

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Mixed Methods Approach to Optimizing
Outcomes in State Government Relations at
Public Institutions of Higher Education

A Capstone Project

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Doctor of Education

by

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Abstract

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Public institutions of higher education are reliant on their state governments for the provision of appropriations and enactment of policies, yet within any given state there exists a political contest between interests for limited resources. As public institutions of higher education compete for appropriations and favorable policy decisions from state legislators, institutional administrators enact strategies to achieve desired legislative outcomes. The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods study is to gain a deeper understanding of how government relations officers at public institutions in Virginia make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. An analysis of legislative text and individual in-depth interviews illuminates five conclusions that facilitate a series of recommendations for practitioner state government relations officers to consider implementing in their practice.

Keywords: higher education lobbying, government relations, state legislature

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APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, (“A Mixed Methods Approach to Optimizing Outcomes in State Government Relations at Public Institutions of Higher Education”), has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Dedication

To my parents, who instilled in me the value of education and empowered me to pursue my wildest dreams.

And to Cody, for inspiring me with your fearlessness and unwavering love and support.

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STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Table of Contents

DEDICATION v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vi

LIST OF TABLES x

LIST OF FIGURES xi

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

 PRIOR ANALYSIS..... 3

 STUDY PURPOSE 6

 DEFINITIONS 7

 JUSTIFICATION AND AUDIENCE 8

 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK..... 9

Policy pathways 13

Coalition opportunity structures 14

Scholarly application 16

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 18

 OVERVIEW AND FOCUS 18

Exclusion of federally focused literature 19

Evidence for lobbying 21

 THE ROLE OF STATE GOVERNMENT IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION..... 22

Evolution of the state role 24

Contest between state and institutional interests 27

 LOBBYING 34

Lobbying as a form of communication..... 35

Lobbying techniques 37

Lobbying in higher education 39

 THIRD PARTY INTEREST GROUPS 43

Impact of interest groups 43

Interest groups and higher education 44

 LITERATURE REVIEW CONCLUSION 44

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY 47

 RESEARCH DESIGN 48

 SAMPLING STRATEGY 49

 DATA COLLECTION 50

Quantitative data collection..... 51

Qualitative data collection..... 53

 DATA ANALYSIS 55

Quantitative data analysis and connection to the qualitative phase..... 55

Qualitative data analysis 56

 INSTRUMENT 56

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

CRITERIA FOR CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....	57
RESEARCHER-AS-INSTRUMENT STATEMENT	58
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS	59
QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS.....	60
MIXING THE DATA	63
QUALITATIVE FINDINGS	64
<i>Theme one: Lobbying through a paradigm of communication</i>	64
<i>Theme two: Practice influencing factors</i>	69
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, & CONCLUSION	77
AVERAGE LEGISLATIVE FREQUENCIES	78
ALIGNING RESOURCES TO ACHIEVE A LEGISLATIVE OUTCOME	80
RECOMMENDATIONS	82
<i>Future scholarship</i>	86
LIMITATIONS	88
CONCLUSION	90
REFERENCES	94
APPENDICIES	108
APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF VIRGINIA’S LEGISLATIVE PROCESS	108
APPENDIX B: RECRUITMENT EMAIL	111
APPENDIX C: KEYWORD SEARCH	112
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW INFORMED CONSENT FORM.....	113
APPENDIX E: FOLLOW-UP EMAIL EXAMPLE	115
APPENDIX F: FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS.....	116
APPENDIX G: DATA MANAGEMENT	118
APPENDIX H: CODEBOOK.....	119
APPENDIX I: ANALYTIC MEMO EXAMPLE	121
APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL	123

List of Tables

Table 1: Thematic Overlap with the Advocacy Coalition Framework.....11

Table 2: Legislative Mentions Across Virginia General Assembly
Years by Institution.....62

Table 3: Connecting Observations to the Advocacy Coalition Framework.....76

List of Figures

Figure 1: Visual Flowchart of the Advocacy Coalition Framework12

Figure 2: Policy Subsystem in the Advocacy Coalition Framework91

Figure A1: How a Bill Becomes a Law:
 Overview of Virginia’s Legislative Process..... 110

Chapter 1: Introduction

Public institutions of higher education are heavily reliant on state support in order to be competitive in the broader higher education ecosystem; however, state policymakers must balance disparate needs and competing interests when considering public policy design and the allocation of public appropriations (Li, 2017; Stone, 2012). As a result of various state policy contests between competing coalitions, public institutions of higher education are left to operate in a dynamic political and policy environment, where each decision by a state legislature can have significant and disparate impact on institutions and students. Therefore, one way that senior administrators seek to optimize outcomes for their institutions and the public is to engage in lobbying activity as a method of fostering a mutually beneficial relationship with state policymakers.

Within the context of a single state, there exists a bounded political contest between interests, such as between public institutions of higher education competing for resources, like favorable decisions from the state. State policymakers, however, do not always have all the information when making decisions; in the polis, policymakers must contend with ambiguous goals and blended alternatives, must choose between actions that are likely to harm some constituency, and must be prepared to adapt to shifting political environments (Stone, 2012). Therefore, for institutions to optimize positive state outcomes in an environment where state-level decisions can have lasting institutional impact, administrators at public institutions advocate to state policymakers for public policy and appropriations outcomes that can provide conditions to support their

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

institutions' missions. However, like the contest faced by state policymakers, administrators must also balance disparate needs and competing interests when making decisions regarding their institution's state government relations strategy, including factors such as institutional resource commitment and how to operationalize a strategy in political environment that is commonly decried as hyper-partisan and where universities are often regarded as highly politicized organizations.

Both appropriation and policy outcomes provide opportunities to measure return on investment, and senior administrators seeking to improve their practice can weigh their institution's financial investment in state government relations against the outcomes their institutions receive from the state. There are two broad categories of outcomes that practitioners may seek to optimize when seeking favor from the state, appropriations and non-monetary policy. While institutions may also benefit from contracts with the state, contract awards are excluded from this discussion, as they are not typically represented in legislative text. Regarding appropriations, according to a 2018 report from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), over the 10 years from 2008-2018, the average U.S. state educational appropriation per full time enrollment dropped from \$8,848 to \$7,853 (unadjusted). Over the same period, the national average student share of the cost of higher education increased from 36% to 47% (SHEEO, 2019). Similar trends exist in the Commonwealth of Virginia, where the average educational appropriation per full time enrollment dropped from \$7,009 to \$5,701 (unadjusted), and the average student share increased from 48% to 63% (SHEEO, 2019). In addition to public appropriations, another area where state policymaking affects institutions is non-monetary policy. For instance, state lawmakers can enact policies that affect

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

postsecondary affordability and financial aid programs, institutional governance and accountability structures, student access and transfer, procurement, capital planning and construction, and human resources (McGuinness, 2016). Institutional government relations officers may influence each of these processes, and by doing so, can improve outcomes for their institutions, and in turn for the public. However, in practice, there exists a problem of constraining environmental factors. While an institutional state government relations strategy might benefit from an unlimited budget, a favorable political environment, and no third-party opposition, senior administrators must instead optimize limited funds to produce state appropriation and policy outcomes that are beneficial to their institutions in a dynamic landscape of policy and political actors. This study will follow a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) to better understand how institutional state government relations practitioners in Virginia seek to optimize state outcomes for their institutions. The goal of this study is to provide state government relations practitioners with the tools to efficiently and effectively produce positive state policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions in a complex and constraining environment.

Prior Analysis

An exploration of the literature of state lobbying in higher education returned limited results. Where there is existing scholarship on this topic, it has focused primarily on either the role of third-party interest groups or the significance of state funding for public higher education writ large. I will briefly address each of these areas here. First, regarding the role of third-party interest groups, Tandberg (2009) found that in the state policymaking process, interest groups have the potential to act as a unifying force

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

affecting outcomes of state decision-making. This concept is supported by Stone (2012), who argued that interests are an integrated component of the policy making process, where interest groups and decision makers alike must rely on convincing constituents that their interests are at stake as a means of enacting change. At the federal level, studies have explored the relationship between national higher education associations and the U.S. Congress and executive agencies, as it related to lobbying the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act and federal funding for research (e.g., Cook, 1998; Milbrath, 1960; Tandberg, 2006; Tandberg, 2010). From a federal regulatory perspective, interest groups have used a wide array of resources, such as participating in negotiated rulemaking or driving a mass mobilization of constituents to submit comments to a federal agency, to influence federal rulemaking (Natow, 2016).

Regarding the significance of state funding for public higher education, the literature provides compelling empirical evidence that state appropriations are negatively correlated with the price of tuition; additionally, fluctuations in state appropriations can affect educational outcomes and enrollment management (e.g., Barr & Turner, 2013; Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2014; Zhang, 2006). For instance, evidence has shown that decreases in state funding have resulted, on average, in increases to tuition and fees (Barr & Turner, 2013; Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2016). The great recession of 2008 in the United States resulted in dramatic decreases to public funding for higher education, with many states still funding their colleges and universities below pre-recession levels (Mitchell et al., 2014). Individual students and their families have felt the unintended consequences of such cuts, as costs have shifted from public subsidies to increases in tuition, fees, and other individual payments (Barr & Turner, 2013).

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Researchers at the Cornell Higher Education Research Institute have also noted that educational outcomes such as graduation rates are impacted by variations in state appropriations (Zhang, 2006). Finally, fluctuations in state appropriations can affect enrollment management; as state funding decreased and institutions sought to account for the loss in revenue, Barr and Turner (2013) found that enrollment of out-of-state students was likely to increase.

Although much of the existing scholarship on this topic focuses primarily on interest groups and state appropriations writ large, there is, however, an early baseline of qualitative and quantitative research that illustrates the behaviors and attitudes of institutional state government relations officers and their perceptions of an effective lobbying campaign on a broad scale (e.g., Murphy, 2001). Institutions that engage in state lobbying activity can spend thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars each year on resources with the purpose of lobbying state policymakers. In practice, these efforts are well documented – officials with titles such as senior advisor to the president for state relations, contracts with private lobbying firms, and invitations for legislators to visit campus. However, there is a deficiency in a scholarly understanding of why institutional administrators make certain decisions regarding a state government relations strategy.

An overview of the literature demonstrates a lack of analysis of state lobbying strategy across public institutions in a single state. Therefore, the existing scholarship is inadequate to confidently describe why practitioners make certain decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from their legislature. By focusing the scope of this study within a single state context, I will

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

mitigate the effects that varying characteristics of disparate state legislatures may have on an institution's capacity to lobby.

Study Purpose

Although institutional government relations officers can theoretically influence the state policy process to improve policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public, in practice, however, they must do so in an environment that exhibits constraining factors, such as institutional resources, the political climate, or the interference of third-party interest groups. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of how practitioners at public institutions in Virginia make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. The study findings will provide state government relations practitioners with the tools to produce positive state policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public. This study will follow a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), which will first involve collecting and analyzing quantitative data before collecting and analyzing qualitative data to provide depth of understanding. The research questions guiding this study are:

1. At what frequency are each of Virginia's public institutions represented in legislative text during the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 sessions of the Virginia General Assembly;
2. How frequently are Virginia's research-intensive institutions mentioned compared to non-research-intensive institutions; and

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3. How do institutional government relations officers align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly?

Definitions

There are certain terms that carry special meaning in the context of this study. I will define those terms here, and all references to these terms in this inquiry should be understood as follows.

- *Lobbying*: I will use the definition of lobbying activity as defined in the Code of Virginia, which includes “Influencing or attempting to influence executive or legislative action through oral or written communication with an executive or legislative official; or solicitation of others to influence an executive or legislative official” (Virginia Lobbying Disclosure and Regulation Act, 1994/2017). Of note, as agencies of the state, public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia do not formally lobby the General Assembly. Rather, they engage in government relations activity. However, I have chosen to use the words “lobbying” and “lobbyist” in this paper as these are the terms accepted in the scholarly literature for this topic.
- *Senior administrator*: Used as a collective term to describe institutional leaders with broad discretionary authority, such as presidents or provosts.
- *Government Relations Officer (GRO)*: An administrator who is primarily responsible for the implementation of their institution’s state government relations strategy. For the purposes of this study, this term does not apply to individuals whose primary job duties are focused on federal government relations.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Furthermore, as appropriate for this study's research questions, all references to "institution" in this inquiry refer to public institutions only, unless otherwise noted.

Additionally, the reader should interpret references to the word "state" as meaning one of the 50 United States, not as the autonomous political unit as used by scholars of political science, unless otherwise noted.

Justification and Audience

The significant role that the state plays in the outcomes of its public colleges and universities, and the lack of scholarly and practice-based understanding of how institutional government relations officers align context, strategies, resources, and techniques in a way that successfully yields institutionally desired state policy and appropriations outcomes, justify the need for this study. Therefore, the primary audience for this study is practitioners, specifically institutional state government relations officers. Senior administrators at public institutions of higher education make resource allocation decisions in an environment where resources are scarce and emphasis is often placed on resource optimization and efficiency. Furthermore, the political environment has become commonly accepted as increasingly partisan, with institutions of higher education often viewed as partisan organizations. Consequently, it has seemingly become increasingly difficult for administrators to advocate to state policymakers on behalf of their institutions. In such an environment, one could reason that institutional government relations operations that do not yield a desired impact could experience a reallocation of resources towards more efficacious institutional initiatives. Therefore, when developing an institutional strategy for state government relations, administrators should engage in techniques that are efficient and effective in yielding a desired impact. With a better

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

understanding of the landscape of higher education state lobbying in Virginia, senior administrators and GROs will be able to make data-informed decisions to maximize state appropriations and policy outcomes for the benefit of their institutions and the public. In addition to practitioners, this study's findings may also be useful to scholars by pointing to opportunities for future research. As the body of literature on this topic continues to grow, scholars will have the opportunity to empirically measure the effectiveness of varying lobbying techniques on selected policy outcomes.

Theoretical Framework

The Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) will serve as a blueprint (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) for exploring the literature and developing this study's methods. Paul Sabatier and Hank Jenkins-Smith developed the ACF in the 1980s as a framework to study substantially complex political contests containing many actors trying to influence policy outcomes (Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2018). Over the past thirty years, the ACF has been refined numerous times, yet continues to provide a framework for understanding the disparate and interwoven forces, such as the mobilization of coalitions that influence policy change (Weible et al., 2011). In the ACF's original form, Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1988) sought to address critical deficiencies of the policy process literature. These deficiencies included an inability to view policy change through a long-term lens; a lack of analysis of policy actors within subsystems; a dearth of science and intergovernmental relations perspectives in the policy process; and the exclusion of psychology as a lens to explain individual motivation (Weible et al., 2011). In the decades since its inception, the ACF has also undergone several revisions. For instance, scholars have proposed new variables to account for governmental decision-making systems that are dissimilar to the

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

style of American pluralism on which the original model was implicitly based.

