Latinx and other underrepresented groups within all university areas.

*Participant P23*

Participant P23 serves in a senior leadership position at their university within Student Affairs. While they do not have a formal role in the HSI initiatives, P23 intentionally incorporates aspects of this responsibility into their broader duties concerning campus climate and servingness. They view their position as integral to advancing the university's commitment to serving Latinx students and the wider community, emphasizing the importance of integrating Latinx identity and concerns into the university's operations and culture. In their role, P23 focuses on leveraging their leadership to foster a university environment that transcends mere compliance with HSI, aiming instead to embody the values and spirit of what it means to be truly serving the Latinx community. This involves not only supporting and reviewing grant applications and new programs but also participating in strategic discussions that influence the university's direction regarding its Latinx students and broader community engagement. P23 advocates for thoughtful inclusion of Latinx perspectives in all university activities to ensure that these efforts resonate authentically with the intended beneficiaries and contribute positively to the institutional mission.

**Data Collection**

Data was gathered by targeted interviews of key informants during the 2022-2023 academic year. Each informant was sent an email requesting their participation in the study that included an introduction to the study, the research questions, a description of the

interview process, data collection information, and researcher contact information (see

Appendix A). Once a participant agreed to be involved in the study, each informant received

an informed consent form outlining the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits,

confidentiality, right to withdraw, and researcher contact information for the study (See

Appendix B). Informed consent forms were issued, processed, and signed via DocuSign

online e-signature software. Interviews were conducted via Zoom video conference and were

recorded by Zoom Cloud Recording. The audio recording was retained for transcription

purposes. Consent forms, electronic notes, and interview audio recordings were downloaded

and stored in an encrypted on-line drive for security purposes.

**Interview Protocol**

Castillo-Montoya's (2016) interview protocol refinement (IPR) framework was

utilized in the creation of this study's protocol. The phases are outlined as follows:

1. Ensuring interview questions align with research questions

2. Constructing an inquiry-based conversation

3. Receiving feedback on interview protocols

4. Piloting the interview protocol.

The protocol was aligned with the research questions as it is developed from the Multi-

Contextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) (Hurtado et al., 2012; Hurtado

& Ruiz, 2012) and the Decolonizing HSIs (Garcia, 2018a) Frameworks which addresses

phase one of the IPR framework. The protocol was constructed to invite participants to

inquiry-based conversation with questions differing from the research questions and inclusive

of follow-up, or probing, questions. The protocol received feedback from the researcher's

dissertation committee not only prior to this study's interview process, but prior to the study

within a pilot study investigation with similar research questions, participants, and setting. The information gathered during the pilot study interviewing process was utilized to edit the protocol appropriately yielding the final version of the interview questions and format.

Prior to the beginning of the interview, the researcher highlighted the importance of confidentiality and the steps taken to ensure anonymity and privacy outlined in the informed consent document. The Interview protocol (see Appendix C) was designed to gather the leadership perspective of informant's views on institution's initiatives and strategies surrounding HSI *Servingness* efforts and climate. The protocol was created by utilizing the areas identified by the Multi-Contextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) (Hurtado et al., 2012; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012) and the Decolonizing HSIs (Garcia, 2018a) Frameworks.

The protocol contained four sections and question types: introductory, HSI process & designation, HSI *servingness,* and campus climate. Introductory questions were asked to establish rapport and gain an understanding of the informant's role in their institution (e.g. What is your role within the university and with HSI efforts?). HSI process questions focus on the process of HSI designation and initiatives (e.g. How do you perceive your organization has changed since HSI designation?). HSI *servingness* questions attempted to obtain information regarding specific initiatives and goals in support of the Latinx student population of the campus (e.g. How has your institution involved students in HSI efforts?). Campus climate questions were asked to understand how the leader perceives HSI initiatives have impact their institution and if any efforts are, or will be, underway that impact *servingness* goals and campus climate (e.g. How has compositional diversity or student race/ethnicity demographics been impacted by HSI efforts?).

## Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using a thematic analytical method, commonly referred to as thematic analysis. This method was chosen for its compatibility with a case study approach and its capacity to provide a rich and accurate reflection of the entire data set, as noted by Braun & Clarke (2006). They argue that thematic analysis is especially beneficial in examining under-researched areas or when engaging with participants whose perspectives on the topic are unknown (p. 83). Given the study's emphasis on a newly emerging institutional type, HSRI, and interviews with its leaders, thematic analysis was deemed appropriate. Braun & Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework for thematic analysis was used to identify themes and patterns in the data. These phases included (Braun & Clarke, 2006):

1. Familiarization with data

2. Initial code generation

3. Searching for themes

4. Reviewing themes

5. Defining and naming themes

6. Producing a report

In the familiarization phase, interview recordings were transcribed to provide detail and to aid in recalling the perspective of informants, also certifying validity in the interpretations of the data. Following the completion of the transcription, accuracy was verified by re-listening to all interviews and cross-checking them against the transcriptions. The transcripts were then uploaded to Dedoose, a qualitative data analysis software for coding. Inductive coding was utilized in data analysis process, which involves interpreting textual data to develop themes (Creswell, 2008). Initial code generation was established by reviewing all

59

transcriptions and codes were noted and organized within Dedoose. Codes were then sorted into university specific themes (e.g. Leadership Needs) and cross-case themes (e.g. R1 Status Impact). Themes were then checked for pattern and fit, as well as if they were representative of the dataset. Once themes were established, they were named, and a report was generated. The findings are shared in the following chapter.

## Positionality

The investigator for this study identifies as a Latinx scholar-practitioner and serves as a student affairs practitioner. This background provides valuable insights and access which is helpful for the success of the study but also introduces potential bias in data interpretation, which could affect the study's internal validity. To address these biases, several strategies were implemented. Data triangulation was used to incorporate various sources of data, offering a comprehensive view of the data being studied. Also, member checking was conducted where possible, allowing participants to review the findings and ensure their experiences were accurately represented.

## Ethical Procedures & Considerations

University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB) Human Subjects Committee granted approval for this study prior to the beginning of data collection. Due to the nature of the study, the committee granted the study exempt status. Additionally, as stated earlier, due to the significant roles of the key informants at their respective institutions and the political nature of the data sought by the researcher, all personally identifiable information has been deliberately excluded from this study. The safeguarding of participant anonymity is a paramount ethical consideration in research that carries potential risks of unintended

repercussions. Consequently, participants and institutions were assigned pseudonyms, and no

demographic data were gathered or disclosed throughout this investigation.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDINGS

This following chapter presents the data found in the study in response to the following research questions:

1. What strategies and initiatives have or will be implemented to realize *servingness* goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions?

2. What perceptions do HSRI leaders hold on dimensions of *servingness* their organization provides, including the specification of *servingness* goals?

The information was primarily gathered by interviewing key informants. A secondary data source included review of publicly available documents and university websites to gather information regarding the university description and the organizational description of HSI programs.

## Themes

As stated previously, themes are organized according to a case-driven format by each University. A cross-case analysis is then presented comparing data across the two universities, H1 and H2, and, lastly, an analysis of how the identified themes relate to the research questions is discussed. H1 participants P11-P14 identified campus community building as furthering the realization of servingness goals, while also noting a number of strategies that could be undertaken in the implementation of the HSI initiative. University H2 participants P21-23 identified several strengths of the HSI in a comprehensive effort on campus, while indicating difficulties with buy-in and other challenges initially.

**University H1 Analysis**

The following five themes noted by participants identified five areas important to HSI efforts and *servingness:*

- Campus community building

- Need for greater intentional student involvement

- Importance of planning & structure

- Need for leadership

- Critical external factors

*Campus Community Building*

The first theme identified was the focus and importance of building community efforts throughout campus while engaging in HSI efforts. P11 expressed how the HSI status has fostered a sense of community and pride among first-generation students, by sharing the following:

One of the most successful things I think they've done over the years was when they secured their first student-initiated or student-serving HSI grant. Their complete focus is on first-gen students, making it a point of pride to be a first-gen student, not just something that's different and needs to be overcompensated for.

This emphasis on community and pride helps first-generation students feel valued and supported, reinforcing the positive impact of HSI initiatives. P12 shared a similar sentiment when discussing the collaborative efforts within the university surrounding grant support:

We have been able to do a ton of stuff and initiate a ton of stuff because it wasn't as threatening coming from a place where you wouldn't expect it. But in my mind,

pushing hard on getting our faculty to apply for all of these grants has been the thing

that has changed the whole attitude about us being a Hispanic-Serving Institution.

In the following excerpt, P13 shares another example of how H1 underscored the importance

involving the community in HSI efforts, saying:

I start with community organizing. This is always my start. Like, I would be at

people's kitchens, both literal and metaphorical, and I would be doing assets and

needs mapping. Focus groups, these conversational networks, excavate the histories

and the presence of this community's experience on the campus, the more easily you

can build a just future.

Overall, the theme of Campus Community Building when engaging in HSI efforts at

University H1 was evident through proactive engagement, shared goals, and collective

efforts to support Latinx students and foster an inclusive environment.

### *Need for Greater Intentional Student Involvement*

Although campus community building was a key strength, a second theme

highlighted the need for more meaningful student involvement in the work undertaken to

support Latinx students on University H1's campus. All four participants noted the

importance of participation throughout the designation process and regarding HSI initiatives.

P12 shared the following regarding involving students, "Yeah, I think through the

whole process there could have been a lot more inclusion of students." P12 highlights the

importance of having students involved from the conceptualization of HSI designation

through its inception. P14 echoed the sentiments of P12, as they shared that they would like

to see themselves and their university engage with more students on this topic:

I would look for opportunities to engage students in more conversations of what it

means to be HSI, look for opportunities to when we're applying for some of the grant

money available to the designated schools where they could be active participants in

the research that we get money for the programming.

Although participants shared several examples of student involvement with HSI efforts, they

believed involvement should be more intentional and, in one case shared that student

involvement was sometimes detrimental to students as well. In the following excerpt, P13

shares a particularly impactful incident during a HSI committee involving student

involvement working on acquiring a position dedicated to HSI efforts at University H1:

For instance, in our HSI Committee, there the committee was tasked with writing the

JD [job description] for the [HSI position] and the faculty on the committee tried to

get the students to write it.