Additionally, a new typology of coalition resources was introduced and the pathways to major policy change have been revised to include internal system shocks (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework, as shown in Figure 1, proposes that although the final product in policymaking may be the direct result of a handful of specialists, other forces are integral components of the policy process and ultimately influence the behavior of the specialists who set policy. For instance, broader political and social trends could act as a destabilizing force on an elected official's willingness to agree to a given policy, or, conversely, the mobilization of citizens into advocacy coalitions could serve as a catalyst to legislative action. As applied to this study, I will use the ACF to guide an exploration of how public institutions of higher education in Virginia mobilize and leverage political and social resources to influence the decision-making of Virginia's lawmakers. Furthermore, I will use the ACF to frame an analysis of the structure, staffing, systems, processes, partnerships, and noteworthy successes and failures at public institutions in Virginia to suggest ways in which practitioners may be more successful in achieving intended outcomes from the state (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Table 1 provides a visual representation of common ACF inputs and their overlap with this study's research questions.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Table 1

Thematic Overlap with the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF)

ACF Input	Overlap to a Higher Education Setting	Connection to Study
Structure (including staffing)	Historical hesitation in the higher education community to engage in lobbying; willingness of an institution to devote resources to lobbying activity; proximity of GRO to president.	Examination of the resources and context practitioners might align to conduct lobbying activity.
Systems	Actions do not happen in a vacuum; rather, actions taken by practitioners could have rippling effects throughout an interconnected system of players; systems for information sharing among Virginia GROs.	Exploration of how practitioners consider context and strategy when engaging in lobbying activity.
Process	Structural and cultural constraints exist that may influence practitioner decision-making.	Examination of the resources and context practitioners might align to conduct lobbying activity.
Partnerships	Institutions might form natural coalitions with peer institutions around mutually desired goals.	Exploration of how practitioners consider strategy and techniques when engaging in lobbying activity.

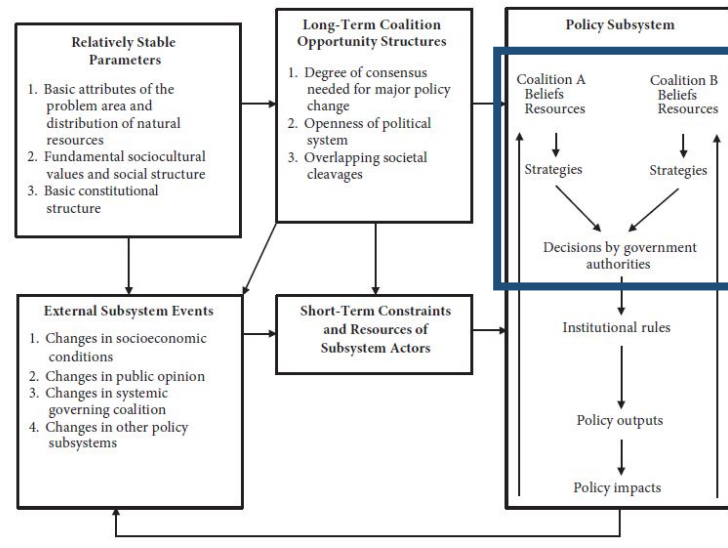
While the ACF accounts for a broadly holistic view of the policy process and affiliated influences, this study will focus specifically on the relationships in the policy subsystem between a coalition, the coalition’s strategies, and the decisions by government authorities. In the context of this study, coalition A in the policy subsystem is representative of public institutions of higher education, strategies are representative of the various lobbying techniques used by those institutions, and decisions by government authorities are representative of bills and resolutions introduced in the Virginia General

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Assembly. Additionally, in the context of this study, coalition B in the policy subsystem is more abstractly representative of any group that stands in opposition, whether totally or in part, to coalition A's goals and objectives. This could include third party interest groups, grassroots organizations of parents, or another institution. However, because this study seeks to explore how GROs make decisions regarding their institution's state lobbying strategy on a broad scale and not in the context of a specific policy contest, it would be inappropriate to assign a discrete value to coalition B. Of note, there is a tradition of focusing on the policy subsystem as the primary unit of analysis in academic research (Weible et al., 2011).

Figure 1

Visual Flowchart of the Advocacy Coalition Framework



SOURCE: Adapted from Sabatier and Weible (2007).

Note. The blue box, which I added to the diagram, represents the part of the framework that is the focus of this study.

Policy Pathways

The four pathways for affecting policy within the policy subsystem of the Advocacy Coalition Framework include change attributed to external sources, change attributed to internal events, change attributed to policy-oriented learning over long periods, and change attributed to negotiated agreement between opposing coalitions (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Each of these four pathways represents one possible model for how a GRO might act to support or impede a policy decision. These pathways are presented here to further contextualize the policy process; however, the findings from this study are not intended to necessarily align with any one pathway specifically.

The first pathway, change attributed to external forces, includes “changes in socioeconomic conditions, changes in the governing coalition, and policy decisions from other subsystems” (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp.193). Scholars have suggested that change attributed to external forces generally takes place over a longer-term timeframe, and that external forces are an almost inevitable factor to produce policy change (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). While the original version of the ACF was primarily focused on the importance of external forces as a factor of major policy change, succeeding iterations of the model have suggested internal shocks as a second alternative pathway to major policy change. Sabatier and Weible (2007) noted two primary ways in which internal forces can shock the ACF’s policy subsystem into major policy change. First, internal shocks can cause a redistribution of political resources that are necessary for major policy change. Second, internal shocks can dramatically affect the beliefs and behaviors of policy actors and cause tension between coalitions. The third pathway for policy change in the policy subsystem of the ACF, policy-oriented learning, suggests that coalition members will

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

change their belief systems as they develop a full understanding of the policy problem and the use of political strategies to achieve related objectives (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014). Therefore, policy change is possible via the third pathway when policy actors fully realize a government relations strategy. Finally, the fourth pathway of the ACF posits that opposing coalitions are more likely to reach a negotiated agreement when both sides perceive the status quo as unacceptable and do not have access to alternative means for achieving their objectives (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Public institutions of higher education are heavily reliant on state appropriations and favorable public policy to compete for personnel, students, and research capacity (Li, 2017; Stone, 2012; Tanberg, 2010). At the same time, states are reliant on institutions to provide public higher education to the citizenry of the state (Fethke & Policano, 2013; Stone, 2012). The logic of the fourth policy pathway in the ACF suggests that institutions are more likely to reach favorable policy and appropriations outcomes by working with lawmakers to identify negotiated compromises, thereby theoretically justifying the need for lobbying in higher education. Each of these pathways represents a model through which a GRO may seek to influence policy; however, the scope of this study is agnostic to a single pathway presented in the ACF.

Coalition Opportunity Structures

Within the Advocacy Coalition Framework, there are certain factors that can affect the resources of the coalitions that operate within the policy subsystem. Sabatier and Weible (2006) grouped these factors into a category they termed “coalition opportunity structures” and included factors such as the degree of consensus needed for major policy change and the openness of political systems. According to Sabatier and

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Weible, coalition opportunity structures can have downstream effects on policymaking. Although not the primary focus of this study, a discussion of these elements provides important context for further understanding how institutional administrators make decisions regarding state lobbying. Additionally, the degree of consensus needed for major policy change and the openness of political systems may serve as useful themes during qualitative data analysis.

The first coalition opportunity structure that Sabatier and Weible (2006) identified, the degree of consensus needed for major policy change, acts to regulate coalitions in their breadth; the greater the degree of consensus required for major policy change, the greater the degree of coalition inclusion that is needed (Sabatier & Weible, 2006). The authors noted that in political systems such as the United States, where policy decisions are generally subject to multiple checkpoints, coalitions that practice exclusionary tactics are less likely to succeed in enacting major policy change. Conversely, Sabatier and Weible noted that coalitions that operate in authoritarian political environments might be successful in their advocacy without the need to include many other groups in the efforts.

Sabatier and Weible (2006) applied similar concepts to the second coalition opportunity structure, the openness of a political subsystem, which describes the measure of interaction policymakers could have with external actors during the policy process. The authors noted two factors that inform the openness of a political subsystem, the frequency of opportunities for decision making on a given matter and the degree of accessibility for the public to access any or all of those opportunities. Based on this concept, political subsystems, such as the Government of the Commonwealth of Virginia, provide a high degree of openness. In Virginia, legislation follows a commonly accepted

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

legislative process, which includes bill introduction, consideration by committees of both houses, consideration by each full house, and consideration by the governor (see Appendix A). Throughout these multiple opportunities for decision-making, members of the public have access to legislative committee hearings, legislators, serve on gubernatorial boards and commissions, and can access bureaucrats, thereby benefiting from a generally open political subsystem.

Scholarly Application

The ACF has proven to be a popular framework in the scholarship of the policy process. Between 2007-2017, the ACF was applied at least 161 times in approximately 100 different peer-reviewed English language academic journals, with approximately 25 applications produced annually (Pierce, et al., 2017). Among these uses, the ACF has been applied in a diverse array of cases; however, the framework has been most heavily used to examine the federal policy process of the United States or European countries (Pierce et al., 2017). Furthermore, although Pierce et al. (2017) found that the ACF has been applied primarily in qualitative methodology, the framework does provide for generating generalizable knowledge of the policy process, thus making it suitable to quantitative inquiry as well (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014).

Regarding limitations to the Advocacy Coalition Framework, scholars have found that the framework does not account for coordination among policy actors (Pierce et al., 2017) and is less applicable to policy processes in non-democratic states (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). Concerning the former, the difficulty of fully accounting for dynamic interactions between disparate policy actors and the transformative characteristics of some policy subsystems has resulted in cases of limitations to the ACF's ability to

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

comprehensively measure policy change (Pierce et al., 2017). Concerning the applicability of the ACF in non-democratic states, because the ACF was largely conceived under assumptions of the American pluralistic style of democracy, the model does not properly account for dramatically different forms of governance, such as authoritarianism (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018). However, despite the two major limitations to the ACF discussed here, neither will hinder the inquiry presented in this study. The mixed methods design I propose for this study will allow for an in-depth and holistic understanding of institutional government relations strategy, which based on participants' experiences may or may not include an acknowledgement of coordination among policy actors. Therefore, because I do not explicitly seek to explore the effect of third-party actors in the policy process, this study will not be limited by this deficiency of the ACF. Similarly, the ACF's limited applicability to non-democratic states will not adversely affect this study, as the setting for this study is the Commonwealth of Virginia, which is squarely situated in the tradition of American pluralism on which the ACF was based.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework, which guided the decisions I made over the course of this study, was designed to acknowledge the many factors and actors that can affect the policy process. In the context of this study, the ACF will provide a blueprint (Grant & Osanloo, 2014) for an inquiry into how institutional government relations officers in Virginia align context, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired when seeking funding, new laws, or to changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly. The ACF has been amended over time to account for critical deficiencies; however, the major limitations discussed in the literature will not adversely affect this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

I have segmented this literature review into five sections. First, in the overview, I engage in a cursory discussion of the literature and provide boundaries to focus an exploration of the existing scholarship. This section is followed by four thematic sections that further contextualize the study's research problem and research questions within the existing scholarship. In the first thematic section, I will provide a brief discussion of the role of state government in public higher education. Included in this section is a brief discussion of the process of public appropriations in Virginia; please see Appendix A for more information regarding Virginia's legislative process. Next, I will analyze the literature regarding the common policy contests that are apt to invoke institutional state lobbying. Third, I will review the literature of lobbying, paying special attention to higher education lobbying. Fourth, I will briefly discuss the role of third-party interest groups in the policy process. This literature review will conclude with a brief synopsis of the research problem, the significance of this study for both practitioners and scholars, and an overview of the proposed methods for this study.

Overview and Focus

There is no scarcity of scholarship at the intersection of higher education and public policy, and the literature makes clear that American public institutions are reliant on their states, regarding both appropriations and public policy (e.g., Li, 2017; Lowry, 2019; McGuinness, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2016). Given this relationship, analysis of the ensuing issues as pertaining to private institutions is not included in this literature review,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

as private institutions of higher education are bound by a different set of parameters that govern their relationships with the states (Blanchard & Baez, 2016; Marginson, 2016). Furthermore, private institutions of higher education are not directly relevant to this study's research questions. Despite the apparent need for institutions to employ robust government relations campaigns in a resource environment that is increasingly focused on oversight, accountability, and competition, and a political environment that is hyper-partisan, there is scant literature devoted to understanding how institutional government relations officers (GROs) make decisions to optimize positive state outcomes for their institutions and the public.

Exclusion of Federally Focused Literature

Although the federal government plays a critical role in the higher education community writ large (e.g., Mumper et al., 2016), that role is arguably not as significant as the relationship between a state and its public institutions. The relationship between a state and its institutions is evidenced in a variety of facets but can be broadly categorized as manifesting through either public policy that affects institutional operations (e.g., Baker, 2019; Lowry, 2019) or financial decisions that affect institutional resource allocation (e.g., Li, 2017; McGuinness, 2016; Tandberg et al., 2016). From a public policy perspective, states could take action to regulate the use of affirmative action, which would have downstream effects on institutions, students, and families. For instance, one study found that states that adopted bans on affirmative action subsequently experienced scarcity of access by underrepresented students to their public flagship institutions (Baker, 2019). States could also enact public policy to promote access to higher education for low socioeconomic status (SES) students. For instance, Lowry

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(2019) found that low-SES students were more likely to gain access to four-year institutions when their states reorganized disconnected systems of higher education under single governing boards and invested in financial aid programs. By contrast, the federal government has weighed in on issues of affirmative action or financial aid at a much higher scale, and primarily through the courts or the federal rulemaking process (Natow, 2016). In addition to enacting public policy, the literature also supports a significant role for states in the financial welfare of their institutions. Most importantly, the states provide direct appropriations to institutions for operational and capital expenditures. By comparison, the financial commitment of the federal government, while not meager by any means, is focused primarily on student financial aid and research grants (Mumper et al., 2016). Furthermore, state policymakers regularly make financial decisions that affect institutions by way of tuition setting and financial aid for students (McGuinness, 2016).

In addition to the impact of state appropriations and policy decisions, the smaller scale of state- versus federal decision-making suggests that individuals can have a more focused impact at the state level. For instance, Tandberg et al. (2016) found a positive correlation between the relationship between a state's higher education executive officer and a state's governor with the level of state appropriations directed to public higher education. Additionally, the ideology of state policymakers (Doyle, 2012), state governance structures (McLendon et al., 2013), and state financial aid programs are all topics that affect pricing strategies in higher education, regardless of geography. Therefore, while the federal government has been found to be an important partner in the advancement of academic research and supplier of student financial aid (Mumper et al., 2016), the decisions of state policymakers ultimately have the potential to critically shape

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

the future of public higher education within a state. Therefore, the focus of this study and supporting literature is directed primarily at the state level, where government relations officers act to optimize state outcomes for the benefit of their institutions and the public. However, it is also important to note the possibility for a dual federal and state approach to government relations in practice. For instance, institutions of higher education might lobby for something at the federal level, such as the ability to receive block grant federal funds, and then lobby their state governments to receive a disbursement of said funds. Again, however, this study is focused solely on state matters in order to support GROs in optimizing outcomes for the benefit of their institutions and the public.