P13 goes on to share the following when describing the same incident, i.e., the position

description:

And so now we asked the students. So, the students were asked to like, show up and

be advocates, and have their voices, and it wasn't honored right.

This example highlights views about a genuine attempt to involve students, noting

H1's inclusion of students within HSI efforts, but suggests the need for involvement to be

intentional to ensure misunderstandings or unintentional negative impacts do not occur.

Participants reveal that University H1 made earnest efforts to involve students with

HSI efforts. However, an area identified throughout the experiences shared and the excerpts

presented here, was the need for student involvement from the onset of discussions--and for

efforts around involvement to not only be well-meaning, but well executed (e.g., in job descriptions, grant-supported research).

### *Importance of Planning & Structure*

Another theme interviewees expressed was the importance of structure through a clear vision and strategy around HSI efforts. The importance of structure was stressed by all participants. P11 shared their thoughts on the lack of structure, "I think there isn't a structured organization, so I feel like sometimes I have to put myself out there and does hope that people trust and follow or volunteer or come to my side of the room." P11 would later discuss the notion that all stakeholders in the institutions should have a strategic DEI plan and that University H1 would benefit by the creation of a HSI plan and vision.

P12 highlighted that they believed HSI planning was important in the following quote: "And then another thing that has never happened, because we just haven't had the leadership in place, is that there has never been a systematic strategic plan for what it means to be a minority serving institution." P13 shared the same sentiments here:

I don't think there's a unified vision for what [University] as an HSI is, right? I think a lot of folks who work with the HSI components know how robust services are, and how, like, hard we ride for them, and how hard they ride for us. But there's no structural vision right.

P13 continues in the following quote, sharing the lack of structure impacting understanding and coordination efforts throughout units within University H1:

If I went to the [chief executive leader] now, [and] I said, what does it mean to be an HSI? That'd be different than [executive leader], than [executive leader], than [executive leader], then myself than [Academic Department]. Than, you know

66

[Office], and … that's a barrier. You know that creates people doing things in different images and not resource sharing and not collaborating. And so, yeah, again, just that culture of collaboration. And yeah, our specific institution is funkier.

A similar perspective was shared by P14 who commented, "This campus is very siloed. We are, we don't do a great job of working across our different divisions, and I think it's a huge miss, because there's their cultural organizations through student life." P14 shared what they perceived to be the implications and opportunity costs of planning efforts that do not involve all stakeholders, and the effects of siloing with the institution. Participant 14 touched on the challenges of internal communication and the practical impact of the HSI designation on campus: "[One university area] is so out of the loop. Our students are organizing and frustrated, and we're missing the opportunity to share information and be transparent." This quote reveals the gaps in communication that can occur at H1 when intentional structure is not inclusive of all stakeholders, missing opportunities to involve all constituents.

Information shared by participants perceived the importance of effective planning efforts and an inclusive structure. The participants highlighted the need for structure and planning impacting communication leading to siloing effects.

### Leadership Needs

The need for clarity from executive campus leadership and a stable leadership effort supporting HSI initiatives was evidenced throughout all participant interviews. The perceived impact of unstable and transitional leadership occurring on the campus was also identified. This leadership issue is best summed up by P11. Although P11 voiced that

transition in leadership was inevitable on university campuses, greater stability was needed in HSI efforts:

> I think part of the problem in our HSI efforts is that we haven't had stable leadership. So, I understand that there's always a transition to new leadership and then that transition to new leadership will undoubtedly have a lag and introducing new programs or new focuses, but I do think that, if you have constant transitions and you just get further behind, so I think one of the issues has been we haven't had stable leadership [within the DEI Office].

P14 highlighted their perspective on executive leadership impacts on HSI initiatives when asked how HSI designation has changed their campus: "From my vantage point, No changes. I haven't seen any changes [in leadership strategies]. I, I haven't seen it affect the leadership of our campus at all. There's been no change from what I can tell." Whether lack of communication or leadership oversight, the need for clarity and leadership from executives was evident by P14's comments. P14 was not alone, as P13 also voiced a need for visible action and/or communication from the university leadership regarding HSI efforts. P13 shared their perspective on University H1 executive leadership's involvement and a need for a greater proactive response on HSI and similar issues. They shared their perspective that the university can at times be a reactionary campus and not be proactive in their work around social justice.

This perspective, along with the others shared, underscores the necessity of achieving leadership continuity in HSI-related efforts as well as the need for clear leadership and guidance from executive leaders on this issue.

*Critical External Factors*

Another theme that was prevalent when reviewing the information shared by participants in University H1, was the role of external factors by way of critical global incidents impacting HSI efforts. As the participants described, these incidents came at critical times in the planning and execution of initiatives to highlight HSI services and efforts.

One such incident was the COVID-19 pandemic. In the following excerpt, P14 shared the impacts of the pandemic at University H1 when it came to helping students and other stakeholders understand HSI designation:

And then COVID happened, and that disconnect from campus and us making any progress and helping people understand what HSI designation means, and what these grants are to be used for, got waylaid in the absence of campus. I don't think students are wrong, however, if especially, if we could, if they could, connect the dots of no, you don't get to use this grant money, but the campus should be doing more for you.

Similarly, in the following, P11 identified another external factor to University H1 that impacted the willingness and motivation for community members of color to work on HSI issues:

I think that we have a strong sector, the university is ready, willing and enthusiastic and already doing the work welcoming the work of serving Latinx students and a POC and BIPOC students. And I think we made more of a commitment, I'm going to be very honest, during this post George Floyd moment. There's now a newer sector that is really motivated but not sure exactly how to work more with Latinx students and students of color in general.

Both examples highlight critical external factors that had a significant impact on not only HSI efforts, but general university function and other DEI efforts.

*University H1 Summary*

The presentation of data from University H1 revealed the following perceptions organized into five themes: Campus Community Building, Need for Greater Intentional Student Involvement, Importance of Planning & Structure, Leadership Needs, and Critical External Factors. Participants at University H1 agreed that deliberate student engagement and consistent leadership in fostering successful HSI activities was necessary and important. Stakeholders at the university maintained ambitious goals for serving its diverse student body, recognizing the institution as a dynamic entity actively striving to enhance its services and campus environment for Latinx students. Despite these efforts, they also acknowledged the persistent challenges, such as unstable leadership and external factor impact, and the necessity of building community to make strides in fully achieving these objectives.

**University H2 Analysis**

The following four themes were identified in the analysis of University H2 participants:

- Institutional accountability

- Need for faculty support

- Comprehensive inclusion & commitment

- Cultural community engagement

*Institutional Accountability*

University H2 participants expressed a common perspective that there was a need for the HSI designation to be perceived as critical and required significant institutional reform by University H2 stakeholders to truly serve their diverse student body effectively. P22 shares some of the perspectives and challenges University H2 community members had when first taking on HSI initiatives: "Some of the challenges in the beginning was that, that buy-in?

You know, the other one was a mistrust and, and a mistrust, in the sense of changing projects

and programs like what? How? Not only how will it benefit? Let's say my division, my

discipline. But is this gonna be something that we are going to be able to measure?"

Those challenges highlighted the need for institutional accountability regarding HSI

efforts. This need included reevaluation of how institutions fulfill their responsibilities and

commitments to students' in addressing systemic issues that may hinder student success. P21

shared their perspective on this need for accountability within HSI efforts here:

So, we inherited this idea, that sort of individualized the issue at the level of the

student. And rarely did our institutions ask the question, how are we serving them? Or

are we serving to the full extent of the rights they have to, the successful high level

research education? And that means interrogating, not just the preparation of the

student, but actually owning the student and saying, "since we accepted you, we will

make sure that we train you and provide you with you all the avenues, so that you can

expand as an intellectual as a person as a young person." And that means rethinking a

whole lot of the practices and systems that constitute your institution.

P23 discussed how this same level of accountability was undertaken concerning the

campus climate impacting students within an HSI. In the following, P23 reflected on the

word *inclusion* in the context of  institutional accountability around supporting Latinx

students on campus:

So, I think that we'll start to sunset that word [(referring to the word inclusion)] in the

near future, and instead, we have to think of how we designing things from the

beginning, or redesigning, or, you know, starting over or revamping spaces, places,

services, resources, classrooms, curricula with with, with, with everybody in mind.

And, and do to do so in consultation or co-leadership or co-authorship with, with

those that you know that we do have in mind. And, and that didn't happen to start. So

there's always going to be continue to be gaps in inequities that make people feel

erased or not heard and seen or thought of, of. Not thought of, you know. Thought of

as second secondarily, and, and so I think like any campus we're, we're, we're trying

to see where we can remedy that.

P23 goes on to say that, "If the space that you've just welcomed them in, even if you've

welcomed them in in earnestness, in all sincerity, wasn't built with them in mind, then, then

they're not gonna feel it as fully equitable and, and a place that they can thrive." Lastly, P23

commented on the leadership's role in ensuring that the university's efforts align with its HSI

status and broader diversity goals, stressing the need for resources and support to effectively

implement these initiatives. "And resources have been put into it. And there's like, I said, the

conversations around. How we go about transcending that that sort of basic tenets of what it

means to be an HSI, to more thinking through in different pockets of our institution are, are

go all the way up to the top." These examples from participants further showcase a perceived

high bar for accountability to be present in University H2 HSI efforts.

### *Need for Faculty Support and Support Systems*

Another theme identified in the analysis of University H2 participants was the critical

need for faculty representation and support systems that are essential for the success of both

students and faculty within HSIs. In the following excerpt, P21 explains the importance of

faculty mentorship:

[Mentor support] creates problems both for faculty and for students, both grad and

undergrads, because the students who are joining the institution, anew, many of

whom, as you know, are first chance students of, of lower economic means need to

find role models need to find a mentors need to establish a connection that is not

simply intellectual or cognitive, but it's also cultural and noncognitive. So, if you

have very limited faculty, those faculty are being overtaxed by the growth in the

undergrad population that is not accompanied by a growth in the faculty which, of

course, interferes with their capacity to being promoted, which, of course, interferes

with the whole thing.