Evidence for Lobbying

The nature of the relationship between institution and state suggests an opportunity for growth for institutions that actively maintain channels of communication with state policymakers and opportunity costs for institutions that do not. This notion is supported by evidence that demonstrates that over the past two decades, higher education has been a growing force of influence in state-level policymaking and has become one of the most influential coalitions in state capitals (Gandara et al., 2015; Herbenar, 2004; Tandberg, 2010; Thomas & Gandara, 2018). In particular, research universities have been found to possess remarkable levels of political influence in state arenas (Gandara, 2018). Despite the noted levels of political influence, it is not uncommon to read articles from popular news outlets that illustrate the financial strain under which institutions of higher education operate. Noting the gap between influence and perceived outcomes, there is an opportunity to better inform practice by providing recommendations to GROs concerning lobbying techniques that are perceived to be most effective when seeking policy and

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

appropriations from a state legislature. This study will approximate the robustness of each participant institution's government relations efforts by first examining the frequency at which each of Virginia's public institutions are represented in legislative text and whether Virginia's research-intensive institutions are mentioned at a higher frequency than non-research-intensive institutions. Being named in a bill or resolution suggests an institution is directly receiving an outcome (positive or negative) from the General Assembly, which might warrant a government relations response. I hypothesize that Virginia's highest-research institutions will have greater resources to dedicate to government relations efforts and will consequentially be more frequently mentioned in legislative text, which in turn could lead to funding or policy. Therefore, one of the questions that will be included in the interview protocol is to ask participants how many full-time employees are dedicated to state government relations at their institution. Additionally, this study will seek to better understand how GROs in Virginia align context, strategies, resources, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly, so that practitioners can optimize the return of positive outcomes for their institutions and the public. This study's findings will create a baseline for scholars to conduct additional research on the topic of state lobbying in higher education.

The Role of State Government in Public Higher Education

The American system of higher education comprises a diverse cadre of organization and governance principles, with 19 different models identified among the 50 states (McGuinness, 2003). One product of this diversity is a disparate arrangement of relationships between institutions and their state governments (McGuinness, 2003),

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

which is the primary reason that this study is limited within the boundaries of a single state and its political and legislative environment. However, the literature provides several issues that are prevalent across the higher education community without deference to state borders, and an examination of these issues helps to explain the role of the state. For instance, a state's role includes providing appropriations to its institutions (Archibald & Feldman, 2014; Li, 2017; McGuinness, 2016). Underscoring the importance of this role, studies have shown that appropriations from the state are one of the most significant sources of funds for public institutions, and despite relative declines, continue to enable a baseline of institutional operational continuity (Li, 2017) and affect access and equity in higher education (Taylor & Cantwell, 2019). The scholarship further underscores the significance of this role of the state in practice; Tandberg (2006) found that one of the common high-priority issues for institutions engaged in state lobbying was increasing state appropriations for higher education. Absent in the literature, however, is an understanding as to how institutional state government relations officers perceive positive appropriations outcomes in a fiscal environment that shows continued relative declines in state funding for public higher education (Li, 2017; SHEEO, 2019).

In addition to providing appropriations, the state's role also includes that of regulator (Bamberger, et al., 2019; McGuinness, 2016), and a common set of policy issues includes those related to admission and race. For instance, every state has set policy expectations regarding affirmative action for their institutions, whether by way of an outright ban, no regulation at all, or somewhere in between (Baker, 2019). Additionally, many states have developed public policy regulating the relationship between their community colleges and four-year institutions, and expectations for student transfer

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(Taylor & Jain, 2017). The dynamic role of the state in public higher education suggests that institutional GROs should be adept at balancing a plethora of issues. However, the contemporary state role in higher education, which dictates the environment in which GROs operate, has benefited from decades of evolution.

Evolution of the State Role

The contemporary organization, governance, and coordination structures that frame the relationship between state and institution range from centralized boards that have broad authority over institutional programs and budgets to decentralized structures that place most authority at the institutional level (Volkwein & Tandberg, 2008). However, the present-day models are a culmination of decades of evolution that began in earnest during the end of the nineteenth century with the enactment of the Morrill Land-Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890 (McGuinness, 2016; Sorber, 2013). Exploring the historical evolution of the role of the state in higher education provides additional context for understanding institutional government relations in contemporary terms.

Prior to the advent of new public state universities during the Progressive Era, most American institutions were private and enjoyed little, if any, encumbrance from the state (McGuinness, 2016). That paradigm shifted significantly with the passage of the Morrill Land-Grant Acts, which gave the states a new role in coordinating higher education (Sorber, 2013), and between the first and second World Wars, when there was a push to consolidate and expand public universities under single statewide governing boards (McGuinness, 2016). Stimulated by the GI Bill during the 1950s, America's institutions of higher education began to broaden their enrollment from serving only a small fraction of elite students to serving almost 3.6 million students by the end of the

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

decade (Thelin, 2011). The several decades that followed prompted additional evolution in the relationship between state and institution, as the public sector experienced a boom in community colleges and technical schools, multi-campus universities, and teachers' colleges (McGuinness, 2016; Thelin, 2011). During the 1970s and 1980s, public trust in U.S. higher education experienced a decline, which combined with a tapering of the great expansion of mass higher education, resulted in a shift in the state role from a steady and passive source of funding to actively ensuring student access and opportunity (McGuinness, 2016). By the 1990s, state governors began to include public higher education in their policy agendas, especially as it related to student outcomes, which further cemented a shift in the relationship between state and institution towards that of active partners (McGuinness, 2016). As the era of new accountability took root in the 1990s, state governments placed additional emphasis on measuring institutional performance and student outcomes (Volkwein & Tandberg, 2008). Over the course of the past 20 years, states focused more heavily on institutional accountability and student performance, and public funding models emerged that linked state funding to student outcomes (Hearn, et al., 2017; McGuinness, 2016; Thelin, 2011). Where statewide coordinating bodies had not existed before, the push towards performance-based funding incentivized the creation of new agencies (Thelin, 2011). Furthermore, over the past decade, the political framing of higher education has increasingly shifted towards viewing access as a social and political right that ought to be available as a means towards personal economic and social gain (Baum & Ma, 2007; Spellings, 2006; Volkwein & Tandberg, 2008).

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While the role of the state in higher education has been in flux since the end of the nineteenth century, the most fundamental shifts occurred in the years since the 1980s. By the mid-2010s, the sum of the evolution of the role of the state in higher education could be described as concerned with strategic planning, decentralized management, a reliance on policy incentives and disincentives, the linkage of quality and student outcomes to funding, and a growing reliance on third party providers to meet student and community needs (McGuinness, 2016). However, many scholars did not foresee the dramatic shift to activist state legislatures that has occurred over the last few years as evidenced, for instance, in Iowa, Wisconsin, and North Carolina. In 2018, the Wisconsin legislature led efforts to restructure the state's higher education system to align it with business interests by eliminating academic programs deemed nonessential to workforce needs (Smolarek et al., 2018). Similarly, in Iowa, a series of bills were introduced in 2017 that sought to eliminate tenure for all faculty, and in North Carolina, a wealthy campaign donor lobbied the state legislature to raise tuition at public institutions as a means of subsidizing tuition grants for use at private institutions (Lafer, 2017). The examples from Wisconsin, Iowa, and North Carolina illustrate how increasingly active state governments can further underscore the need to provide practitioners with the tools necessary for achieving positive state policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public.

Given the multidimensional, complex, and evolving nature of the role of the state in higher education, it is fitting that many institutions have invested in either an institutional GRO or a contract with an external lobbyist. The presence of dedicated government relations personnel has been shown to be especially evident at large research

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

universities, where a majority maintain an entire office dedicated to government affairs (Tandberg, 2010).

Contest Between State and Institutional Interests

The relationship between state and institution is not without conflict; such conflict, or policy contest, arise when each party seeks to achieve their interests, and in turn catalyzes the need for lobbying activity (Stone, 2012). In the context of this study, these policy contests generally align with the state's role and can be categorized as either public policy or appropriations.

Public Policy. Institutions are reliant on the states to enact public policies that do not encumber their ability to fulfil their missions; however, in the polis there exists a contest between policy actors, priorities, and interests, and as a result, senior administrators have implemented government relations strategies to advocate for favorable policy outcomes (Cook, 1998; Murphy, 1999; Stone, 2012). Aims McGuinness (2016), a preeminent scholar of the state's role in higher education, described five topics as perennial issues in higher education policy that are apt to cause conflict between state and institution. This section will briefly discuss each of the five issues that McGuinness identified and the associated government relations responses. First, McGuinness found that variations in regional economic and cultural differences within a state often resulted in calls from elected officials for increased access to graduate and professional programs as a means of preparing greater swaths of the workforce for local specialized needs. This phenomenon was found to be most amplified when calls for graduate and professional offerings expanded beyond single course offerings and into demands for new programs that could draw enrollments from regional and statewide populations. McGuinness

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

described this scenario as often resulting in legislative proposals for higher education restructuring. This example of a policy contest, caused by growing expectations from lawmakers for expanded academic offerings, can be described as a form of state-sponsored competition, where a state legislature might enact public policy to exacerbate the vertical stratification that exists within a community of institutions, thereby further increasing the likelihood of additional policy contests (Naidoo, 2016).

A second perennial issue that McGuinness (2016) described as often resulting in policy contest between state and institution is the real or perceived barriers to student mobility. While transfer policy was historically developed locally at community colleges, the 1970s witnessed increased activity on the part of state legislatures to facilitate transfer and articulation policy for institutions in the state (Taylor & Jain, 2017). The literature illustrates that with the onset of state policies for student transfer and articulation, contest began to manifest in clashes between political and academic cultures, the culture gap between community colleges and four-year institutions, and between community college curricula and student advising (Senie, 2014; Taylor & Jain, 2017). In a Virginia-specific context, administrators at the state's public institutions have served on numerous state committees and working groups – such as the State Committee on Transfer, the Dual Enrollment and Passport Advisory Committee, and TransferVA - to advocate for their institutions' priorities related to transfer policies.

McGuinness (2016) described a third common policy contest occurring when two or more institutions in the same geographic area within a state have similar aspirations (e.g., for academic offerings), and thus require negotiation between senior administrators and state policymakers. Higher education has traditionally been a marketplace for the

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

exchange of knowledge; however, rising globalization has resulted in greater competition between institutions for budgets and faculty, a trend Musselin (2018) attributed to increases to research costs, increases in the number of academics, decreases to public budgets, market-based steering instruments, and the intertwining of higher education and opportunities for financial gain. Therefore, the generally high-stakes nature of competition between institutions is likely aggravated when institutions in the same geographic area have similar aspirations for growth and demand for resources, and thereby is apt to cause policy contest between state and institution. For instance, McGuinness found that intense competition between regional institutions resulted in legislative proposals for reorganization and consolidation of higher education within a state as an attempt to promote cooperation and coordination. Highlighting the intensity of such contests, Drucker (2016) found that economic benefits to a community derived from the presence of an institution could be felt as far as 60 miles away from a central campus, thereby underscoring the competition for prominence within a given geographical region. State policies that mandate increased coordination between institutions could have a profound effect on the character of a state's higher education system and the operational capabilities of individual institutions. Similarly, a fourth issue that McGuinness (2016) described as a common policy contest between state and institution regards institutions that have ill-defined or overlapping missions. Legislative proposals to address such concerns have frequently included efforts to merge, consolidate, or close institutions, or significantly amend an institution's mission (McGuinness, 2016). While McGuinness described this policy contest as primarily applicable to small and isolated rural institutions, he noted that the resulting lobbying activity could be intense.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Finally, a fifth recurrent issue that McGuinness (2016) described as causing policy contest between state and institution regards concerns about the effectiveness of institutional governing boards. McGuinness found that during times of fiscal stringency, state policymakers were more willing to advocate for a single statewide coordinating or governing body for institutions in the state, whereas during times of financial prosperity state policymakers were apt to devolve authority to institutional governing boards.

The five thematic policy issues McGuinness (2016) identified serve as a touchstone for broadly understanding the policy contests between state and institution that readily result in implementation of institutional government relations strategies. However, it is important to note that there are numerous specific public policy matters that affect institutions not explicitly mentioned by McGuinness, such as those related to student enrollment (e.g., Musselin, 2018; Naidoo, 2016; Taylor & Jain, 2017), intercollegiate athletics (e.g., Smith et al., 2017), or contingent faculty (e.g., Julius & DiGiovanni, 2019; Murray, 2019). For instance, Naidoo (2016) found that institutions compete for international student enrollment as a function of government-legitimized reconceptualization of the student as the consumer in higher education. Smith et al. (2017) found a dearth of state policies supporting a growing number of wounded military veterans participating in intercollegiate athletics. Murray (2019) found that in the absence of the availability of unions and collective bargaining, contingent faculty were at a higher risk of discrimination. Taken together, the many issues that cause public policy contest between state and institution serve as compelling evidence for the implementation of institutional government relations.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Public Appropriations. In addition to public policy, state financial decisions can also create contest between state and institution that may warrant an institutional government relations response. The literature illustrates that public funding for higher education tends to be the most volatile part of a state budget; as compared to others state budget allocations, higher education funding has been shown to be cut more dramatically in bad fiscal years and increased more significantly in good fiscal years (Delaney & Doyle, 2018). However, regardless of whether public appropriations for higher education are increasing or decreasing, the literature illustrates that in all states the governor and legislative committees responsible for appropriations play a dominant role in determining how the state's budget will be allocated (McGuinness, 2016). Additionally, McGuinness (2016) found that state budget and appropriations language often contains embedded policy mandates. Together, these findings support the implementation of institutional government relations strategies to secure favorable appropriations from the state.

The fifty states of the United States represent fifty unique budget and appropriations processes. The Commonwealth of Virginia, which is the setting for this study, adopts a biennial budget that includes a general operating budget and a capital budget. The general operating budget consists of expenditures for the operation of government agencies, while the capital budget includes costs associated with building or renovating public facilities. Both the general operating budget and capital budget affect Virginia's institutions of higher education. According to the Virginia Department of Planning & Budget (VDPB), the 2018-2020 biennium included \$115.9 billion for operating expenses and \$1.4 billion in capital outlay; of the total operating expenses, approximately 33.8% was allocated to education. In Virginia, the state budget process for

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

institutions of higher education begins when public colleges and universities analyze their needs and submit budget requests to the VDPB in early fall (Department of Planning & Budget, 2018). After consulting with the VDPB, and no later than December 20 of the submission year, the Governor of Virginia then proposes a budget bill to Virginia's legislative body - the General Assembly - that contains detailed line-item appropriation requests. The Governor of Virginia, unlike most U.S. states, is restricted from serving consecutive 4-year terms. Therefore, the political context of the decision-making in the state shifts every four years. The literature illustrates that the ideology and influence of a state governor can have an impact on appropriations for higher education, which suggests that the frequent gubernatorial turnover in Virginia could have an impact on public higher education state lobbying. By examining bills and resolutions from a period that spans two administrations, I will mitigate the political influence that any single governor may have on the legislative process. Next, during the legislative action phase, the budget bill follows a process like that of other legislation, including an opportunity for each house of the General Assembly to make amendments to the bill before returning it to the governor for signature or veto. Once signed, the budget bill becomes law and funds are appropriated as contained therein. Throughout this process, there are multiple opportunities for GROs to communicate their institution's strategic priorities to policymakers as part of government relations strategy.

Although average state funding for education has remained relatively constant as a share of total state budget, spending on other state priorities, especially health care, infrastructure, and public safety, has increased, thereby resulting in relative declines to appropriations for higher education (Archibald & Feldman, 2014; Barr & McClellan,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2018). However, regardless of a state's process for appropriating funds, state financial support of higher education is critical to institutional operations, and contest arises when state lawmakers make resource allocation decisions among the interests in the state. Barr and McClellan (2018) highlighted this contest by describing the failure of states to adequately fund their institutions as partly responsible for increasing competition between institutions. Furthermore, the authors articulated specific institutional prerogatives that, due to relative declines to state appropriations, have caused contest between institutions, including competition for students, faculty, and staff; safety and security programs; research infrastructure; acquiring cutting-edge technologies; and student financial aid (Barr and McClellan, 2018).

Reactions to State Financial Decisions. One negative consequence of the contest created by the relative decline in state appropriations has been effects to student affordability and degree completion, which have been felt by students and families because of institutions increasing tuition to mitigate budget shortfalls (Mitchell et al., 2016). Barr and Turner (2013) found that continuous and dramatic decreases in state appropriations following the Great Recession of 2008 resulted in major shifts to who pays for higher education, with the federal government and select families taking on a larger share. Regarding completion, Zhang (2006) found that every \$1,000 increase in state appropriations per full time enrolled student positively correlated with about a one percent increase in graduation rate. Additionally, Doyle and Zumeta (2014) found that institutions generally responded to state austerity in one of five ways: cutting costs, allocating funds based on outcomes, accepting less funding in return for greater autonomy, waiting for a return to normalcy, or generally falling apart. These examples

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

stress the pressure on institutions to achieve their interests in the contest over state appropriations.

The myriad impacts felt by institutions because of fluctuations in state financial decisions, and the disparate ways by which institutions can respond, serve as additional arguments for senior administrators to think strategically about engaging in a robust state government relations strategy. Regardless of the varying ways in which contest between state and institution manifest, whether through policy or appropriation, there is a need to better inform practice by exploring how GROs make decisions regarding government relations. Doing so will fill a gap in the literature and provide administrators with the tools necessary to efficiently and effectively advocate for their intuitions.

Lobbying

The concept of lobbying is a function of American politics that dates to the dawn of the Republic, when citizens would congregate outside of the chambers of the U.S. Congress and state legislatures in an attempt to influence the voting behaviors of elected officials (United States House of Representatives, 2015). Although the origins of American lobbying were focused on the individual as the influencer, lobbying has since developed into an industry of its own, encompassing firms dedicated to providing government relations services, professional- and industry-based associations engaged in legislative advocacy, and coalitions of various actors pursuing a collective policy goal (Berry, 1977; Cook, 1998; United States House of Representatives, 2015). Lobbying is a story of competing interests, incentives, power, symbols and storytelling, equity, and efficiency (Stone, 2012). Ultimately, however, lobbying is a form of communication (Milbrath, 1960). Understanding how public institutions of higher education

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

communicate their priorities to state policymakers will provide critical context regarding the strategies GROs deem to be effective when seeking favor from the state and will therefore be an important factor in this study's methodological design.

Lobbying as a form of Communication

Lester Milbrath (1960; 1963) provided an early and seminal understanding of the role of money in politics and the practice of lobbying in American democracy that scholars have continued to rely on in the six decades since publication (e.g., Austen-Smith & Wright, 1992; Contandriopoulos, 2010; de Bruycker, 2016; Lupia & McCubbins, 1994; McGrath, 2018; Smith, 1984). Essentially, Milbrath (1960) framed lobbying as a process of stakeholders communicating vital information to policymakers. More recently, McGrath (2018) expanded Milbrath's definition to include an element of competition between lobbyists for access to policymakers. Within this broad conceptualization of lobbying as a process of communication, Milbrath (1960) grouped specific lobbying strategies and techniques into three categories, including direct personal communication, communication through intermediaries, and opening new channels of communication. Methods of direct personal communication rely on the lobbyist as policy knowledgeable (McGrath, 2018), and might include lobbying techniques such as personally presenting arguments or research to policymakers and testifying at hearings (Cook, 1998; Milbrath, 1960). On the other hand, methods of communication through intermediaries, which rely on the lobbyist as a message coordinator, might include lobbying techniques such as arranging for a notable constituent or alum to contact a policymaker, organizing a letter writing or social media campaign, and publicizing a legislator's voting record (McGrath, 2018; Milbrath, 1960; Murphy, 2001). Finally,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

methods of opening new channels of communication might include entertaining policymakers at social functions, contributing resources to a political campaign, and collaborating with third-party interest groups (Milbrath, 1960; Murphy, 2001). Used in this context, the term new is not specifically used to describe techniques that are contemporary or new technology; rather, the term new is used to describe the use of lobbying techniques that forge fresh opportunities for communication with legislators where there may not have been a previously established relationship. In other words, Milbrath (1960) would be apt to describe a lobbying technique as opening a new channel of communication if utilizing that technique facilitated the development of a nascent practitioner-legislator relationship.

In a survey of registered federal lobbyists, Milbrath (1960) found that a majority of respondents favored lobbying techniques that were a form of direct personal communication with policymakers. However, Milbrath's findings also suggested that too high a frequency of direct personal communication with policymakers led to a decline in the acceptance of such techniques as a favorable strategy. This suggests an important caution, that GRO should strive for balance when developing an institutional lobbying strategy. Furthermore, Milbrath found that entertaining policymakers at social functions was one of the least popular methods of communicating with policymakers. Regardless of the channel of communication or specific techniques that a lobbyist uses, lobbying is fundamentally an exercise of access and information, where lobbyists compete for access to policymakers by communicating subject-matter expertise and political acumen.

However, this role has expanded over the last several decades beyond what Milbrath (1960; 1963) and his contemporaries envisioned. During the late 1990s,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Republican House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas) sparked a major evolution in the practice of lobbying, incurring a new wave of partisanship beyond the halls of the Capitol. Newspapers in the early 2000s, such as the Los Angeles Times and the New York Times, reported on DeLay's overt signaling to industry that their interests would be better served if they pledged allegiance to the Republican Party. In 2005, as DeLay was winding down his service as House Majority Leader, the Los Angeles Times reported on action DeLay took seven years prior to block legislation of importance to electronics manufactures from coming to a vote because the manufacturers' trade association had recently hired a Democrat as their top lobbyist. Many lobbyists and lawmakers alike have credited DeLay for the shift to partisanship in the business of lobbying, telling reporters that they no longer believed political contributions could be split evenly between parties, as was the practice historically (Hamburger & Wallsten, 2005). Additionally, based on my own personal lived experiences, the new partisan lobbying is evident in lobbying shops billing themselves as either Republican or Democratic leaning, or conversely, shops that strives to create precise party balance in the makeup of their professional lobbyists.

Lobbying Techniques

While the term lobbyist is typically formally defined in state and federal code (e.g., Virginia Lobbying Disclosure and Regulation Act, 1994/2017), the role of a lobbyist can be distilled down to an individual who attempts to influence policy by communicating with policymakers as a subject-matter expert (e.g., Burgess & Miller, 2009). The specific techniques that a lobbyist uses to accomplish this objective contribute to an overall lobbying strategy. Therefore, although limited, the literature that discusses

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

lobbying techniques offers important context to frame this study's research questions and methods. Early and formative scholarship on lobbying identified a common series of lobbying techniques that included testifying at public hearings, meeting with policymakers directly in both formal and informal settings, utilizing contacts to present an argument, sharing research to support a position, and providing recommendations to drafted legislation (Berry, 1977; Cook, 1998; Milbrath, 1963).

The commonly held lobbying techniques identified in early scholarship have been discussed in subsequent literature as well. Building on Milbrath's (1960) work, Mullen (1980) conducted a study to gauge the perceived effectiveness of using varying lobbying techniques to achieve an increase in state appropriations for Ohio's cooperative education program; the survey instrument asked respondents to react to a series of lobbying techniques like those that Milbrath identified. Corroborating Milbrath's conclusions, Mullen found that face-to-face direct personal lobbying was the preferred technique of both lobbyists and legislators. However, distinct from Milbrath, Mullen found that lobbyists expressed a proclivity for communicating through intermediaries, specifically engaging notable constituents in outreach to policymakers. The use of notable constituents, or other grassroots advocacy techniques, has been shown to be particularly effective in state level lobbying (Jackson & Smith, 1997).

Lobbyists may also avail themselves of opportunities to engage in the political electoral process as part of a lobbying strategy, and the literature has established this as an effective technique for achieving a desired result. For instance, Langbein (1986) established a positive correlation between campaign contributions - in both monetary and non-monetary forms - and a lawmaker's voting behavior. Additionally, Bonica (2018)

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

developed a methodology for inferring roll-call scores from campaign contribution data and found that campaign contributions were a dominant indicator of voting behavior. Furthermore, Richards (2017) found that campaign contributions were more predictive of voting behavior than the ideology of a policymaker's district or party affiliation.

The lobbying techniques discussed in the literature present a disparate and loosely organized understanding of how lobbyists seek to influence policy outcomes. While the aforementioned lobbying techniques are generally discussed in the literature in a federal context, the Advocacy Coalition Framework would support a parallel application at the state level, as both the U.S. Congress and state legislatures are forms of American pluralism that is the premise underlying the ACF's policy subsystem. However, from the perspective of a scholar-practitioner, there is an opportunity to explore the use of these techniques further in a state context in order to provide practitioners with information that can help them optimize their state government relations strategies and thereby return positive policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public.

Lobbying in Higher Education

There is significant evidence in the literature that illustrates the benefits for institutions to effectively communicate their value to broad audiences (e.g., Baum & Ma, 2007; Fethke & Policano, 2013; Jackson & Smith, 1999; Lowry, 2007; Stone, 2012; Tandberg, 2009). Furthermore, the literature supports the notion that external influencers, such as institutions of higher education, can have an effect on state higher education policy development (Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2014; McLendon, et al., 2009), which is consistent with the policy subsystem model in the Advocacy Coalition Framework. Although the literature is robust concerning lobbying and the policy process writ large,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

few scholars have added to the body of knowledge around state lobbying by public institutions of higher education.

The specific lobbying techniques commonly used by higher education lobbyists have evolved over time, often due to changes in the political balance of power and to changes in public opinion towards higher education and lobbying (Cook, 1998; Murphy, 2001). One product of this evolution has been an increased reliance on campus-based assets. For instance, university presidents have begun to spend more time in Washington, D.C. and their state capitals; student organizations have used the internet to amplify their messages; campus-based ad hoc coalitions have been formed to respond quickly to divisive matters; and participation in national and regional higher education associations has significantly increased (Cook, 1998; David, et al., 2018; Murphy, 2001). Regarding engagement in electoral politics, although the literature supports direct engagement as an effective lobbying technique, there is a dearth of empirical evidence linking the political behaviors of university presidents and other senior administrators with state policy outcomes. Additionally, while contributing to the electoral process through a political action committee (PAC) is another method of electoral political engagement, the non-profit higher education sector has been resistant to PAC activity, as it would explicitly designate the sector as a special interest (Cook, 1998; Stone, 2012).

Similar to prior studies on lobbying writ large, in a study exploring lobbyist and policymaker attitudes towards higher education lobbying, Murphy (2001) found that the role of a higher education lobbyist can generally be understood as an individual who provides information, builds relationships, develops strategy, and leverages grassroots organizing, all while in pursuit of their intuition's policy objectives. According to

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Murphy, building relationships was the most critical role for an effective higher education lobbyist; a relationship built on mutual trust provided an infrastructure to support additional lobbying efforts. Additionally, Murphy found that higher education lobbyists were most effective in fulfilling their roles as providers of information when they became sources of subject-matter expertise for legislators and their staffs.

Furthermore, Murphy found that higher education lobbyists who developed an intentional and holistic lobbying strategy before the start of a given legislative session were perceived to be most effective. Finally, underscoring the important role of coalition efforts in the ACF's policy subsystem, Murphy found that a higher education "...lobbyist who can marshal grass roots support for an issue will stand a much better chance of achieving the desired results" (pp.35). In sum, Murphy's findings suggest that the role of a higher education lobbyist is not dissimilar from lobbyists for other industries. Informing policymaking by building relationships through an honest brokering of subject-matter expertise should guide the techniques that a higher education lobbyist uses to achieve their institution's policy objectives. Murphy's conclusions were later supported by a study from Burgess and Miller (2009), who found that higher education lobbyists perceived as effective the same strategies that lobbyists for other industries also perceived as effective. However, one area of disagreement between the two studies related to organizational structure. Whereas Murphy did not highlight the structure of an institution as important to its state lobbying strategy, Burgess and Miller found that participants unanimously viewed an institutional structure that provided a GRO unimpeded access to the institution's president as a key factor in successful lobbying.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Although the literature of higher education lobbying techniques is limited, one topic that has been discussed in recent literature is the use of constituents – especially alumni - as intermediaries in outreach to policymakers. Weerts et al. (2010) explored the role that alumni can play in political advocacy and noted there has been a historical resistance to leveraging alumni engagement in non-monetary support roles. At the same time, however, the authors suggested that alumni could provide a low-cost and multi-dimension political advocacy tool for their institutions by contacting policymakers, serving on political action teams, and participating in special advocacy events (Weerts et al., 2010). Despite a historical reticence to engaging alumni for political causes, the use of alumni as a higher education lobbying technique rose in popularity in the early 2000s (Potter, 2003; Weerts et al., 2010). It is important to note, however, that although scholars have found alumni to be increasingly active in political advocacy, alumni actions have not always been at the direction of GROs or as part of an institution’s formal lobbying strategy (Weerts et al., 2010). Rather, Weerts et al. found that politically engaged alumni informally received advocacy talking points from alumni magazines, newsletters, and other communications from their alma maters. This suggests that one lobbying technique GROs might consider is working closely with their alumni association counterparts to carefully construct the politically infused messages that might appear in institutionally branded publications.

Institutional lobbying has been shown to have real impact in state decision-making (Lowry, 2007; Tandberg, 2010), and the literature indicates that senior administrators have placed a growing emphasis on efforts to lobby their state’s policymakers as a means of achieving a desired outcome regarding appropriations, new

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

laws, or changes to existing laws (McLendon, et al., 2009). As higher education continues to evolve in an environment that has grown increasingly financially stringent (Archibald & Feldman, 2010; Li, 2019) and politically constraining, state government relations strategies can act as an integral component of an institution's operations.