P23 reflected on the broader implications of faculty support sharing, "Ensuring our faculty

feel supported and valued is crucial; without this, their ability to effectively serve all

students, particularly our Latinx community, is significantly hindered." P22 highlights a

similar challenge here: "We need to provide proper training and support for faculty who are

tasked with so much more than teaching; their roles in mentorship, research, and service are

overwhelming without proper support structures in place."

The critical need for strong faculty support at HSIs was clearly demonstrated by

comments from University H1 participants. The comments emphasize the connection

between faculty support and HSI efforts. Participants shared the perspective that there was a

need for training and support structures for faculty, recognizing that their roles extend far

beyond traditional teaching to encompass mentorship, research, and service. These insights

indicate a belief that for HSIs to truly fulfill their mission, they must prioritize creating an

environment where faculty are well-equipped, supported, and appreciated, ensuring they can

provide the essential mentorship and engagement that students need to succeed.

*Comprehensive Inclusion & Commitment*

A reemerging theme that comprehensive inclusion efforts would be merged with institutional commitment from all levels of the University was present throughout University H2's analysis. This involves an institutional commitment reflected in resource allocation, program development, and sustained support. P21 highlights the commitment of leaders to expand and deepen the understanding and implementation of HSI efforts. The leadership is portrayed as actively engaged in creating meaningful changes that extend beyond admissions to ensure inclusivity at all levels. P21 shares the following on University H1's comprehensive efforts and commitment:

> So, what we have done at [University] in trying to expand and rethink what servingness means for us is let's not drop the inclusion part that is concentrated mostly on the first and second year experiences. But let's expand the purview of our efforts to include everything up until graduation and beyond graduation into professional, academic, or non-academic lives in the in order to include within our purview the democratization of the access to the professoriate and higher ED managerial, high, high, level positions, without which both there will be no real change. Ever. We have tried to do this, and this is a process of expanding the idea of serving this from moving from inclusion or admission to inclusion.

In the following, P22 discusses leadership roles in terms of their involvement in diversity, equity, and inclusion, illustrating a broadened responsibility across all levels of administration, not just confined to specific roles or offices:

Currently I work with all students, really. And so the, the designation for me now has

become not only a focus of students, but also like our, our staff and our faculty, like

the representation.

P22 describes HSI efforts and serving the needs of Latinx students as follows:

But knowing that we are a public university, how, how do we also tell that we are

going to be serving right and being unapologetic to serve a population. And, and for

us it was as a group. We were very unapologetic that we were going to serve the

students that were here at this point, and those that were incoming. So also this type

of commitment that it's not about the grant, but it's about equitable education for all

students like it was always that wording when we were talking about HSI that it was

going to benefit all students.

P21 shares how initiatives to reframe faculty recruitment and retention strategies to foster

diversity, which includes training programs and resource development that enhance equity

across the institution:

And so, for example, we train the search committees in our protocols for equity. So,

I'm, I'm very invested in this in this effort, and I think this integral to transforming

anything it seems like it is only concentrated on the faculty...

P22 also ded the comprehensive approach their area (DEI) undertakes when they engage the

campus, ensuring that it permeates every aspect of the university's operations, from student

recruitment to staff interaction and overall campus climate:

For me like, and it and even spills into the DEI, you know, lens, is that everybody is

in it. You know, like the DEI is or and should be, part of everybody's portfolio. You

know, because I everything is part of my portfolio for sure, and so I think that it's a

75

shared responsibility. Right? So how do we, when we're on boarding faculty, when

we're onboarding Vice Presidents, right? It's not only part of the recruitment or even

part of their job you know, talks, but it's also the practice. Right? How do they put

this in theory? How do they really advocate? How do we see the local area?

Participants appeared to commonly view University H2 as committed to fostering inclusion

and engagement throughout the institution, even unapologetically. This commitment

involved leadership actively working to redefine and expand the scope of HSI initiatives

beyond traditional approaches, emphasizing that the HSI designation is not merely for

obtaining grants but for ensuring equitable education for everyone, and ensuring staff and all

faculty and staff are folded into HSI efforts.

### *Cultural Community Engagement*

A theme of cultural engagement with Latinx student and local community members

(non-affiliates to the institution) was present in the data. University H2 engaged in cultural

practices and outreach to local families and utilizing community resources for educational

enrichment. These efforts were mentioned by participants as enhancing student experiences,

diversified the campus environment, and positioned the university as a significant contributor

to local development and social change. In the following excerpt, P22 shared how familiar

and culturally significant interactions between staff and students contribute to a sense of

belonging and community on campus:

So, for example, a lot of the students, and that's why, now, as a [DEI Leader], I'm

really looking at the macro and and the vision of our campus is how many times do

we have students sharing that where they felt the most at home or the most supported,

was when that custodial person would say, 'hey, Mija!' or 'How did that class go?'

Or 'Oye ya comiste?'

In the following quote, P23 discusses how cultural engagement is accomplished within student programming efforts, as well. They highlighted the creation of inclusive campus events that foster a sense of belonging and celebrate cultural heritage, which has been a strategic effort to make University H2 feel like a communal space for Latinx students:

Another really wonderful thing that we've done for the last few years that's coming up again on November second is our Dia de Los Muertos celebration... students are involved in every step of the way, including manifestation of the performance and the rituals that happen that evening and then are involved in the planning stages for all that.

P23 highlighted the importance of cultural connection efforts to make the campus a central part of the local community's cultural and public life, particularly through events that celebrate Latinx heritage and attract community members to the campus. In the following excerpt, P23 shares why centering and outreaching to the local community, in this example through a Spanish language concert, was important for HSI efforts:

And we knew that it would bring up, a large crowd of Latine community members from the extended area. And that felt really right to us for a couple of reasons. One, we, we want them to know that this is their institution, and that they are most welcome. And that we have events that have them in mind. And, please, this is, this is your public institution. You know, this is your place to be and to gather. And also, I surmise that a lot of the people that sold, that came to that sold out show, had never been on the campus before. And now, perhaps, they had a, a positive experience.

77

They go back off the campus, and when they're talking to their children, to their

siblings, to their nieces and nephews, to other friends and family and loved ones,

they're going to say, 'that was a wonderful institution. That was a wonderful place to

be.'

University H2 actively engages with Latinx students and the local community through

cultural events and outreach, enhancing student experiences and fostering a sense of

belonging. Events like the Dia de Los Muertos celebration and summer concert series open

the campus to the community, reinforcing the university's role as a welcoming hub and

emphasizing its commitment to HSI efforts and a positive campus climate.

*University H2 Summary*

The analysis of University H2 participants revealed the following themes:

Institutional Accountability, Need for Faculty Support, Comprehensive Inclusion &

Commitment, and Cultural & Community Connection. While reviewing participant

information it becomes evident that although they perceived challenges existed, the

designation and efforts surrounding it have shifted the institution--toward not just inclusion

but ensuring educational success, equity, and high achievement across different areas of

University H2 and its community members. It was evident that this did not stop at academic

integration as integration of community and cultural elements into the university

environment was also undertaken to foster a more inclusive and supportive setting Latinx

students. Leaders in this study mentioned various efforts, such as family-oriented programs,

cultural events, equitable hiring practices, and comprehensive DEI training of staff and

faculty, to not just serve as an educational institution but as culturally responsive community

that validate and celebrates the identities of their constituents.

**University H1 and H2 Cross-case Analysis**

In this study, cross-case analysis refers to identification of themes and connections found across University H1 and University H2. The following four themes were identified across the cases:

- Community building

- Success necessitates structure

- Leadership at all levels

- R1 status impact

*Community Building*

Participants from both institutions shared that building community across campus and outside of campus was important for the success of HSI-related activities. University H1 focused on fostering a sense of pride among first-generation students through grant-supported initiatives, engaging in "pushing hard" for faculty to engage with HSI efforts within grant efforts, and by engaging students actively to help develop and organize the community. Although not always successful, University H1 engaged in community building efforts, nonetheless. P14 shares their experience attempting to building community among graduate students and organize a celebration on the eve of University H1 being designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution:

> Did work with graduate students too, to explore what it meant to be HSI, you know.
> When I was trying to organize a celebration and realizing the push back, you know
> we did more low key things. So we were talking about it and making some inroads.

Even after receiving some level of push back, P14 pivoted from organizing a larger

celebration to smaller events to focus on building community with both graduate and

undergraduate.

University H2 emphasized community building with a broader cultural engagement

approach. P22 shared the importance of culturally significant interactions, such as staff

addressing students in familiar and culturally connected terms, fostering a sense of

belonging, by stating, "how many times do we have students sharing that where they felt the

most at home or the most supported, was when that custodial person would say, *hey, Mija*! or

*How did that class go? Or Oye ya comiste?*" P23 emphasized the importance and impact of

building community, externally and culturally, through campus events open to the

community and targeted at the Latinx population. When describing a Spanish concert aimed

at getting the local Latinx community to the University H2 campus, P23 shared the following

regarding the intentions and goals of the program:

> And perhaps they'll spark an interest in the institution and make it accessible to those
>
> that maybe didn't see it as theirs, but now will. And, so, I think that's the kind of thing
>
> that we can do. That makes us, you know, have our the mission come alive, and our
>
> goals come alive, and us being HSI come alive in a in a very large and vibrant way.

Participants from both institutions emphasized the importance of building community

both on and off campus for the success of HSI-related activities. University H1 focused on

fostering pride among first-generation students through grant-supported initiatives and

encouraging faculty involvement. Efforts were made to build community through smaller,

more intimate gatherings, to promote HSI efforts. University H2 highlighted the significance

of cultural engagement, fostering a sense of belonging through cultural interactions and community events.

*Success Necessitates Structure*

Another theme identified throughout the information presented across institutional leaders highlighted the importance of structure in the successful initiation and progression of activities in connection with HSI efforts.