Third Party Interest Groups

The policy process is multidimensional and involves many actors that seek to affect a final policy outcome (Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2014; Stone, 2012; Tandberg, 2010). While GROs may seek to influence policy on behalf of their institutions, unaffiliated interest groups also comprise a significant cadre of policy actors that can have significant impact on higher education state policy and appropriations outcomes (Jenkins-Smith, et al., 2014; Stone, 2012; Tandberg, 2010). Importantly, interest group objectives can align with or compete against the policy objectives of institutions. Although this study does not directly explore the role of interest groups in higher education state lobbying, understanding the role of interest groups in the policy process provides important context for understanding the decisions GROs make regarding a lobbying strategy for their institutions.

Impact of Interest Groups

The impact of interest groups on state policymaking has been well documented in the scholarship. Interest groups, which Stone (2012) described as a mobilization of actors motivated by common interest, can have a powerful and visible impact on establishing priorities for state policymaking (Jacoby & Schneider, 2001; Tandberg, 2010). For instance, scholars found a negative correlation in any given state between the number of interest groups and the number of bills that were signed into law, whereas the greater the

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

number of interest groups, the fewer number of bills were enacted (Gray & Lowery, 1999; Tandberg, 2010). This phenomenon suggests a caution to GROs that leveraging interest groups could be a valuable tool in their lobbying toolbox, but an over-reliance on interest groups could produce a deadlock in the policy process.

Interest Groups and Higher Education

The literature supports a longstanding and dynamic relationship between higher education and interest groups. For instance, in a case study of a single state, Tandberg (2006) found that institutions of higher education, regardless of institutional type, tended to work collaboratively with interest groups to achieve their policy objectives. The institutions sampled in Tandberg's study sought to expand their sphere of influence within the state by strategically collaborating with interests that had power concentrated in certain geographical regions. Tandberg discussed this finding by noting that regional politics carried more political capital at the state level than at the federal level; therefore, there is significant incentive for GROs to collaborate with interest groups of regional importance. However, this concept could be applicable in the reverse as well; GROs should address regionally significant interest groups that seek to oppose an institutional policy objective.

Literature Review Conclusion

The contemporary role of a state, as both appropriator and regulator, is significant in the general health and welfare of its public institutions. Concerning appropriations, states provide critical, albeit relatively declining, streams of revenue to their institutions (Archibald & Feldman, 2010; Li, 2019). Concerning policy, state lawmakers can advance legislation affecting institutions across a wide spectrum, including, but not limited to,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

admissions, free speech, guns on campus, athletics, curriculum, and faculty tenure. Given the magnitude of the state's role in public higher education, senior administrators have facilitated institutional state government relations strategies to maintain favor with state policymakers. The role of a higher education lobbyist, which could once be summarized simply as someone who seeks access to policymakers to communicate institutional policy priorities, has evolved over time. Milbrath's (1960; 1963) initial conception of lobbying has since grown increasingly partisan (e.g., Hamburger & Wallsten, 2005), which has resulted in both barriers to access policymakers and a great expansion of lobbying as an industry.

This study seeks to better understand how GROs align context, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired outcomes when seeking funding, new laws, or to changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly. With declines in state appropriations for higher education over the past several decades (Archibald & Feldman, 2010; Li, 2019) as well as a shift in the policy paradigm that is increasingly focused oversight and accountability (e.g., Volkwein & Tandberg, 2008), senior administrators have powerful incentives to maintain positive relationships with state policymakers. However, as senior administrators are challenged with utilizing scarce financial resources to advance their institution's mission in a political environment that has grown increasingly partisan, they might invest in a state government strategy that is both efficient and effective to maximize positive state policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public. An exploration of how GROs at public institutions of higher education make decisions regarding state government relations strategies for their institutions will provide a new depth of understanding for both

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

scholars and practitioners in the fields of higher education administration and public policy.

This study will fill a gap in the existing literature concerning higher education administration and public policy, as well as provide new evidence to inform practice. Although the literature is comprehensive regarding public funding for higher education, the policy process, and interest groups, there is a gap in the literature that does not address state lobbying conducted by public institutions of higher education. For practitioners, this study will equip senior administrators and GROs with the tools necessary to efficiently and effectively pursue positive state policy and appropriations outcomes for their institutions and the public. For scholars, this study will serve as a baseline for future inquiry into effective methods of lobbying for higher education policy and appropriations. This study will follow a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), using publicly available legislative quantitative data and semi-structured interviews to collect qualitative data. The following section will provide a detailed discussion of the planned methods for data collection and analysis for this study. The methods described therein were developed using the aforementioned literature and the ACF as a guide.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this sequential explanatory mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) study is to better understand how institutional government relations officers (GROs) make decisions regarding their institution's state government relations strategy to successfully yield desired outcomes when seeking funding, new laws, or to changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly. The product of this study will provide practitioners with the tools to optimize positive legislative outcomes for their institutions and the public in the context of the state where the study is conducted. I developed the methods and instrument described in this chapter within the bounds of the policy subsystem of the Advocacy Coalition Framework and the existing scholarship on the topic of lobbying. Specifically, the ACF provided a frame for understanding the relationship between an institution and state legislators within the policy process, and the existing literature provided a baseline for a scholarly understanding of the mechanics of lobbying. This study's research questions are:

1. At what frequency are each of Virginia's public institutions represented in legislative text from the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 sessions of the Virginia General Assembly;
2. How frequently are Virginia's research-intensive¹ institutions mentioned compared to non-research-intensive institutions during the same period; and

¹ Based on 2018 Basic Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3. How do institutional government relations officers align context, strategies, resources, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly?

This chapter provides the groundwork to this study's research plan. First, I will describe the study's sequential explanatory mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) research design. Next, I will describe the sample strategy and site selection for the study. Third, I will propose a plan for quantitative and qualitative data collection. Fourth, I will describe the process for analyzing data. Fifth, I will explain the development of the interview protocol. Finally, I will describe the criteria for credibility and trustworthiness, and provide a researcher-as-instrument statement.

Research Design

To implement this study, I deployed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In accordance with this design, I first conducted quantitative data collection and analysis, then used the quantitative findings to inform the design of the qualitative phase, then conducted qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). A sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) is appropriate for this study because the subsequent qualitative data helps explain and build upon the initial quantitative findings, which alone are not sufficient to answer all of this study's research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The participant selection variation of the explanatory mixed methods design is appropriate for this study because the quantitative findings allowed me to identify and purposefully sample participants for the qualitative phase of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). The sources of analysis for the quantitative phase were

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

bills and resolutions introduced during the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly as maintained by the Commonwealth of Virginia and recorded in the Legislative Information System (LIS).² The sources of analysis for the qualitative phase of the study were in-depth semi-structured interviews with GROs, follow-up emails to GRO participants, and an analytic journal.

Sampling Strategy

Because of the sequential, participant selection design of this study, the sampling strategy comprised two separate and distinct processes specific to either the quantitative phase or the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). First, the quantitative-based research questions seek to explore the frequency of mentions in legislative text of Virginia's public institutions of higher education as a means of approximating the level of involvement of an institution in state government relations activity; the literature supports the logic that an institution that is mentioned more frequently, regardless of the context of those mentions, may engage in a greater degree of government relations activity (e.g., Burstein, 2018; Cook, 2008; Lowery, 2013; Stone, 2012). Therefore, to answer the quantitative-based research questions I used whole population sampling of Virginia's public institutions of higher education. Given the differences in the nature of the relationship between public institutions and the state as compared to private institutions and the state, as well as the focus on public institutions in this study's research questions, I excluded private institutions from the sample. Based on the existing literature of higher education lobbying, I hypothesized that the highest-research activity institutions would be most frequently mentioned and baccalaureate colleges would be

² <https://lis.virginia.gov/>

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

least frequently mentioned. I determined the population by using the official list of Virginia's public institutions as maintained by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), the state's coordinating agency for higher education. According to SCHEV, there are 15 four-year public institutions in this population: Christopher Newport University, the College of William & Mary, George Mason University, James Madison University, Longwood University, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Radford University, University of Mary Washington, University of Virginia, University of Virginia's College at Wise, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia Military Institute, Virginia State University, and Virginia Tech.

Following quantitative data analysis, I utilized a purposeful sampling strategy to select participants for qualitative data collection. Specifically, I analyzed the quantitative data and sampled participants for the qualitative phase based on those findings. Given the disparity in average legislative mentions across institutions in the sample, I selected the four institutions with the highest average frequency of legislative mentions and invited the respective GROs to participate in individual semi-structured in-depth interviews. I used online institutional public-access personnel directories, as well as my own professional and personal networks, to identify the GRO for each of the sampled institutions. I accessed this sample by asking a GRO who is not a participant in the study to introduce me, via email, to the four GRO participants identified during the purposeful sampling (see sample recruitment email in Appendix B).

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in two phases. The first data collection phase utilized quantitative methods and the second data collection phase utilized qualitative methods.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

While I will discuss data analysis in a later section, it is important to note here that analysis of the quantitative data took place before qualitative data collection began, which is appropriate to the form of a sequential explanatory mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Before qualitative data collection took place, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS) at the University of Virginia (UVA IRB-SBS #3909).

Quantitative Data Collection

I began quantitative data collection by accessing legislative text from the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly as contained in the Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS). First, I used a personal computer to access the online LIS, which is a free searchable database of bills and resolutions introduced in the Virginia General Assembly that is maintained by the Commonwealth of Virginia. Once on the homepage of the LIS, I navigated to the dropdown menu on the top left side of the screen titled “Other Sessions” and then navigated to the “2017 Session.” Next, on the webpage for the 2017 session, I clicked “Bills & Resolutions” under the “Searchable Databases” heading on the lower left side of the page. This brought me to a keyword-based search page of all bills and resolutions introduced during the 2017 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly. I then performed a keyword search (see Appendix C) of each participant, one at a time, and recorded in Microsoft Excel the number of references returned by the LIS. I performed each keyword search in quotation (e.g., “University of Virginia”) to ensure that the LIS only returned references that were relevant to answering the research questions. I intentionally decided to not include colloquial institutional abbreviations (e.g., “UVA”) for data collection because there is an

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

unbounded limit on what abbreviations people might use to refer to an institution (e.g., Univ. of Virginia, Univ of VA, UVA, UVa, etc.). After I performed a unique keyword search for each of Virginia's 15 institutions in bills and resolutions from the 2017 legislative session, I repeated the aforementioned process for the 2018 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly, the 2019 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly, and finally the 2020 regular session of the Virginia General Assembly.

Virginia's General Assembly meets for a variety of session types (e.g., regular, veto, and special) and lengths (e.g., 30 days and 60 days) during the course of a legislator's term. To reduce the outlier effects that special and veto sessions may have on a particular institution(s), I excluded such sessions from data collection and focused solely on regular legislative sessions. Additionally, examining the four legislative sessions between 2017-2020 ensured the inclusions of two short sessions (non-budget years) and two long sessions (budget years), as well as two different gubernatorial administrations and political party balances in the General Assembly. The product of the quantitative data collection phase was total references of each participant contained in bills and resolutions across the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly. This product served as a proxy to approximating the robustness of an institution's involvement in the practice of state government relations and supported the sampling strategy for the qualitative phase of this study; an institution that is mentioned in legislation, regardless of the context of those mentions, can be expected to receive some outcome from the state due to that mention, and may therefore engage in a government relations activity (e.g., Burstein, 2018; Cook, 2008; Lowery, 2013; Stone, 2012).

Qualitative Data Collection

I invited each participant to individually participate in a virtual 60-minute in-depth semi-structured interview using the teleconference service Zoom, which I have licensed access to as a member of the University of Virginia community. I scheduled the interviews to take place during standard work hours during fall 2020. I chose mid-fall as the qualitative data collection period because the General Assembly is in session during the winter and early spring months, and it would have been difficult to gain access to participants during that busy time.

Informed Consent procedures included both written and verbal information provided to participants. First, I distributed an Informed Consent form (see Appendix D) to participants when I scheduled their interviews. The Informed Consent form contained information about the study, including its purpose, anticipated participant time commitment, expectations for privacy, a notice that study findings may be published in a non-attributable format, and a notice that participants may opt to cease participation in the study at any time without penalty. I summarized the Informed Consent form at the beginning of each interview and addressed any questions that participants had; furthermore, I obtained verbal permission from each participant to video and audio recorded the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Hays & Singh, 2012). Upon consent from each participant, I used Zoom's recording function to create an audio and video file of the interview.

I personally conducted each interview in a private Zoom meeting to ensure participant privacy (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I started each interview with simple background questions to help each participant feel at ease, before moving into opinion-

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

based questions (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Turner, 2010). Based on the semi-structured nature of this data collection design, I anticipated the possibility that there would not be enough time to address every question contained in the protocol. However, I ensured that each participant was asked the seven questions that appear in the protocol in bold typeface; time permitting, I used the remaining questions to probe deeper where appropriate (Aurini et al., 2016). Within a few weeks after the conclusion of each interview, I followed-up with each participant via email (see Appendix E) with additional clarifying questions (see Appendix F).

Following each interview, I transcribed the conversation and returned it to the participant to review for accuracy. To protect the privacy of each participant, I assigned source identification numbers to each participant for use in file naming, masked participant names in transcriptions, and stored the key in a separate secure location (Given, 2012). Furthermore, I masked the names of all institutions and participants in reporting for this study. I reviewed recordings in a controlled environment and will destroy any personally identifying data when the study is complete (Sieber, 2013). I stored all data locally on my computer, with a backup copy of data in a secure cloud service, which ensured the study could continue if data were lost or became unusable. Following the conclusion of the study, I will preserve and archive the data for a period of five years, per the recommendation of the UVA IRB-SBS, and will store it in the same manner. At this point, I will destroy all Zoom recordings; the data that are preserved will only include transcripts. See Appendix G for additional specifics regarding data management and file naming. Finally, throughout the research process, I maintained an

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

analytic journal to record my observations, acknowledge potential bias, and make notes for items that will require follow-up.

Data Analysis

Similar to data collection, the data analysis methods utilized in this study were specific to either the quantitative or qualitative phase. Quantitative data analysis served as a link to the qualitative phase, both in scope and purpose.

Quantitative Data Analysis and Connection to the Qualitative Phase

After quantitative data collection was complete, I had obtained four consecutive years' worth of legislative mentions for each of Virginia's public institutions. I began data analysis by screening and cleaning the quantitative data. Given the quantitative sample size, I individually rechecked each entry to ensure accuracy. Next, I used Microsoft Excel to calculate the average number of times an institution was mentioned over the four-year period, as well as the ranges and standard deviations. After obtaining the mean legislative mentions for each institution, I arranged the sample in order of average most mentioned institution to average least mentioned institution as a means of approximating the robustness of an institution's involvement in the practice of state government relations. This was not to approximate a correlation between institutional resource investment in state government relations and state outcomes, but to identify participants for the qualitative phase of the study that would be most well suited for comparison.

As a bridge between the study's quantitative and qualitative phases, I used the aforementioned ranked list to select participants for qualitative data collection. I specifically looked for trends in the quantitative data that warranted additional

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

exploration and used those trends for sampling participants for the qualitative phase of the study. This approach was congruent with the purposeful sample strategy planned for qualitative data collection. This phase of data analysis was completed once I selected participants for qualitative data collection.

Qualitative Data Analysis

I began qualitative data analysis by reading through each interview transcript. Then, using Corbin and Strauss's (1998) open and axial coding processes, I further analyzed the data. First, I used open coding to uncover blocks of ideas and meaning contained in the data; I followed this with axial coding to identify connections between codes (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). I then coded the transcripts using the codes from a codebook (see Appendix H) I developed as I analyzed the data, looked for patterns, and recoded each transcript based on patterns that emerged during initial coding. This led to the development of themes that I connected to the study's research questions and theoretical framework (DeCuir-Gunby, et al., 2011). While the codes were developed primarily during the coding process, I utilized the baseline understanding of lobbying techniques provided in the literature, as well as the stages in the policy subsystem of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, to guide this part of data analysis. Additionally, I kept analytic memos (see Appendix I) throughout the coding process as an additional source of data analysis.

Instrument

The data collection tool I used for the qualitative phase of this study was an interview protocol developed for a series of individual semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants in a virtual setting. I developed the interview protocol

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

(Appendix J) guided by the Advocacy Coalition Framework and in a manner that connected the interview questions to the study's research questions. The protocol flows from descriptive-based questions to opinion-based questions (Hays & Singh, 2012; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Turner, 2010). There are seven questions in the protocol that are emphasized in bold typeface. I asked these questions to each participant and used the remaining questions to ask follow-up questions to probe deeper when appropriate. Before deploying the instrument, my peers reviewed the protocol to identify issues with clarity and bias. Additionally, I piloted the protocol with a test-participant who is familiar with the topic of lobbying, but who was not a participant in the study, to check for the same concerns (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Turner, 2010). I made minor changes to the protocol only to address issues related to clarity.

Criteria for Credibility and Trustworthiness

I took certain steps to promote credibility and trustworthiness in this study, primarily by utilizing data triangulation techniques and systematic methods of inquiry. In the qualitative phase, I triangulated data by collecting data using interview transcripts, follow-up emails, and an analytic journal (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Additionally, I used a high-quality technology for video conferencing and recording for qualitative data collection, ensuring an accurate account of the interviews. Furthermore, the use of member checks, peer feedback, and pilot testing served to build the credibility, dependability, and confirmability in the study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Hays & Singh, 2012; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Turner, 2010).

Researcher as Instrument

The qualitative data collection and analysis components of this research design demanded an introspective analysis of the relationship between me and the inquiry. Part of my current role as a practitioner includes engaging at an institutional level in state and federal government relations at a public research university that relies on the state to support its mission. Furthermore, the success of the office of the university in which I work is premised in part on resourcing the various schools and units of the institution with state funds in a way that supports the overall academic mission. I acknowledge the possibility that this role could introduce bias in favor of my institution's style of lobbying. Additionally, I am a former registered federal lobbyist, and recognize that I have an implicit bias towards this topic; I therefore used an analytic journal to reflect upon my role in this research throughout the inquiry, specifically about how my personal biases may affect the study and instrument (Shenton, 2004). I am confident that the use of reflexivity journal, combined with the aforementioned peer review and pilot testing processes, helped to mitigate the potential for bias in this study (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Hays & Singh, 2012; Shenton, 2004).

Chapter 4: Findings

This capstone study examines the practice of state government relations at Virginia's public institutions of higher education. The research questions underpinning this study include:

1. At what frequency are each of Virginia's public institutions represented in legislative text during the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly;
2. How frequently are Virginia's research-intensive institutions mentioned compared to non-research-intensive institutions; and
3. How do institutional government relations officers align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly?

These questions enabled a deeper understanding of how state government relations practitioners at public institutions of higher education in Virginia make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking an outcome from the Virginia General Assembly. The study's framework (the Advocacy Coalition Framework) posits that outside forces such as institutional GROs are apt to have an impact on the behaviors of specialists who ultimately set public policy (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2018).. To explore these three questions, I followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Data collection occurred in two phases; I first collected and analyzed quantitative data, then used the quantitative findings to inform the qualitative phase of the

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

study, and then collected and analyzed the qualitative data. For the quantitative data collection and analysis phase, the Virginia Legislative Information System (LIS) facilitated an exploration of legislative mentions of institutions in the sample across four regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly. Using the mean legislative mentions for each institution in the sample, I then selected participants for the qualitative phase of the study, which included individual in-depth interviews and follow-up questions with four state government relations officers from institutions in the sample. I then used Corbin and Strauss's (1998) open and axial coding processes to analyze the qualitative data and identify themes. This chapter presents the findings of this study by first addressing research questions one and two, which are both quantitative in nature, followed by a brief discussion of data mixing, and then addressing research question three, which is qualitative in nature.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data analyzed in this study were mentions of institutions in the sample contained in bills and resolutions from the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly, as maintained in the Legislative Information System (LIS). Table 2 provides the legislative mentions by General Assembly session, means, ranges, and standard deviations found during the quantitative phase of this study. It is sorted in descending order by mean. Institution names are masked in Table 2 to protect participants' privacy; however, certain institutional characteristics provide important context for interpreting the quantitative data. First, Institutions A-F are all doctoral universities, with either high or very high research activity according to the 2018

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Basic Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education³. Conversely, Institutions G-O all represent either master's colleges and universities or baccalaureate colleges. This finding answers this study's second research question by illuminating that Virginia's public research-intensive institutions are in fact mentioned at a higher rate in legislative text than Virginia's public non-research-intensive institutions. Second, in Virginia's 2020-2022 biennium budget,⁴ adopted during the 2020 session of the General Assembly, the total allocation in operating costs appropriated to Virginia's 15 public four-year institutions of higher education in Fiscal Year 2021 was \$8,555,500,880. Of this total amount, the four institutions that comprised the qualitative phase of this study (Institutions A-D), received a combined \$4,960,360,376, which is 57.97% of the total state appropriation to higher education for that fiscal year.

³ <https://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/index.php>

⁴ <https://budget.lis.virginia.gov/bill/2020/1/>

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Table 2

Legislative Mentions Across Virginia General Assembly Years by Institution

Sample Institutions	Legislative Mentions by General Assembly Session Year				Descriptive Statistics		
	2017	2018	2019	2020	Mean	Range	Standard Deviation
Institution A	884	781	976	1399	1010	618	271.3
Institution B	369	567	495	548	494.8	198	89.2
Institution C	597	417	341	376	432.8	256	113.8
Institution D	310	245	334	469	339.5	224	94.2
Institution E	138	168	59	100	116.3	109	47.2
Institution F	109	176	51	93	107.3	125	51.9
Institution G	116	54	118	90	94.5	64	29.9
Institution H	93	77	62	43	68.8	50	21.3
Institution I	53	33	98	14	49.5	84	36
Institution J	46	55	60	27	47	33	14.5
Institution K	63	48	15	42	42	48	20
Institution L	53	29	32	26	35	27	12.3
Institution M	37	41	26	24	32	17	8.3
Institution N	21	26	44	18	27.3	26	11.7
Institution O	28	31	15	14	22	17	8.8

Note. Figures are rounded. Institutions A-F are doctoral universities with high/very high research activity; Institutions G-O are a mix of master’s and baccalaureate institutions.

The range in frequency at which each institution in the sample is represented in legislative text during the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly is greatly varied, both within and across cases. For instance, looking within cases, Institution A has a comparatively large range of 618, indicating a significant swing in legislative mentions across the four sessions. On the other hand, Institutions M and O both have a comparatively small range of 17, indicating minor changes in legislative mentions across the four sessions. Great difference in range is also present across cases. For instance, Institution A has the most legislative mentions during a single General Assembly session with 1,399 legislative mentions in 2020. On the other hand,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Institutions I and O both have the least, 14, legislative mentions during the 2020 session. The variance in range across cases suggests that the institutions in the sample participated at varying levels in their practice of state government relations, whereas Institution A can be assumed to devote significant resources in their state government relations while Institutions I and O can be assumed to devote minimal, if any, resources in their state government relations.

There is also a wide array in the mean legislative mentions taken across the four General Assembly sessions. For instance, on one end of the spectrum, Institution A's average frequency is 1,010 legislative mentions while on the other end of the spectrum Institution O's average frequency is 22 legislative mentions. Furthermore, when arranged in order of highest average mentions to lowest average mentions, there is a precipitous decline, which results in a clear demarcation between high mention institutions and low mention institutions. Specifically, the four institutions in the sample at the high end of the spectrum all have an average frequency of legislative mentions above 300 mentions (there is also noticeable stratification in average mentions among these four institutions). On the other hand, the remaining institutions in the sample all have fewer than 120 average mentions.

Mixing the Data

In accordance with the participant selection format of a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, the quantitative findings were used to guide participant selection for the qualitative phase of the study. The average frequency of legislative mentions, which, following the logic that legislative mentions would result in a state outcome and therefore induce a need to lobby (e.g., Burstein, 2018; Cook, 2008; Lowery, 2013; Stone,

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

2012), was used to approximate the degree of involvement in the practice of state government relations at the institutions in the sample and was the primary measure that drove participant selection. Therefore, government relations officers at institutions A, B, C, and D, were selected for individual in-depth interviews. By significant margins, these four institutions exhibited the greatest average frequency of legislative mentions across the four sessions, which therefore suggested a higher degree of emphasis placed on the practice of state government relations at those institutions as compared to the other institutions in the sample. Similarly, the quantitative data also suggested that these same four institutions' legislative needs and practices may be better suited to comparison to one another than they may be to institutions with less robust state government relations operations. Therefore, I did not choose any other institutions in the sample to participate in the qualitative phase of the study. However, future scholarship could focus on the institutions with the lowest average legislative mentions.

Qualitative Findings

The sources of qualitative data analyzed for this study were individual in-depth interviews, e-mail follow-up questions to participants after their interviews, and analytic memos. The presentation of findings in this section includes text from these sources. An analysis of the qualitative data presented two emergent themes, which I use to organize the presentation of findings in this section.

Theme One: Lobbying Through a Paradigm of Communication

Lobbying as a form of communication, a paradigm originally presented by Milbrath in the 1960s, emerged as a theme across all cases. All participants appeared to engage equally in Milbrath's (1963) three forms of lobbying communication: direct

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

communication, communication through an intermediary, and establishing new forms of communication.

Lobbying as Direct Communication. Regarding lobbying as a form of direct communication, all participants described experiences directly engaging with a legislator or legislative staff. Additionally, criteria that participants followed to determine which legislators to meet with were three-fold and included the legislators representing the areas where the participants' institutions were located, members of the legislative money committees, and legislators who could patron legislation of significant interest to the institutions. Furthermore, this direct engagement took varying forms. For instance, participants from Institutions A and C emphasized direct communication through means such as texting, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings. An example of this style of direct communication with a legislator was noted by one participant who said, "I know I can text X delegate and be like, hey you got five minutes tomorrow I need to run something by you, or hey I need your help on this." Participants from Institutions B and D also engaged in direct communication forms of lobbying; however, they placed more emphasis on face-to-face meetings with a legislator or legislative staff. An example of this style of direct communication with a legislator was noted by one participant who said:

I'll send an email to their legislative staff person saying here's the attachment, I'll come by tomorrow to discuss, and then I'll come by and make an in person visit with the legislative aide with a paper copy and ask if there's a time that I can get the member that day, you know, that all depends on the day, it's often "no," or if

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

you wait for them on their way to general laws [committee], you might be able to catch them.

The differences in the approach to lobbying as a direct form of communication between Institutions A and C and Institutions B and D appeared to be grounded in the strength of the practitioner's relationship with a given legislator. All four participants discussed the frenetic nature of a General Assembly session and the resulting benefit of being able to sequester a legislator for a quick conversation in a hallway between meetings.

Lobbying as Communication Through an Intermediary. Regarding lobbying as a form of communication through an intermediary, all participants utilized intermediaries in their practice. Furthermore, there was consensus among participants regarding the preferred types of intermediaries and the level of engagement at which those intermediaries were utilized. Specifically, all participants described using their institutions' presidents in the practice of state government relations and all participants placed high value on utilizing their institutions' presidents during engagements with legislators. One participant embodied the importance of involving an institution's president in state government relations by saying "In the higher education state government relations world, it is expected that the president, especially that the president, will be the primary face, you know, the primary voice that the legislators see." Another participant discussed the role of their president in their practice of state government relations, saying "[President] has met with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman and the subcommittee chairs of the money committees." Similarly, another participant described the impact of presidential engagements by saying:

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Well, he's also the president of a major university and [legislators] love to see that. [Legislators] can then can go back and tell their constituents or their family or their friends, I got the President of [Institution] in and it's all me. I think there's a lot of benefit [to that].

These examples illustrate the kind of intermediary engagement found across all cases, where an institution's president engaged in high-level state government relations work. In all cases, participants described the value of their presidents' engagement as greatest when directed at priority-setting. In other words, an institution's president was found to be more likely to have a high-level conversation with a legislator, while a state government relations officer was more likely to conduct follow-up lobbying regarding the priorities established by the president. One participant captured this experience shared by all participants, saying "[President] is very involved with government relations, but not all presidents are, and because of that, we like to let [president] be the face of speaking to our priorities and the direction that [Institution] wants to go." While participants most cited their institution's president as the primary intermediary used in their practice of state government relations, they also described utilizing chief financial officers and board members; however, both types of intermediaries were utilized to a far lesser extent than an institution's president. Contrary to evidence in the literature (e.g., Weerts et al., 2010), no participant placed meaningful value in utilizing a broad swath of their institution's alumni as part of their state government relations practice. However, participants did note that utilizing board members who are alumni was useful and having alumni as elected members of the General Assembly was very useful.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Lobbying as Opening New Channels of Communication. Regarding opening new channels of communication as a form of lobbying, all participants (n=4) placed high value on the practice of inviting legislators and legislative staff to their respective campuses to tour buildings or witness initiatives that would ultimately be the subject of that institution's legislative priorities. For instance, in pursuit of state capital outlay funds, two participants described the value of inviting legislators to tour old buildings on their campuses. In reference to this practice, one participant noted "There was no substitute for making those legislators walk through that horrible decrepit building" while another participant said:

The last time we did a campus tour, [the legislators] toured a beautiful historic building, but it was unfortunately in quite disrepair, and they were helpful in pushing, the one spouse was helpful in pushing her spouse, for emergency funding for health repairs.