Some of the efforts highlighted included redesigning organizational frameworks, develop new administrative roles, and implementing strategic plans that actively support the inclusion and advancement of Latinx students. As discussed previously, University H1 identified structure as a clear need. P11 identified this need by stating the following:

> I think there's...there isn't like a structured organization for it, so I feel like sometimes
> I have to kind of put myself out there and does hope that people trust and follow or
> volunteer or come to my side of the room, but I think the campus needs to work on a
> recognizable identifiable infrastructure. To then have conversations so them facilitate
> programming.

They follow up by sharing the importance structure creation to better delineate and define *servingness* given an institution's multiple identities:

> It's not a way of defining servingness but it's a way of looking across the institution at
> a variety of different like different that. I think the way that we ended up calling them
> was structures. So any who, the point the point is, and the reason that I like that
> approach is that I think you can be Hispanic-serving in a lot of different ways, and
> that there are multiple identities that institutions have, and not every Hispanic-serving
> institution is going to have that as their primary identity. But they can still serve

students, So I don't think there's one definition, and I think it's up to institutions to use

a community approach to defining it for their own institution, based on a lot of

different ways of thinking about it that should come from the community.

It was also found that structure was critical to HSI efforts within University H2. In the

following, P21 explains the structural changes made within their university to better support

HSI initiatives, which include developing programs that bridge the gap from undergraduate

to graduate levels and beyond. The narrative also touches on the importance of aligning

institutional structures with the needs of Latinx students:

So, what we have done at [University H2] in trying to expand and rethink what

servingness means for us is let's not drop the inclusion part that is concentrated

mostly on the first and second year experiences. But let's expand the purview of our

efforts to include everything up until graduation and beyond graduation into

professional, academic, or non-academic lives in the in order to include within our

purview the democratization of the access to the professoriate and higher ED

managerial, high, high, level positions, without which both there will be no real

change.

This need for alignment, which could be addressed with appropriate structure, is highlighted

by P14's comments below. P14 shares how intentional infrastructure for HSI efforts could be

connected to existing structures that compliment HSI efforts:

There's a really strong infrastructure within student affairs that is just right for the

partnering with the academic side. That may perhaps, although I think most of the

money is through research. But I do know the colleges have received some money

and have been able to build some infrastructure. It is a miss, in terms of strengthening

the resources in the student affairs area, so that we could do more. That would only

uh parallel that strong academic and social support that our students need.

This excerpt highlights the fact that structure need not be a new creation, but a leveraging of

existing structure that can complement already built and successful models.

Intentional structure efforts for successful implantation of HSI initiative was

highlighted within H2 at the university leadership level, as well. In the following except P23

discusses the comprehensive involvement of university leadership in embedding HSI goals

into the broader mission and vision of the institution:

I've seen the urging from senior leadership to apply for certain opportunities because

they thought they'd be great for the campus for our students. This is something that

gets talked about all the way to the head of our institution. Regularly. And resources

have been put into it. And there's like, I said, the conversations around. How we go

about transcending that that sort of basic tenets of what it means to be an HSI, to

more thinking through in different pockets of our institution are, are go all the way up

to the top.

Structure was even highlighted as important to the success of HSI efforts beyond the specific

institutional efforts. In the following P21 shares the importance of structure across

institutions within the shared identity of HSRIs:

I mentioned in passing that the campus has joined the network of HSRI's across the

nation the campus has finally, finally created a structure, administrative structure

within which HSI can be permanently housed, and with possibilities of access to the

higher ups. All of that was always being negotiated was always kind of precarious.

Now we feel finally we have arrived. We have a space, and there are certain resources

that have been committed to our effort. For example, we created a position that is

now being emulated across the system, [HSI Position]. You know which is a full-time

administrative position, well compensated. So that someone who has administrative

experience running the show of connecting the dots on the people.

The role of structured planning to initiate and advance HSI efforts was emphasized by

multiple participants at both universities. The need to redesign organizational frameworks

and implement structured institutional plans to support Latinx students was a common

perception held by all participants.

*Leadership at All Levels*

It was evident across institutional participant data was the criticality of leadership, at

all levels, throughout HSI designation and implementation activities to ensure successful

entry and progress with HSI activities. This included formal leadership efforts from a top-

down approach to leadership endeavors from the bottom-up.

As previously identified, University H1 participants shared the importance of formal

leadership's support of HSI efforts as critical upon the inception of HSI designation efforts.

Leadership, in this context, was described as the actions of formal leaders to highlight the

importance of HSI efforts and organization of these efforts.

Within University H1 this was highlighted as an area of growth. In the following

excerpt, P12 shares this perspective:

And then another thing that has never happened, because we just haven't had the

leadership in place, is that there has never been a systematic strategic plan for what it

means to be a minority serving institution.

P12 highlights the lack of formal leadership in place and/or the presence of transitional leadership. Such leadership would aid in the development of and engagement in HSI efforts, by way of MSI planning.

On the other hand, P23 describes the role of leadership within University H2, emphasizing their support of HSI efforts:

> I think that support, for this goes all the way to the top. I've seen the urging from senior leadership to apply for certain opportunities because they thought they'd be great for the campus for our students. This is something that gets talked about all the way to the head of our institution. Regularly. And resources have been put into it. And there's like, I said, the conversations around. How we go about transcending that that sort of basic tenets of what it means to be an HSI, to more thinking through in different pockets of our institution are, are go all the way up to the top. And I, I believe that, that's helped us a lot.

The perception of commitment from senior leadership in advancing HSI efforts is seen as critical in both University H1 and H2.

Leadership was not only perceived as important as an activity undertaken by senior leaders, but throughout the organization. P12 highlighted the importance of not solely relying on senior leadership to enact or empower HSI efforts, but on leaders throughout the organization to be involved in "grassroots" HSI activities:

> I have always had this sense that people are waiting to be anointed as the person who's supposed to do it. Our campus doesn't work that way. And I have, like I've even told a several of these faculty members like you are an important Latinx leader on our campus. You're a faculty member. You're the director of something. You're the

chair of something. Like, you can make it your job because you have authority. No

one is going to cross. Trust me. Like they're going to be scared of you, and they're

gonna let you do whatever you want, so you can come up with anything you want.

P12 goes on to share that individuals should feel self-empowered to engage in HSI efforts by

saying "Like you're the one, you're the one!" Emphasizing the importance that there is not

"one" institutional actor who needs to start to lead in this area, and if you are looking for

someone, you are that one. As previously mentioned, P23 also spoke on the importance of

leadership not being relegated to a top-down approach but including and being "in

consultation or co-leadership or co-authorship with, with those that, you know, that, we do

have in mind," in this case the very students which the institution is attempting to serve.

Leadership was seen to play a critical role in the successful implementation of HSI

activities, with both top-down and bottom-up leadership being instrumental in its success.

University H1 and University H2 illustrate that formal leadership support is fundamental, and

even its perceived absence may impact progress. Both universities emphasize the importance

of empowering individuals throughout the institution. This emphasizes that leadership in HSI

efforts should not only rely on formal authority to set the stage for HSI efforts but also

encourage grassroots initiatives and empowerment of all constituents.

### R1 Status Impact

Lastly, participants across cases shared the impact their institutions' identity as a

research 1 institution held on the HSI designation process and the transformation into HSIs.

Participants shared challenges associated with HSI designation as R1 institutions, as well as

several benefits.

86

P12 shared a significant and unique challenge when their institution gained

designation. P12 shares their experience when connecting with other HSIs that do not engage

in research activities, such as community colleges:

> We get a lot of flack from, not only from program directors at the agencies, but from
>
> other HSI that aren't research institutions like, "You're not a real HSI. Why are you
>
> trying to take our money away from us?" But that's where, like we have a role to play.

P12 continues, by sharing that although it may be true that a limited amount of grant money

exists to support HSIs, HSRIs have a crucial role to play in serving the needs of Latinx

students:

> But we have a role to play, and it is exactly that place like we are the institution that
>
> can create the Latinx professoriate of tomorrow. So, getting our students involved in
>
> research and wanting them or getting them to want to go on to have careers in, not
>
> just stem, but, like especially higher education, is the place where [university] can
>
> really make a lot out of being an HSI. And then the other area, of course, is doing
>
> research about HSI. So we've had. We're on our second title five grid right now, and
>
> both of them have been publishing about what those programs are doing. That is very
>
> uncommon for other institutions that have Title V grant. So we're like creating new
>
> knowledge about HSI, and then, of course, that has trickled down to students in
>
> [department]. Doing research on this. So that's another area where, being a research
>
> institution that I don't, I don't want to say it gives us an edge, but it just like, that's our
>
> space for making the contribution to the HSI community.

Although challenged by some as not being a "real" HSI, P12 highlights not only the

important role of HSRIs, but the unique and singular ways universities such as H1 can

contribute to HSI efforts, as professoriate preparation and HSI knowledge creation are core activities of research institutions.

P21 shared similar sentiments when discussing University H2. They shared the following:

> But let's expand the purview of our efforts to include everything up until graduation
> and beyond graduation into professional, academic, or non-academic lives in the in
> order to include within our purview the democratization of the access to the
> professoriate and higher ED managerial, high, high, level positions, without which
> both there will be no real change. Ever. We, we have tried to do this, and this is a
> process of expanding the idea of serving this from moving from inclusion or
> admission, to inclusion

The conceptualization of inclusion highlighted the important role research institutions play in providing access to not only the professoriate, as highlighted by P12, but also for preparation to higher education managerial positions. Another activity that is taken on by research institutions within their graduate preparation programs.