Beyond tours of buildings as a technique for supporting capital outlay requests, participants also valued campus tours as a method of strengthening their institution's profile in the General Assembly. For instance, one participant said, "I can't tell you how much that helps, just having that feeling of seeing a cancer researcher talk about possibility for vaccinations or inoculation for something and just the enthusiasm and excitement that these individuals bring to it." This example represents a crossover between two forms of Milbrath's (1963) lobbying communication, opening new channels through the campus tour, and using an intermediary in the cancer researcher who can emphasize the need for research funding through their passion for the issue. Similarly, describing the benefit of using campus tours to educate legislators, one participant noted:

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

I'm sure one day we'll have a new senator in that area and we'll need to spend a couple of times, you know, probably three, maybe four or five tours with him to go over all the different things that [Institution] is doing in terms of research and enrollment. So [tours] are really good. I'm sure some people from the outside might see that as, like, I don't know, like not being appropriate or, I don't know, seeming like [legislators are] playing favorites. The reality is we are a state school. The legislators need to spend time learning about us, just as we need to spend time, you know, building relationships with them, so yeah, we do quite a bit of [campus tours].

Based on the experience of the participants in this study, the contemporary mechanics of lobbying at the state level in Virginia are not fundamentally different than the paradigm proposed by Milbrath in the early 1960s. While the specific approaches to lobbying may have changed since the 1960s with the advent of new technologies and changing cultures, the thematic approaches of lobbying through direct communication, communication through intermediaries, and opening new channels of communication, are represented in the experiences of this study's participants.

Theme Two: Practice Influencing Factors

The second theme that emerged from the qualitative data was the presence of a common set of factors that participants experienced as influencing their practice of state government relations. These practice influencing factors included: (a) the scope of involvement of an institution's president, (b) the relationship between practitioner and legislator, (c) an institution's geographic and economic footprint, (d) a practitioner's ability to work in a coalition, (e) the context of a given issue, and (f) an institution's

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

reputation. Among these six practice-influencing factors, participants expressed a greater degree of influence from the first two, while the latter four factors were described as having a lesser, albeit notable, influence.

Greater Influence Factors. The two factors that participants described as having the greatest influence on their practice of state government relations were the scope of involvement of their institution's president and their own relationships with legislators and legislative staff.

The scope of involvement of an institution's president was found to influence the practice of state government relations both externally and internally to an institution. From an external perspective, participants described their presidents' roles in state government relations as gatekeepers; individuals with relatively low barriers to directly accessing legislators, who could provide a compelling, big picture story of their institution's legislative priorities. All four participants described their presidents' roles in this way, as providing opening salvos for what would become an ongoing dialogue between legislator and government relations officer. For instance, one participant described this practice by saying "Most college presidents are good storytellers... They can do a good job of saying, what are the [priorities], why is this important to the Commonwealth, and why this is what [Institution] needs."

From an internal perspective, participants described their presidents' roles in state government relations as having an influence on their operational styles and range of autonomy. For instance, two participants, both of whom have less professional experience as compared to the other two participants, described situations where their institutions' presidents would communicate directly with legislators without their prior

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

knowledge. While these two participants described a strong president-legislator relationship as an overall positive influence on their state government relations strategy, they also noted that the absence of their preparatory involvement resulted in having to play catch-up with the details and outcome of the conversation that had taken place. Conversely, the other two participants, both of whom have more professional experience as compared to the other two participants, described close relationships with their presidents that facilitated a more autonomous operational style. The benefit of a scope of involvement of an institution's president that allows the government relations officer more autonomy was, as one participant described, an ability to make decisions in real time when meeting with legislators:

Learning the [Institution] brand, understanding the mission, understanding the president's vision - things like that ultimately guide a lot of my reaction on the policy side... I don't think that most people in these positions would feel like they could say yes to a situation like that if you didn't have the confidence of your president. So, I will say that I wouldn't be able to do my job as effectively as I think I do without the confidence of [president] and without [president's] trust. So, if your president believes in you, then it's obviously going to give you more, I think confidence and leeway.

Regarding the participants' own relationships with legislators and legislative staff, all participants described the ability to build and maintain such relationships as an imperative for practicing effective state government relations. For instance, when asked how they measure success in their jobs, in all cases participants included their relationships with legislators as part of their answers. For instance, one participant noted

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

“It's [received desired appropriations and passing legislation], but it's also relationship success and a lot of it's also the success of the brand and trust of the brand.”

Furthermore, when asked about relationship building during the follow-up process, all participants said that their own relationships with General Assembly members and/or staff were extremely impactful or very impactful on their practice. During the same follow-up process, another participant described the importance of building relationships by noting that “Failure to work to establish these relationships, or failing to maintain these relationships, can be damaging to our institution’s success in the state capitol.” Furthermore, participants listed trust, truthfulness, consistency, and mutual respect as elements important to building and maintaining healthy relationships with legislators.

Lesser Influence Factors. To a lesser extent than the aforementioned two practice influencing factors, participants described four other factors as influencing their practice of state government relations. These factors included an institution’s geographic and economic footprint, a practitioner’s ability to work in a coalition, the political context of a given issue, and an institution’s reputation. First, participants described their institution’s footprint, both in geographical and economic terms, as being a factor that influences their practice of state government relations. Regarding geographical footprint, multiple participants pointed to their institution’s location within the state as an asset in their ability to create a broad coalition of supportive legislators. For instance, in reference to their institution’s physical presence in multiple locations around the state, one participant noted “I know I can get to 25 of the legislators in Northern Virginia. I don't know that [another institution] can get to [participant’s institution’s legislator]. That doesn't mean that they're ineffective, I just, I don't know about their reach.” An

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

institution's geographic footprint was found to be especially helpful if it overlapped with the district of a legislative committee chair. Regarding an institution's economic footprint, some participants described their institution's status as a large regional employer as an appealing characteristic for attracting legislative support, thereby influencing their practice of state government relations. For instance, in response to a prompt to describe how they might conduct their government relations practice on a given issue, one participant said, "Let's boil it down to jobs in the district and that's why they should care about helping support higher ed during the pandemic, because if not, you're going to have 600 employees and constituents who are going to be unemployed."

Another practice influencing factor that emerged from the data was the participants' ability to work in a coalition with their peers from other institutions of higher education. Participants noted that in Virginia, often policy legislation will affect all public institutions in a similar manner, which therefore facilitated an ability to regularly work with other institutions in the state in their government relations efforts. Additionally, two participants noted that certain institutions carry greater influence in the General Assembly, including the institutions in the sample. All participants described the ability to work in such a coalition as having a positive influence on their practice and described the benefit of working in a coalition as two-fold. First, presenting a united front on a given issue to legislators was found to be an effective strategy for achieving a desired legislative outcome. Second, working in a coalition offered logistical benefits. Participants noted that Virginia's public four-year institutions are generally aligned on most policy issues, and the ability to have one or two state government relations officers take a meeting on the group's behalf was an efficient use of their collective time.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Likewise, the ability for a legislator to take one meeting on a given issue was an efficient use of the legislator's time, which was perceived by participants to be appreciated and therefore facilitated their ability to make future requests. Additionally, when asked to name other public institutions of higher education in Virginia that exhibited effective state government relations, all participants named, in some combination, each other (without knowing which other participants were included in the study). This suggests that the GROs who participated in interviews conceptualize effectiveness similarly and perceive their colleagues to be effective. Because this study did not gather countervailing claims from smaller or less-involved universities, the claims of similarly engaged universities may be evidence of confirmation bias or selective perception.

The political context of a given budget or policy matter, and whether that context created a permission structure for a legislator to support an institution's request, was another factor that emerged from the data as influencing participants' practice of state government relations. In other words, whether a practitioner's request was politically advantageous, palatable, or harmful to a legislator had a direct effect on the ability of that practitioner to achieve a desired legislative outcome. One participant described this political mindset by noting "I think my most value add to campus as a liaison or lobbyist is being able to put myself in the legislator's shoes and say, why do they care and why would they want to be helpful." Another participant illustrated this practice influencing factor by describing the political environment during the period when Virginia's Governor Ralph Northam was facing intense backlash over racial insensitivities demonstrated early in his gubernatorial term. That participant leveraged the turmoil to

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

build support for institutional priorities related to serving underrepresented minority students.

Finally, an institution's reputation was also a factor that emerged as influencing participants' practice of state government relations. For instance, one participant described touting their institution's graduation rate in conversations with legislators, while another participant illustrated their institution's role in healthcare, public service, and growing the next generation of workers as part of an effort to build their institution's brand with members of the General Assembly. In both cases, participants ultimately sought to strengthen their institution's reputation to support future legislative asks.

The findings from this capstone study, which examines the practice of state government relations at Virginia's public institutions of higher education, provide a deeper understanding of the scope of state government relations in Virginia and how practitioners make decisions regarding their state lobbying strategy. These findings are in line with the framing of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), which posits that interests external to a legislative process can still influence the behaviors of the policymakers who ultimately set public policy (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988). In advance of chapter five, where I will discuss these findings and their implication to practice, Table 3 presents a visual representation of the connection between components of the ACF, this study's research questions, and this study's findings.

Table 3***Connecting Observations to the Advocacy Coalition Framework***

ACF Input	Thematic Overlap with Study	Observations
Structure (including staffing)	Examination of the resources and context practitioners might align to conduct lobbying activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GRO reliance on institution president • Practitioner imperative to build relationships with legislators • Rate of doctoral university engagement in state government relations compared to non-doctoral institutions
Systems	Exploration of how practitioners consider context and strategy when engaging in lobbying activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of environments that may be politically advantageous (or harmful) • GROs may need to strategically consider when to employ a given lobbying technique in concert with the confluence of other factors
Process	Examination of the resources and context practitioners might align to conduct lobbying activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practitioners might overcome constraints by opening new channels of communication with legislators • Frenetic environment could be beneficial to lobbying process
Partnerships	Exploration of how practitioners consider strategy and techniques when engaging in lobbying activity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclination to form coalitions with other institutions of higher education • Institutional ability to form geographically diverse legislative support • Practitioner imperative to build relationships with legislators

In the following chapter, I will further discuss these observations and provide recommendations to improve practice.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how practitioners at public institutions in Virginia make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. I employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) to answer three questions. First, I analyzed the average frequency at which each of Virginia's public institutions were represented in legislative text during the 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2020 regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly. An examination of these average frequencies served as a proxy for gauging an institution's level of involvement in the practice of state government relations. Second, I compared the average frequency of legislative mentions of Virginia's public research-intensive institutions against Virginia's public non-research-intensive institutions. Finally, using the findings from the quantitative phase of the study to select participants, I interviewed the state government relations officer at the four institutions with the highest average frequency of legislative mentions in order to gain a deeper understanding of how institutional government relations officers align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly. The discussion of this study's findings in this section follows the sequence of these three explorations. I will conclude this section with recommendations for practice and future scholarship.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Average Legislative Frequencies

The quantitative findings from this study, the outcome of an analysis of the average frequency of legislative mentions of Virginia public institutions of higher education across four regular sessions of the Virginia General Assembly, suggest three key discussion points. First, an institution that is mentioned more frequently, regardless of the context of those mentions, is more likely to receive an outcome from the state and is thus more apt to engage in a greater degree of government relations activity (e.g., Burstein, 2018; Cook, 2008; Lowery, 2013; Stone, 2012). Therefore, using the frequency of legislative mentions as a proxy for an institution's degree of involvement in the practice of state government relations, the data suggest that Virginia's public institutions are engaging in state government relations at varying levels of effort. Institutions in the sample might engage in state government relations to support favorable public policy, kill policy proposals that could be detrimental to the institution, or advocate for state appropriations. Of the institutions in the sample, Institution C, with an average frequency of 433 legislative mentions, is arguably more engaged in state government relations than Institution N, which has an average frequency of 27 legislative mentions over the same period. This is further supported by the qualitative phase of the study; when asked to name other institutions from the sample that exhibited robust state government relations, participants did not name any institution from the bottom quarter of the list of average legislative mentions.

Second, there is variation in the range of legislative mentions across institutions within a single legislative session, and those same institutions' mentions vary from session to session. In other words, a ranking of all institutions in the sample from most

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

mentioned to least mentioned in legislative text would yield a different outcome depending on which General Assembly session is under examination; however, the data indicate that the same strata delineating research-intensive institutions from non-research-intensive institutions would remain generally intact, with a discernible hierarchy between Virginia's research-intensive institutions and non-research-intensive institutions. This suggests that changing conditions - the disparate policy issues considered by legislators and varied economic and budget conditions from year to year - influence an institution's engagement in state government relations. For instance, in years when an institution's legislative mentions are higher, that institution is receiving greater attention from the General Assembly and is therefore more likely to be deeply engaged in state government relations as compared to other years. Similarly, looking across institutions within a single year, the data suggest that institutions that exhibit high frequencies of legislative mentions are likely more deeply engaged in state government relations as compared to the institutions with low frequencies of legislative mentions. These conclusions are further supported by the qualitative phase of the study, where participants highlighted the political context of an issue as influencing their ability to achieve a desired legislative outcome. Embedded in this analysis, however, is a recognition that although GROs may have a predetermined list of institutional priorities at the start of each legislative session, new priorities may emerge throughout the course of a session that could in some ways shift the focus of a GRO and in turn influence the findings discussed here. As varying environmental forces, such as societal and cultural trends, shift over time, the political context of an issue that may make it favorable to legislators can change from year to year.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Third, again using the frequency of legislative mentions as a proxy for an institution's degree of involvement in the practice of state government relations, the data indicate that Virginia's public research-intensive institutions are likely more active in the practice of state government relations than Virginia's non-research-intensive institutions, as the data indicate that these institutions stood to receive a greater amount of outcomes from the state. Using the 2018 Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education to delineate all levels of doctoral universities as research-intensive institutions, the six research-intensive institutions in the sample are the same six institutions with the highest average frequencies of legislative mentions. This is further supported by the qualitative phase of the study; when asked to name other institutions from the sample that exhibited robust state government relations, participants did not name non-research-intensive institutions, apart from two outlier special-focus institutions. Furthermore, this conclusion is supported by the literature; scholars have found that large research universities possess remarkable levels of political influence in state arenas (Gandara, 2018) and often commit considerable resources to support government relations operations (Tandberg, 2010).

Aligning Resources to Achieve a Legislative Outcome

The qualitative findings from this study, the outcome of an analysis of four individual in-depth interviews, follow-up communication with participants, and an analytical journal, suggest two key discussion points. First, the involvement of an institution's president in state government relations has a direct and significant impact on how a state government relations officer works to achieve a desired legislative outcome. In fact, an institution's president can be thought of as a member of their institution's state

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

government relations team. This conclusion is supported across all cases examined in this study, where each participant described their president as a gatekeeper to legislators. Specifically, a president's legislative gatekeep role has value in two ways. First, presidents act as institutional figureheads whose power and prestige are leveraged for access to legislators. This value is likely amplified with legislators in leadership positions, where gaining access to a legislator in a leadership role or committee chairmanship might otherwise prove more challenging. Flipping the perspective from which access is viewed, an institution's president can also act as a gatekeeper to their institution; presidents were found to be highly capable of providing compelling narrative that highlighted their institutions' legislative priorities and the significance of those priorities both for the institution and the state. By providing a persuasive argument, presidents can capture legislators' attention and interest in their institutions. Based on the findings of this study, I hypothesize for future scholarship that there is a positive correlation between an institution's president's involvement in state government relations and the degree to which a state government relations officer achieves desired legislative outcomes.