### *Cross-Case Analysis Summary*

The cross-case analysis of University H1 and H2 resulted in the following themes: community building, success necessitates structure, leadership at all levels, and R1 status impact. Both institutions emphasized the importance of building community on and off campus for the success of HSI-related activities. Efforts included fostering pride among first-generation students through grant-supported initiatives and cultural engagement through meaningful interactions and community events designed to create a supportive and welcoming environment. Universities H1 and H2 participants shared the importance of

setting up clear organizational frameworks that support Latinx students. This involves

creating new roles, integrating efforts with existing structures, and involving all constituents

of the university. These organized structures help improve HSI initiatives and integrate them

into the university. The analysis indicates that leadership is critical at every level for the

success of HSI activities. The data showed that a lack of systematic planning can negatively

impact HSI efforts and dedicated leadership can advance HSI goals. Effective leadership was

not only a top-down endeavor but must encompass both top-down and bottom-up

approaches. Lastly, being R1 institutions added a special dimension to the role of HSRIs

within HSI efforts. Although some might question the fit or "realness" of research-focused

universities in the HSI arena, the case studies from both universities highlight the unique

contributions they can make. This includes training the next generation of Latinx academics

and professionals, conducting research on HSI topics, and generating new insights that help

the wider HSI community. The research strengths of HSRIs thus play a key role in

broadening and deepening the impact of HSI initiatives.

# CHAPTER V

## DISCUSSION

This purpose of the study was to examine the perceptions of *Servingness* and Campus Climate among key faculty, staff, and administrators at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs). The study was conducted because research findings indicate that educational leaders have struggled to transform higher education institutions, historically dominated by white, male, middle-class norms, raising concerns, into Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) capable of supporting Latinx students. Given the scarcity of HSRIs, and the limited research available, this study aimed to fill a vital gap in understanding. In this chapter the following will be presented in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter II: a summary of results, limitations, implications, and recommendations for future research.

### Results

This study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What strategies and initiatives have or will be implemented to realize *servingness* goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI)?

2. What perceptions do HSRI leaders hold on dimensions of *servingness* their organization provides, including the specification of *servingness* goals?

Below is a review of how participant data provided insight into the research questions. The analysis of University H1 and University H2 participant interview data revealed several themes informants perceived as important to the success of Hispanic-Serving Institution initiatives within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions. The themes identified are listed in Table 4 below ordered by themes identified within University H1, University H2, and across both cases.

**Table 4**

*Study Themes*

| University H1 | University H2 | Cross-Case (H1 & H2) |
|---|---|---|
| Need for Greater Intentional Student Involvement | Institutional Accountability | Community Building |
| Importance of Planning & Structure | Need for Faculty Support | Success Necessitates Structure |
| Leadership Needs | Comprehensive Inclusion & Commitment | Leadership at All Levels |
| Critical External Factors | Cultural Community Engagement | R1 Status Impact |
| Campus Community Building | | |

The cross-case themes of community building, success necessitates structure, leadership at all levels, and R1 status impact will be analyzed using the guiding literature and theoretical foundations discussed in Chapter II. These themes were identified across institutions and incorporate the themes and insights from the University H1 and H2 participants. Analyzing these cross-case themes in the context of the guiding literature provided useful insights into the research questions explored in this study.

**HSRI *Servingness* Strategies and Initiatives**

With regards to what strategies and initiatives have or will be implemented to realize *servingness* goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI), it was identified that community building, intentional organizational structure, leadership at all levels, and leveraging research institution advantages were essential strategies to realize *servingness* goals at HSRIs.

*Community Building*

Building a strong and interconnected internal and external campus community was shown to be an effective strategy by both University H1 and University H2. For example, small meaningful but impactful practices, like custodial staff sharing words of affirmation, were identified by University H2 participants to significantly impact the campus climate and a sense of belonging for Latinx students. University H1 gave examples of building community and a sense of belonging through first-generation programming, student engagement efforts surrounding HSI designation, and faculty development.

Both universities' efforts to build campus communities in support of HSI efforts can be understood through the Four-Frame Model of Leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017). More specifically, these community-building approaches can be understood through the Human Resource Frame. Bolman and Deal (2017) describe the Human Resource Frame as emphasizing the alignment between people and organizations, ensuring that both benefit from their relationship. This perspective focuses on the symbiotic relationship between organizations and their members, emphasizing inclusivity and personal engagement (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

University H2 shared a focus on cultural celebrations, (e.g. a Dia De Los Muertos event and Spanish language concert) which exemplifies its efforts to create inclusive and culturally rich campus events. This clearly fits within the Symbolic Frame, as it emphasizes cultural symbols, rituals, and ceremonies that unify an organization and create a shared sense of purpose (Bolman & Deal, 2017). University H2's cultural campus events reflect this focus, demonstrating how cultural symbols and shared experiences are crucial in fostering community.

University H2's practices, such as custodial staff sharing words of affirmation and culturally rich campus events, serve as examples of fostering a sense of community and belonging, thereby enhancing the overall campus climate (Hurtado et al., 2012). Bolman and Deal's (2017) Symbolic Frame holds that culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise to accomplish desired ends. This is evident in University H2's use of culturally rich events and interactions to strengthen community bonds and support their HSI efforts.

Community building efforts reflect the broader cultural engagement emphasized in Kezar's (2008) framework for creating inclusive campus environments, which stresses the importance of understanding and responding to the diverse needs and experiences of students. This cultural community building focus is clearly an impactful strategy.

Hurtado et al. (2012) saw community building efforts align as critical processes, and described them as occurring at the intersection of student and educator's identities, with intentional practices that advance both diversity and learning to achieve essential outcomes. More specifically, The Multicontextual Model of Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) (Hurtado et. Al, 2012) concept of Creating Community by developing a sense of belonging is evident in these efforts. Building community is essential for fostering a positive campus climate. Cultural engagement through meaningful interactions aligns with the Behavioral Dimension and Psychological Dimension from the DLE. For example, University H2 emphasized the importance of staff addressing students in culturally familiar terms to foster a sense of belonging. Such interactions contribute to a positive campus climate by creating supportive environments and reducing feelings of alienation among students. Furthermore, cultural events like the concert at University H2 align with the Community Context and

External Commitments concept from the DLE. Hosting these events engages the local Latinx community, reinforcing mutual relationships that positively influence campus climate and contribute to social transformation.

The role of and the support for faculty was also seen as a crucial element at both universities as a *servingness* activity (Garcia, 2020). University H1 participants emphasized the need for proper training and support structures for faculty to serve Latinx students effectively. P12 talked about empowering faculty to take leadership roles in HSI efforts. Offering faculty support aligns with the Human Resource Frame, which focuses on the importance of people within the organization and ensuring their needs are met to achieve institutional goals. At University H2, faculty support was seen as essential for the success of HSI initiatives. P21 discussed the importance of mentorship and cultural connections between faculty and students, stressing the need for faculty representation and support systems to create an inclusive academic environment. Training programs for faculty and staff are also an example of enhancing the curricular context which are evidenced instructional practices that are inclusive and responsive to the needs of Latinx students (Hurtado et al., 2012). Bolman and Deal (2017) emphasize the importance of relationships and inclusivity suggesting that when the fit between people and organizations is poor, one or both suffer. This concept is evident in the need for and importance of community development to prevent faculty from feeling overwhelmed and disengaged in *servingness* efforts.

### *Success Necessitates Structure*

Participants from both institutions highlighted the critical importance of organizational structure in the successful initiation and progression of activities related to Hispanic-Serving Institution efforts. The need for adequate structure aligns closely with the

principles found in the DLE and the Structural Frame of the Four-Frame Model of Leadership. This need for structure is consistent with the Organizational/Structural Dimension within the Institutional level of the DLE (Hurtado et al., 2012), which emphasizes how organizational structures can support or hinder diversity and inclusion efforts by unintentionally supporting privilege for some groups while oppressing others.

Participants at University H2 discussed the importance of structural changes to better support HSI initiatives, such as developing programs that bridge the gap from undergraduate to graduate levels and beyond. University H1, while recognizing the importance of a recognizable infrastructure, had participants noting the need for more intentional efforts and better coordination to fully realize the potential of HSI designation and *servingness* efforts. This finding aligns with Bolman and Deal's (2017) Structural Frame, which emphasizes the importance of organizational structure and coordination in achieving institutional goals. Informants at University H2 held a common perception that their organization was aided in HSI efforts by utilizing an organized approach. Leaders at H2 worked to align HSI goals with the university's overall mission, making their efforts more effective. P23 highlighted that senior leadership's involvement helped create a cohesive strategy, better resource allocation, and successful program development. This structured and strategic approach also reflects the Structural Frame's emphasis on organized planning and coordination (Bolman and Deal, 2017).

Additionally, Bolman and Deal's (2017) suggest that organizations must use both vertical and horizontal procedures for coordination. The optimal blend of the two depends on the unique challenges present in the institution. Vertical coordination is generally seen as superior if an environment is stable, tasks are well understood and predictable, and

uniformity is essential. Lateral communications work best for complex tasks performed in a less stable environment. University H2 exhibited a high degree of vertical coordination, which was aided by support from executive leadership. Conversely, University H1 exhibited a more organic and lateral communication structure due to changes in leadership and external factor impacts.  The important role and need of structured planning in initiating and advancing HSI efforts identified by University H1 and H2 emphasizes the importance of aligning structures with organizational goals (Bolman & Deal, 2017) which will be explored further in the next section as organizational structure elements were found to closely align with leadership efforts.

The need for intentional planning and structure is also highlighted within the Diverse Student Success Infrastructure (DSSI) (Kezar, 2019). Since Kezar (2019) found that "campus processes were traditionally developed without an understanding of diverse student needs." (p.11), it is critical that HSI planning align activities with institutional values to address the needs of Latinx students. Similarly, the DLE (Hurtado et al, 2012) highlights the importance of the Organizational/Structural dimension as the specific practices of how an institution organizes itself and the environment impacts the climate for diversity efforts such as HSI initiatives.

### Leadership at All Levels

It was also found that leadership, at all levels, was a successful strategy used by the institutions studied when engaging in HSI servingness goals. This includes both top-down formal leadership and bottom-up grassroots efforts. Although participants universally perceived institutional leadership support as playing a crucial role for both universities HSI efforts, their experiences differed.

University H2 shared how their success with HSI efforts was realized due to executive leadership creating infrastructure, organizing stakeholders and being supportive of HSI efforts. These factors emphasize the importance of vertical coordination and the role of authorities with formal power within an organization, such as executive leadership, keeping actions aligned with overall strategy and objectives (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Leaders within H2 felt supported and empowered, exampled by P21 stating they felt "very supported" by their executive leader and P23 sharing that, "I think that support, for this goes all the way to the top." Executive leader support is an important strategy and as Hurtado et al., (2012) found:

> Support from core leadership and a strong articulation of diversity priorities were the most important factors in predicting institutional action in terms of predicting diversity of the faculty and innovation in practices relative to peer institutions. (p.63)

University H2 participants' perceptions validated this perspective.

As previously described, University H1 leaders shared that their institution exhibited lateral coordination efforts, where leaders engaged in more "grassroots" efforts. P12 exemplifies this notion when sharing their belief that all leaders can participate in HSI efforts and formal leadership roles in those efforts are not required: "You're the director of something. You're the chair of something. Like, you can make it your job because you have authority." P11's entrance into HSI efforts shared a similar sentiment with its organic start:

> It began as somewhat as an organic role, it's becoming a little bit more. I don't know if it's official because I don't have a title per se, but I think [University] was at a point where they did not mind if somebody just stood up and said I'll do this.

Both vertical and lateral structures were seen as necessary and successful strategies for University H1 and H2.

University H2 participants shared that they perceived leadership as stable and supportive leadership when discussing executive leadership's support of HSI efforts. This aligns with the Political Frame (Bolman and Deal, 2017), which emphasizes the importance of stable leadership and the ability to navigate power dynamics and build coalitions to achieve institutional goals. The utilization of position, or authority, power by executive leadership is known to be a useful strategy when engaging in political endeavors such as diversity efforts (Kezar, 2008). University H2 leaders perceived a strong commitment to HSI efforts by integrating HSI goals into all aspects of the institution. P21 described efforts to expand inclusion beyond admissions, ensuring that students were supported throughout their academic journey and into their professional lives. This holistic approach was seen as vital for meaningful and lasting change. This commitment to inclusion aligns with Kezar's (2001, 2008, 2019) framework for creating inclusive campus environments, which emphasizes the importance of comprehensive DEI efforts that permeate all levels of administration and operations.

Conversely, University H1 leaders mentioned that transitional leadership and external factors during and throughout the designation processes impacted their HSI effort communication and effectiveness. At University H1, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted HSI efforts and disconnected stakeholders, as shared by p14,

> COVID happened, and that disconnect from campus and us making any progress and helping people understand what HSI designation means, and what these grants are to be used for, got waylaid.

Leaders must be prepared to address changes that disrupt established patterns of roles and

relationships, leading to confusion and uncertainty which can impact existing power

dynamics and create challenges in coalition-building (Bolman & Deal, 2017). At University

H1, this led to the development of grassroots and lateral strategies. Although not top-down

reliant, these efforts are no less important to HSI efforts. In the absence of legitimate

authority dictating or setting tone for HSI efforts other forms of power can be utilized such as

alliances, networks, and personal influence (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This is in full display

with P11's call to action for leaders to engage actively and empower themselves to engage in

*servingness.*

Although different leadership strategies were employed, both approaches underscore

that effective HSI *servingness* requires adaptable leadership strategies that can operate within

different power structures to achieve *servingness* goals.

### R1 Status Impact

Another successful strategy implemented to realize *servingness* goals identified in

this study was the utilization of the institution's resources and abilities as a research

university.  The universities studied highlighted the importance role HSRIs play by 1.)

developing the next generation of the higher education leaders in the professoriate and in

higher educational executive positions, and 2.) creation of new HSI research.

The development and preparation of a diverse professoriate and higher education

administration is a task that HSRIs are uniquely equipped to execute. P21 perceived one of

the opportunities and roles of the HSRIs as being institutions that can engage in the

"democratization of the access to the professoriate and higher ed [management]." The

importance of investing in people is consistent with the Human Resource frame as

99

organizations need people, their talents, and efforts in order to reinvest in the organization (Bolman and Deal, 2017). Supporting a diverse student body requires a diverse faculty and administration.

A key strategy identified by Kezar (2019) in the development of a diverse student success infrastructure was a focus on human resources and professional development which she found critical to fostering student success as it involved hiring and training diverse staff to meet the needs of a diverse population. Within the DLE, the institutional-level dimension addresses the clear impact of compositional diversity of an institution's campus climate. This Compositional Dimension, which refers to the numerical representation of diverse social identities of students, faculty and staff, is found to promote greater satisfaction by students, positively impact feelings of belonging, and has been identified as resulting in greater ethnic identity awareness within HSIs (Hurtado et al., 2012).

The creation of new HSI knowledge within HSRI is another strategy identified by this study. As P12 shared: "being a research institution that, I don't, I don't want to say it gives us an edge, but it just like, that's our space for making the contribution to the HSI community." Creation of new HSI knowledge falls in line with a key strategy identified by Kezar (2008) when moving forward a diversity agenda, as it speaks to utilizing data to neutralize politics and rationalize the process. Institutional research is found to provide critical data for guiding student success initiatives, to support decision-making and help refine governance, planning, and policies (Kezar, 2019). With HSRIs having the ability to create their own knowledge, it gives them a distinct benefit as opposed to other higher education institutions, including other HSIs.

*HSRI Servingness Strategies and Initiatives Summary*

The cross-case themes found in this study (community building, the necessity of structured support, leadership at all levels, and the impact of R1 status) were reviewed against the foundational and guiding literature to identify the perceptions held by HSRI leaders regarding the dimensions of *servingness* their organizations provided. Clear linkages existed among the guiding frameworks for this study.

**Perceptions of Organizational *Servingness* Dimensions**

With regards to what perceptions HSRI leaders held on dimensions of *servingness* their organization provides, there were a multitude of perspectives shared across all participants and across each institution. This comes as no surprise as each participant held a unique perspective and a limited vantage point of HSI efforts and of their organization. Despite this, there were considerable similarities among participants at each institution that can be gathered. To identify what dimensions of *servingness* participants perceived their organization provided, the cross-case themes (community building, success necessitates structure, leadership at all levels, and R1status impacts) will be analyzed through the guiding and foundational framework for this study, Garcia's (2018a) Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Framework for Organizing.

*Community Building*

University H1 participants identified fostering a sense of pride among first-generation and encouraging faculty to engage with HSI efforts within HSI grant process. This aligns with the purpose dimension of Garcia (2018a) framework, which emphasizes the development of students' critical and oppositional consciousness, with a focus of holistic development. By pushing for faculty involvement, University H1 aimed to create a cohesive

community where both educators and students actively participated in HSI efforts. Additionally, University H1 involved students in the development and organization of community activities, reflecting the membership dimension that promotes inclusivity and the active involvement of various community members. Even when facing some pushback, such as when trying to organize a large celebration, University H1 pivoted to smaller, more intimate events to build a sense of community among both graduate and undergraduate students. This approach demonstrates the community standards dimension, which encourages members to participate in the development of rules, regulations, and policies, supporting a sense of ownership and engagement.

University H2 participants emphasized the importance of culturally significant interactions to foster a sense of belonging. For instance, staff addressing students in culturally familiar terms, such as using endearing phrases in Spanish, was noted as helping create a supportive and welcoming environment for Latinx students. This action aligns both with the purpose dimension. Furthermore, University H2 organized community events that were open to the public and targeted the local Latinx population. By hosting events like Spanish concerts aimed at attracting the local Latinx community to the campus, University H2 made the university more accessible and fostered a sense of belonging among the Latinx population. This strategy supports the external boundary management dimension, which calls for developing relationships with local communities as a means to enhance *servingness* efforts.

*Success Necessitates Structure*

University H1 leaders identified the need for infrastructure to facilitate and support HSI servingness, as it identified that changes and leadership and external factors impacted its

102

ability to create vertical coordination and focus on lateral leadership efforts, discussed in the next section of this chapter.

University H2 participants identified a cohesive and inclusive structure supported by executive leadership. The comprehensive involvement of university leadership in embedding HSI goals into the broader mission and vision of the institution reflects the governance dimension of Garcia's (2018) model which focuses on shared, decentralized leadership and decision-making that supports institutional actors HSI efforts. By creating a recognizable and identifiable infrastructure, University H2 supported a cohesive approach to serving Latinx students.

Participants shared that University H2 made significant structural changes to support HSI initiatives. These changes included developing programs that bridge the gap from undergraduate to graduate levels, ensuring continuous support for Latinx students throughout their academic journey. This approach aligns with the incentive structure dimension, which incentivizes faculty and staff to engage in work that enhances racial and cultural ways of knowing. By aligning institutional structures with the needs of Latinx students, University H2 demonstrated a commitment to *servingness* efforts and enhancing campus climate.

### *Leadership at All Levels*

University H1 leaders emphasized the importance of formal leadership's support of HSI efforts from the inception of these initiatives. Highlighting the lack of systematic planning efforts underscores the need for structured and intentional leadership. University H1 participants stressed the importance of grassroots or self-empowered activities in HSI efforts which, although a need-based approach, align with the governance dimension of Garcia's

103

(2018a) model emphasizing the "rejection of centralized reporting structures, bureaucratic hierarchies, and single authority" (p. 139).

In contrast, University H2 participants highlighted the strong support of executive leadership in advancing HSI efforts. Emphasizing the need for executive leadership support for successful HSI activities aligns with a more effort to be in line with the governance dimension by focusing on shared and decentralized leadership. The support of communal leadership from senior leaders, including the head of the institution, was seen as critical for the success of HSI initiatives.

### R1 Status Impact

University H1 faced challenges from other HSIs that do not engage in research activities. These institutions sometimes viewed research-focused HSIs as not being "real" HSIs and accused them of taking away resources. Despite these challenges, University H1 highlighted the critical role that Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions play in creating the Latinx professoriate of tomorrow and conducting research about HSIs, highlighting the work of graduate students' work in this area. This aligns with the purpose dimension of Garcia's framework, which stresses broader educational outcomes beyond traditional metrics. By involving students in research and encouraging careers in higher education, University H1 emphasized the unique contributions that research institutions can make. This also aligns with the technology dimension which centers racially minoritized knowledge and encourages exploration of identity.

University H2 participants similarly emphasized the role of research institutions in democratizing access to the professoriate and higher education managerial positions. Participants highlighted the need for expanding efforts to support Latinx students throughout

their academic and professional lives aligning with the mission dimension which emphasizes antiracist practices, such as this, as important to include within the institution's mission. University H2 also recognized the importance of inclusion from admission to the institution and through obtaining a career, stressing the unique contribution of research institutions in preparing higher education leaders and creating new HSI research. This approach supports the purpose dimension that identifies holistic student development and broader educational outcomes as important *servingness* efforts.

### *Perceptions of Organizational Servingness Dimensions Summary*

Reviewing how the cross-case themes identified in this study (community building, the necessity of structured support, leadership at all levels, and the impact of R1 status) align with Garcia's (2018a) Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A Framework for Organizing gave valuable insights into the perceptions held by HSRI leaders regarding the dimensions of *servingness* their organizations provided.

University H1 participant perceptions aligned with several *servingness* dimensions. The university focused on the purpose dimension by fostering pride among first-generation students and encouraging faculty involvement, aiming for holistic student development and critical consciousness. The membership dimension was reflected in their inclusive community activities and active engagement of various community members. When facing pushback, the institution adapted by hosting smaller events, demonstrating the community standards dimension that emphasizes participatory rule and policy development. The necessary strategy of grassroots or self-empowered HSI efforts and activities, as well as the involvement in research, aligned with the governance and technology dimension, respectively.

105

University H2 participant perceptions also aligned with several *servingness* dimensions. It was perceived b participants that the university emphasized the importance of culturally significant interactions to foster a sense of belonging, such as staff addressing students in culturally familiar terms, aligning with the purpose dimension. Furthermore, University H2 organized public community events targeting the local Latinx population, to make the university more accessible and foster a sense of belonging, supporting the external boundary management dimension. University H2 participants identified a cohesive and inclusive structure supported by executive leadership, reflecting the governance dimension that emphasizes shared, decentralized leadership and decision-making. The university made significant structural changes, including developing programs bridging undergraduate to graduate levels, ensuring continuous support for Latinx students which was found to align with the incentive structure dimension. Lastly, participants at University H2 expressed the belief that their institution, and other like it, play an important role in democratizing access to the professoriate and higher education administration, and should offer support for Latinx students throughout their academic and professional lives, aligning with the mission and purpose dimensions.

## Limitations

This study, while offering valuable insights into the *servingness* and campus climate of Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions, is limited by several factors impacting its validity and generalizability. The research employed a qualitative design involving two universities, specifically a multiple case study approach. While this method was appropriate for exploring the unique educational challenges of enacting HSI servingness efforts within HSRIs, the in-depth nature of case studies can restrict generalizability. Additionally, the study's narrow

focus on HSRIs and their *servingness* efforts ensures detailed understanding but excludes broader contexts that could provide additional insights. Furthermore, the study's underlying assumptions and findings may not hold true in all HSRI or HSI contexts.

The Universities studied and participants interviewed were identified through convenience and snowball sampling. This approach was chosen due to the limited number of HSRIs and the barriers to accessing informants for a politically sensitive topic (Kezar, 2008), but it inherently introduces biases in the sample. The study, being limited to two university settings and only seven informants, further limits the applicability of the results to other contexts. The findings may be most relevant to institutions with similar characteristics, so it is important to note that findings may not broadly apply to all higher education settings.

Also important, is the underpinning of the study. The study is guided by specific theoretical frameworks that, while providing a structured lens for analysis, may introduce biases based on their inherent assumptions. This reliance on specific frameworks limited the exploration of alternative perspectives and explanations for findings.

## Implications

The findings of this study suggest multiple implications for practice and future research to enhance *servingness* and campus climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions. The study found that participants perceived a strong focus on community building, intentional organizational structure and planning, leadership engagement at all levels of the institution, and research institution advantages were important factors contributing to *servingness* and campus climate. This study was due to the identification that HSIs should not exist as a naming convention alone but affirm their obligation to support Latinx students (Ballysingh et al., 2018; Garcia, 2018a; 2018b; 2020, 2023 Garcia et al.,

2019; Garcia & Taylor, 2017; Mitchneck et al., 2023). The following explores the

implications of the findings which HSRI leaders may employ to engage actively in this

*servingness* obligation. The implications include MSI servingness infrastructure, engaging

our *vecinos*, and HSRI *servingness* contribution.

**MSI *Servingness* Infrastructure**

Participants were overwhelmingly clear that support from leadership and the creation

of an intentional and recognizable *servingness* infrastructure was of paramount importance to

meeting *servingness* objectives and supporting HSI initiatives within HSRIs. Although

grassroots efforts and lateral coordination can be a successful strategy, it needs to be

intentional and driven by a larger organized effort (Bolman & Deal, 2017). This, of course, is

no easy task and as Garcia (2023) puts it "the process of becoming HSIs and defining

servingness in HSIs is so difficult." This is specifically true when engaging in a politically

charged topic that impacts multiple identities and populations (Kezar, 2008). University H1

and University H2 both shared the careful balancing act necessary to serve multiple

stakeholders throughout the institution.

Thus, the creation of a Minority-Serving Insitition plan would address the need for a

comprehensive and intentional plan, which engages in the multiple and complex identities

housed within a HSRI. P12 highlights the idea in the following:

> I want to add, you know, I do think it's a really complex issue on our campus because
>
> of these multiple identities that we have, and I always tell people you can't forget that
>
> we're also an AANAPISI [Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-
>
> Serving Institutions]. And that we have a very important community of African
>
> American students. So I don't want, in a way, I don't want there to be an HSI plan.

Like, I want there to be an MSI plan, because I think having an HSI plan is just going

to create more political problems that are unnecessary when you can accomplish the

same thing with a broader plan that encompasses a lot of student identities.

This, by no means, would be a panacea to the organizational and leadership issues faced by

any institution engaging in *servingness* efforts, but it would allow for a more inclusive and

comprehensive discussion and implementation of diversity efforts. A MSI plan may run the

risk of blurring *servingness* goals for Latinx students, so intentional efforts would have to be

made to ensure HSI *servingness* dimensions were addressed appropriately. A MSI plan

would be highly beneficial as it could capture the needs of an ever changing diverse student

body, as well as the diverse needs of a complex and intersectional Latinx identity. The

creation and implementation of an intentional and well-structured MSI plan by HSRIs could

also engage in "intersectional servingness," found to be a new area of research and need

within HSIs (Garcia, 2023).

**Engaging Our *Vecinos***

Participants in the study identified the importance of building community across and

outside HSRIs. It is well understood that a sense of belonging and social/psychological

dimensions of *servingness* impacts Latinx students (Garcia, 2018a; Hurtado et al., 2012).

Thus, the finding that building community with Latinx students supports *servingness* is not

groundbreaking; however, a unique element identified in the findings is the significant role

that often-overlooked populations, such as Latinx service staff and neighboring Latinx non-

affiliates, can play in this effort. This population has been termed *vecinos*, or the Spanish

word for neighbors, in this study.

Both institutions studied shared the perception that their universities were isolated or separated from the local community. P13 describes this finding in the following:

> When you think of the topography of campuses that are frequently removed from communities, create themselves as little bubble resorts that are frequently made up of communities where black and brown and queer folks do not see themselves right.

P22 shared a similar sentiment when asked to describe the culture of the university of outside constituents, which they also described as "a bubble." An understanding which they stated was held by students, as well.

*Vecinos*, if engaged intentionally, can help HSRIs meet *servingness* dimensions. P22 shared the important role *vecinos* play in developing a positive campus climate in the following excerpt:

> We have students sharing that where they felt the most at home or the most supported, was when that custodial person would say, 'hey, Mija!' or 'How did that class go?' Or 'Oye ya comiste?'

Similarly, P23 shared their efforts to engage *vecinos* to make their institution a more welcoming space for the Latinx community. Here P23 shares how intentionally selecting a Spanish artist to perform on campus and what they believe it communicates:

> " …[it] signals to the campus community and the surrounding community that we want to center the voices and representation from the Latine community. And we knew that it would bring up ,a a large crowd of Latine a community members from the extended area. And that felt really right to us…"

HSRIs and other campus communities can sometimes feel like isolated bubbles, disconnected from the Latinx communities that many of our Latinx students originate from. However,

intentional efforts to engage with local and external campus *vecinos* can be a powerful *servingness* strategy for building community and positively impacting campus climate.

**HSRI Servingness Contribution**

Participants in this study identified HSRIs as uniquely equipped in the development and preparation of a diverse professoriate and higher education administration to lead and impact HSI efforts throughout the HSI community and higher education as a whole. It is known that HSRIs can offer unique contributions to *servingness* dimensions (Marin & Pereschica, 2018). In the following. P12 shares their belief about the role HSRIs play in the larger HSI efforts across higher education:

> But we have a role to play, and it is exactly that place like we are the institution that
> can create the Latinx professoriate of tomorrow. So, getting our students involved in
> research and wanting them or getting them to want to go on to have careers in, not
> just stem, but, like especially higher education, is the place where [university] can
> really make a lot out of being an HSI.

P21 shared a similar belief that *servingness* contributions of HSRIs can "include within our purview the democratization of the access to the professorate and higher ed managerial positions."

HSRIs are not only legitimate HSIs, but they can also significantly impact the broader higher education landscape. While HSIs enroll and serve the majority of the Latinx student population in the U.S. (HACU, 2023b), addressing the needs of Latinx students should be a priority for all campuses. Diversifying campuses is crucial for enhancing compositional diversity, which Hurtado et al. (2012) identified as critical to a positive campus climate.

HSRIs can play a major role in fostering necessary campus diversification among the faculty and staff population.

## Future Research

Several areas for future research could emerge from this study. Firstly, the limitations of the study significantly impact the generalizability and applicability of the findings to other Hispanic-Serving Institutions. Future research should aim to address these limitations. Conducting a similar study with a larger number of institutions and participants would provide more comprehensive insights into HSRI *servingness* and campus climate efforts. Additionally, the study was intentionally guided by specific theoretical frameworks. As of this writing, a new framework for *Transforming Hispanic-Serving Institutions for Equity and Justice* (Garcia, 2023) has been developed. Reviewing and updating the applied theoretical framework in future research would better support the findings and enhance the study's relevance.

Secondly, an important voice was purposefully excluded from study to center support of this stakeholder from campus leaders, Latinx students. Although perceptions of *servingness* derived from faculty and staff provided useful information, confirmation of whether the perceived *servingness* efforts are truly impactful would only come by way of including the very Latinx students the HSRI purports to serve. A level of internal validation could be achieved by interviewing students or analyzing academic outcomes to better understand if the perceived dimensions of servingness identified by HSRI leaders meet their intended goal.

Lastly, few studies have defined what makes HSRIs unique institutions (Garcia & Cuellar, 2023). This study was an attempt to peer into a small window to observe the efforts

of this unique institutional type which involves a few members in the higher educational community to add to this growing body of literature. Efforts to continue to study this institutional type should and will continue. As of this writing, the Alliance of Hispanic-Serving Research Universities, comprised of the 21 identified HSRIs (AHSRU, 2023), is engaging in developing procedures to share data associated with institutional transformation of HSRIs (Mitchneck et al., 2023). These ongoing efforts will enhance our understanding and support the continued evolution of HSRIs and support for all students within them.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the perceptions of servingness and campus climate among key faculty, staff, and administrators at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRIs) to explore strategies and dimensions were employed by their institutions to meet *servingness* goals. Given the scarcity of HSRIs and limited existing research, this study sought to fill a crucial gap in understanding. The study found that participants in the HSRIs studied perceived community building, intentional organizational structure and planning, leadership engagement at all levels of the institution, and research institution advantages were important factors contributing to *servingness* and campus climate. Limitations of the study, which impacted validity and generalizability, include the utilization of a qualitative research approach, its small number of participants, the limitations introduced by the sampling procedure, and study's reliance on specific theoretical frameworks. The findings of this study suggested multiple implications for practice: 1.) clear and recognizable *servingness* infrastructure which could be aided by the creation of a MSI *Servingness* Plan, 2.) intentional efforts to engage with local and external campus *vecinos* can be a powerful strategy for building community and positively impacting campus climate, and 3.) HSRIs are uniquely

equipped to enhance the compositional diversity of the professoriate and higher education administration across all HSIs and within higher education. In the future, similar research could address this study's limitations by including more institutions and participants and updating the guiding frameworks. Additionally, incorporating the voices of Latinx students is crucial to validate the perceived servingness efforts identified in this study. Continuing to study the unique nature of HSRIs will further enhance understanding and support for these institutions and their students.

Ultimately, this study, developed by a student affairs practitioner-researcher, sought to contribute to the crucial and ongoing conversation regarding equity in higher education. This work was intended to support practitioners, policymakers, and educational leaders within HSRIs. This dissertation also sought to empower educational community members to continue to enhance support for Latinx students and significantly enrich the overall student experience.

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## APPENDIX A

Subject Recruitment Email

*Servingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions

Subject Line: Participants Needed for Research Study on HSRI *Servingness* & Campus Climate
Hello [Potential Subject's Name],

I am writing to invite you to serve as a participant in a study on *Servingness* and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI). You are receiving this email because you have been identified as a member of an HSRI who displays prominent involvement in Hispanic-Serving Institution activities, at your institution. Your email address was obtained from your university's website.

My study is investigating how Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI) serve Latinx students, and various aspects of *Servingness* such as conducive campus climate, from the perspective of campus HSI leaders. The study seeks to provide insight into answering the following two research questions: 1. What formal strategies and program initiatives are underway or being planned to realize "servingness" including campus climate goals at your Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions? And 2. What insights do you have regarding the strengths and limitations of your institution's vision of "servingness", including the formal specification of "servingness" and related campus climate goals?

If you choose to participate in the study, you will participate in an hour-long interview at a time of your choosing. The interview will include questions regarding your perception of university efforts on HSRI designation, HSRI initiatives, Latinx student outcomes, and campus climate. The interview will be conducted via telephone or via Zoom video call. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate transcription. Participation is confidential and voluntary, and you can refuse to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable. You can also withdraw from the interview at any time. Data collected will be kept confidential, your name will not be recorded, and I will not share your personal information with anyone. There are no payments or costs associated with this survey.

If you have questions about the study, you can contact me at joaquin@ucsb.edu or you may contact my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Richard Duran, at rduran@ucsb.edu. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807, hsc@research.ucsb.edu, or you may write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.

If you are interested in participating, please reply to this email with your availability or instructions on how to best make an appointment with you to conduct the interview.


Thank you for your time,

Joaquin Becerra
PhD Candidate
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
University of California, Santa Barbara

*Servingness* & Campus Climate Interview Informed Consent Form

Participants are being asked to participate in a study of Servingness and Campus Climate within Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions. We are asking you to take part because you were identified by your position and title, contacted via email and agreed to take part in this study. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

**Purpose:** This study aims to understand how Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions (HSRI) support Latinx students, or their "Servingness," within two organizational dimensions: 1. Leadership and Decision Making and 2. Campus Climate. The study seeks to provide insight into the following two research questions to better understand these institutions: 1. What strategies and initiatives are enacted or underway to realize "servingness" goals at Hispanic-Serving Research Institutions? 2. What perceptions does HSRI Leadership hold on the dimensions of "servingness" their organization provides, including the specification of "servingness" goals?

**Procedures:** If you agree to be in this study, you will participate in an hour-long interview at a time of your choosing. The interview will include descriptive, opinion and comparative questions regarding your university's HSRI designation, HSRI initiatives, Latinx student outcomes, and campus climate. The interview will be conducted via telephone or via Zoom video conference. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate transcription.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are no anticipated risks to participating in this study but given your role and responses there may be risks for confidentiality, as you could be identified. There are no benefits for participation.

**Confidentiality:** Participation is confidential and voluntary, and you can refuse to answer any questions if you do not feel comfortable. You can also withdraw from the interview at any time. Your responses will be confidential, and records of this study will be kept private. Your name will not be recorded as a part of this study. Written research records will be kept in a locked file and electronic records will be kept in an encrypted UCSB authorized on-line drive, only researchers will have access to these records. Interview audio recordings will be transcribed for: data analysis, creation of written quotes, creation of excerpts for presentation materials and utilized within the dissertation associated with this research project. If you indicate that audio recordings may not be used for future research purposes below, audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research project. Otherwise, they will may be utilized the researcher in future research projects.

Please indicate if you give permission for the use of your data (audio recording and transcript) for future research purposes (please initial):
    ___My data collected as part of this project may be used for future research purposes
    ___My data collected as part of this project may not be used for future research purposes

Please note, third party platforms used to record the interview, such as Zoom, may have access to the recordings under their privacy policy.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:**
You can refuse to take part in this project, and you can stop participating at any time. You can skip questions or refuse to complete any items in the interview.
**Contact Information:**
The researcher conducting this study is Joaquin Becerra under the supervision of Dr. Richard Duran. You may ask any questions prior to the start of the study, or after by contacting Joaquin Becerra at jbecerra@education.ucsb.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Committee at (805) 893-3807 or hsc@research.ucsb.edu. Or write to the University of California, Human Subjects Committee, Office of Research, Santa Barbara, CA 93106-2050.


Signature _____          Date _____

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

**Introductory Questions**

1. What is your role within the university and with HSI efforts?

2. How would you describe what it means to be Hispanic/Latinx Serving?

**HSI Process & Designation**

3. What strategies are being or have been employed to enact new HSI initiatives or processes?

4. What, if any, barriers have you encountered in the implementation of HSI related programs?

5. How do you perceive your organization has changed since HSI designation?

6. How does your campuses emphasis on research intersect with HSI efforts?

7. How would you say the designation of the university as an HSI has impacted the institution's core mission?

**HSI *Servingness***

Organizational

8. Stepping back for a moment, how would you say the organization identifies itself as a university (meaning how would you characterize "who we are" as a university)?
   a. Probe: Within your area? Outside of your area?

9. How would you describe the students at your university? to an outside constituent?

10. If you were leading HSI efforts on campus, what would you do to make your university more Latinx serving? What can your university be doing to better serve Latinx students?

11. What has executive leadership (more direct) organizational changes have been made by executive leadership in support of HSI efforts?
   a. What has occurred as a direct result of these efforts?
   b. Probes: Have the efforts been effective, useful, efficient?

Students

12. Do you believe academic outcomes have been impacted by HSI efforts for the general student population? Why or why not?

13. How has your institution involved students in HSI efforts?

14. How are mentorship programs employed in conjunction with HSI efforts?

    Probes: Undergraduates Research Mentorship Programs? Graduate/Undergraduate

    Student Mentorship Programs?

15. Is there anybody on campus that you would identify as an institutional agent of change

    for Latinx students?

    a. Probes: what are they doing to impact change? How are they involved in organized

    HSI efforts?

**Campus Climate**

16. How would you describe the culture of your university to an outside constituent?

    a. Probes: embedded practices, leadership, membership?

17. Please describe the institutional history of exclusion and of inclusion on your

    campus. Context historical how HSI fits into the history of exclusion or inclusion?

18. What efforts are being made to build cultural sensitivity to ensure student success?

19. How has compositional diversity or student race/ethnicity demographics been impacted

by HSI efforts?

20. In what ways do you believe the HSI designation and efforts has impacted or will impact

    campus climate?

21. What specific initiatives are being undertaken to positively impact campus climate for all

    students? For Latinx student?

**Closing Question**

22. Is there anything else you would like to share regarding HSI efforts & Servingness at

    your institution?

*Thank you for your participation in my study.*