Second, the relationship between an institution's state government relations officer and a legislator acts as a transformative outcome, one that is consistently leveraged in the practice of government relations while also exhibiting properties of an outcome itself. In other words, this relationship can be both an input for gaining access to the legislative process and achieving desired legislative outcomes, as well as a metric by which practitioners measure their current and future success. Regarding the former, participants across all cases placed high value on the necessity of building and

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

maintaining strong, positive relationships with legislators and legislative staff as a means of achieving a desired legislative outcome. Furthermore, the findings from this study lead me to hypothesize that there is a positive correlation between the strength of such a relationship and access to the legislator; as a relationship strengthens, a practitioner acquires more access points (e.g., text message, direct phone call, office meeting) to a legislator and thereby the legislative process. In addition to being an important input for achieving desired legislative outcomes, a strong relationship between practitioner and legislator is goal to be achieved in its own right. Across all cases, participants described relationship building as a key measure in defining professional success, to the point where future exploration of this matter might consider instances when a practitioner should resist pursuit of a desired legislative outcome or otherwise jeopardize their relationship with a legislator.

Recommendations

The Advocacy Coalition Framework posits that organized interests can have an impact on the decisions of policymakers (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988). Therefore, a discussion of this study's findings, and a deeper understanding of how institutional government relations officers align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly, prompts a series of recommendations for both practitioners at public institutions and scholars. While the participants in this study all represented public very high research activity institutions, I believe that these recommendations are applicable to public institutions that are master's colleges and universities and baccalaureate colleges as well.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

There is not a one-size-fits-all approach to higher education state lobbying. Instead, there are a multitude of interwoven dynamics that government relations officers must consider to be successful in achieving a desired legislative outcome. Therefore, one recommendation for practitioners is to take a holistic approach to developing a state government relations strategy. For instance, practitioners would be well-served to consider their relationship with a given legislator in parallel with the political context of a given issue, before deciding whether to seek that legislator's intervention on the issue. Similarly, when developing their strategy, practitioners would be ill-advised to consider only their institution's geographic footprint in the state and not also how their peers at other institutions in their coalition might respond. Factors such as the scope of involvement of an institution's president, the relationship between practitioner and legislator, an institution's geographic and economic footprint, a practitioner's ability to work in a coalition, the context of a given issue, and an institution's reputation all exist in a dynamic state and should collectively facilitate the creation of a government relations strategy.

This study found that an institution's president plays a critical role in the operations and effectiveness of their institution's state government relations team. Therefore, a second recommendation for practitioners is to build and maintain a strong relationship with their institutions' presidents. Institutional presidents can facilitate the creation of new practitioner-legislator relationships, and this study's findings suggest that a stronger practitioner-president relationship offers more opportunities for practitioners to engage with legislators. In addition to acting as a gatekeeper to legislators, the practitioner-president relationship can have implications for the internal operations of

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

government relations. For instance, a practitioner who holds the confidence of their president is likely to have more autonomy in developing and implementing their institution's government relations strategy. Likewise, this study found that an institution's president plays a critical role in determining their institution's annual legislative priorities; therefore, a strong practitioner-president relationship can help support the development of a legislative priority list that is actionable and measurable.

The practitioner-legislator relationship was found to be a transformative outcome, where the relationship both facilitated a long-term government relations strategy and was a desired outcome itself. Therefore, in addition to investing in the relationship with their institution's president, practitioners should commit early to building and maintaining strong positive relationships with legislators and legislative staff. A strong practitioner-legislator relationship can enable increased access to legislators, as well as be a measure of professional success. This study found that, in part, effective state government relations is built on a foundation of trust, and participants described elements such as truthfulness, consistency, and mutual respect as important to building and maintaining relationships with legislators that are grounded in trust.

One finding from this study that I was not anticipating at the outset was the importance placed on opening new channels of communication as a form of lobbying, specifically through campus tours. Therefore, when designing a holistic state government relations strategy, one final recommendation for practitioners is to think creatively and strategically about how to combine the various tools at their disposal to gain access to legislators and achieve a desired legislative outcome. There appeared to be a positive correlation between campus tours where legislators witnessed areas of campus that

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

exhibited visible evidence of needing legislative intervention (e.g., a dilapidated building) and achieving tangible results, such as capital appropriations. To a lesser extent, there appeared to be a similar benefit from legislators meeting with researchers and students as well. A recommendation to practice creativity in state government relations is especially important in the contemporary environment; with a pandemic ravaging our communities and threats of political in federal and state legislatures as witnessed by the attacked on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, gathering in-person in state capitols is severely limited. Therefore, in the near-term, practitioners will be especially well-served by practicing opening new channels of communication as a form of lobbying.

Finally, two recommendations are specific to effectively using limited practitioner and legislator time. First, the Virginia General Assembly is a hectic place during the days when they are in session, with legislators and staff going from meeting to meeting between multiple buildings to consider an average of 3,000 bills in just over one month. Rather than view this chaos as an obstacle to practicing effective state government relations, practitioners should leverage this environment to their benefit. All participants described the frenetic environment of a General Assembly session as a means by which they could maximize their access to legislators. Therefore, practitioners should take advantage of the time it takes for a legislator to walk from meeting to meeting and be willing take impromptu meetings with them in the hallways. A second means by which practitioners can be efficient with their time and legislators' time is through collaboration with their peers. Knowing that most statewide higher education policy affects all institutions similarly, there is an opportunity to practice state government relations in a coalition with practitioners from other public institutions. All participants in this study

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

described working in such a coalition as a value add to their practice. Specifically, participants noted that legislators would be apt to grow frustrated if the state's higher education institutions all took 30-minute meetings with them (7.5 hours) to express similar positions on a piece of legislation. Additionally, participants described another benefit of working in a coalition as having a deeper pool of knowledge to draw from when their practice might demand the use of a subject-matter expert. Therefore, practitioners should take care to identify other institutions with which they might partner and then leverage that partnership to maximize efficiencies. Furthermore, when working in a coalition, institutions with less robust state government relations operations are likely to benefit from the coattails of institutions that maintain very robust government relations operations.

Future Scholarship

The findings of this study provide a deeper understanding of state government relations at public institutions of higher education in Virginia. However, the scholarship of higher education state government relations remains limited. Therefore, I would offer six recommendations for future scholars who are interested in this topic. First, future research on this topic could seek to empirically measure the use and efficacy of various lobbying techniques. For instance, a properly resourced research team might consider measuring the frequency that a practitioner uses direct communication, communication through an intermediary, or opening new channels of communication, and correlating those measures with the practitioner's rate of achieving desired legislative outcomes. Another question future scholarship on this topic might explore is to better understand how institutional organizational structure can influence state government relations. The

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

findings from this study illuminate a critical and embedded role for an institution's president in state government relations, and future studies could further examine this phenomenon by conducting a social network analysis of policy influence among stakeholders involved in state government relations. Similarly, future studies could examine the quality of the working relationship between GRO and president. Third, future scholarship on the topic of state government relations in higher education should further explore the use of an institution's alumni in their lobbying efforts. While utilizing alumni for advocacy purposes may not be a new phenomenon in practice (e.g., Indiana University, 2009; Potter, 2003; Virginia Tech, 2004), the literature (e.g., Weerts et al., 2010) suggests that the academic evaluation of alumni operating in a government relations capacity is nascent area of scholarship. Similarly, future scholars might explore the impact that alumni-legislators have on a practitioner's ability to received desired outcomes from their state government. Fourth, the institutions with lower average legislative mentions were excluded from this study because the quantitative data suggested that the legislative needs and practices of Institutions A-D may be better suited to comparison to one another then they may be to institutions with less robust state government relations operations. Therefore, future scholarship on this topic should consider the experiences of state government relations officers at institutions with low average legislative mentions. This study found alignment with the state government relations practices at Institutions A-D; however, scholars may also be interested in better understanding the practices at Institutions E-O. For instance, scholars might explore whether the lesser mentioned institutions also heavily rely on their presidents, whether they are also subject to the same practice influencing factors, or whether they rely on

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

alumni to engage in lobbying. Fifth, future scholars might explore what led to the variance in the number of legislative mentions by legislative session among the highly mentioned institutions. For instance, an exploration of whether there was an overriding topic that may have led to higher rates of mentions in a given year (e.g., legislation in response to a major public event, such as a mass shooting). Finally, this study found that a strong practitioner-legislator is critical in state government relations. Therefore, future scholars could explore the occasions during which a government relations officer should resist lobbying a legislator if it could perhaps jeopardize their relationship.

Limitations

Creswell and Creswell (2018) described the importance of discussing a study's anticipated limitations by noting that "Limitations often attach to the methods of a study (e.g., inadequate sample size, difficulty in recruitment), and they represent weaknesses in the research that the author acknowledges so that future studies will not suffer the same problems" (pp.199). Furthermore, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) contrasted the straightforward nature of an explanatory mixed methods design when they noted the types of challenges that researchers might encounter. Throughout the course of conducting this study, I identified six limitations. First, I was unable to conclusively plan the qualitative phase of this study until the quantitative phase was completed. Specifically, I was unable to sample participants for the qualitative phase until after I analyzed the quantitative data. This introduced an element of unknowingness into my work that challenged the approach I take to my work. Second, I was previously concerned that with the possibility of public access to this study's findings and conclusions, it could be challenging to gain access to participants for the qualitative

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

phase, as the public generally has a negative perception of lobbying (Saad, 2011).

However, it was not difficult to gain access to participants; I was explicit in explaining their privacy, taking special care to note that participants would not be attributed in the study report. Despite gaining access to participants, protecting their privacy was a limitation in writing the findings and discussion chapters of this capstone, as certain contextual information that I believe would been helpful in providing a more comprehensive understanding of the findings was excluded. Although the possibility remains that someone could recreate the quantitative data collection and analysis methods of this study to determine which GROs were participants in the qualitative phase, I do not believe that the qualitative findings present a degree of risk that would warrant additional steps to be taken. Fourth, because this study is seeking to better understand institutional lobbying at the state level only, the data collected and analyzed during this study are limited by matters where there are both federal and state policy implications. By not including the experiences of institutional federal government relations officers, I was not able to fully explore the practice of government relations where a joint state-federal effort was required. However, I believe the instance of joint state-federal government relations is limited and therefore the exclusion of federally focused government relations did not have a negative impact on this study. Fifth, Virginia's higher education system is comprised of 15 unique public four-year institutions and the Virginia Community College System. Each four-year institution is managed by its own gubernatorially appointed board of visitors. Therefore, the findings from this study may not be transferable to institutions that operate within a single state-managed system of higher education. Finally, the Virginia General Assembly is a part-time legislature, where

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

members are not conducting legislative business on a year-round basis. Therefore, the findings in this study may be limited to settings with similarly constructed legislative bodies and calendars.

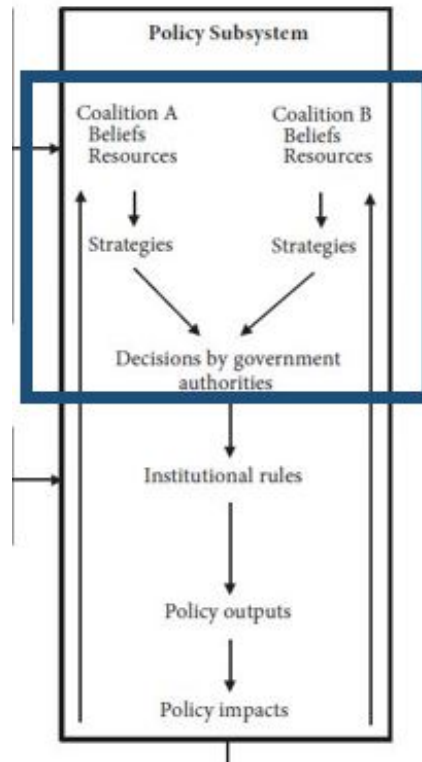
Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of how practitioners at public institutions of higher education in Virginia make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. Public institutions of higher education rely on support from the state, in terms of both policy and appropriations, yet within the context of a single state, public institutions compete for resources. This competition takes place within the policy subsystem (Figure 2) of the Advocacy Coalition Framework (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1988), an area of the framework that has traditionally been used as the primary unit of analysis in academic research. The blue box, which I added to the figure, represents the part of the framework that was the focus of this study.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Figure 2

Policy Subsystem in the Advocacy Coalition Framework



The problem of limited resources incites competing interests, which in turn necessitates the need for senior administrators to optimize state government relations to achieve state appropriation and policy outcomes that are beneficial to their institutions. In order to address this problem of practice, I deployed a sequential explanatory mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and collected data from legislative text, individual in-depth interviews, follow-up questions, and an analytic journal, to better understand how institutional government relations officers align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The findings from this sequential explanatory mixed methods study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) illuminated five key conclusions. First, Virginia's public institutions are engaging in state government relations at varying levels of effort. Second, the disparate policy issues considered by legislators and varied economic and budget conditions from year to year - influence an institution's engagement in state government relations. Third, Virginia's public research-intensive institutions are more frequently mentioned in legislative text, suggesting that they are active in the practice of state government relations than Virginia's non-research-intensive institutions. Fourth, the involvement of an institution's president in state government relations has a direct and significant impact on how a state government relations officer works to achieve a desired legislative outcome. Finally, the relationship between an institution's state government relations officer and a legislator acts as a transformative outcome.

Collectively, the findings from this study suggest a series of recommendations for practitioners and scholars. Practitioners should be encouraged to take a holistic approach to developing their state government relations strategies, to build and maintain strong relationships with their institutions' presidents, to build and maintain strong relationships with legislators and legislative staff, and to practice creativity in the development of their government relations strategies. While this study filled a gap in the literature of higher education state government relations, there remains significant opportunity for future scholarship on this topic. Specifically, the findings from this study suggest an opportunity to empirically measure the use and efficacy of various lobbying techniques and to better understand how institutional organizational structures can influence state government relations.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This study adds to a baseline of knowledge of government relations and higher education. With a deeper understanding how higher education administrators make decisions regarding state government relations, practitioners and scholars alike will benefit from the findings and conclusions discussed in this capstone. This study demonstrates that institutional state government relations officers must be adept and nimble experts, engaging various skillsets, leveraging their networks, and managing competing interests. By doing so, state government relations officers offer a contribution towards the formidable task of addressing the problem of limited state resources, and prove to be an invaluable asset to their institutions' ability to compete in the broader higher education ecosystem.

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STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Appendix A

Overview of Virginia's Legislative Process

Excerpted from the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice:

“The Virginia legislature, known as the General Assembly, consists of the Senate and the House of Delegates. This branch of government makes and changes the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. There are 140 legislators - 40 Senators and 100 Delegates. Senators serve four-year terms and Delegates serve two-year terms. The General Assembly convenes each year on the second Wednesday in January. In even-numbered years, the session is held for 60 days. In odd-numbered years, the session is held for 30 days. The General Assembly reconvenes on the sixth Wednesday after adjournment of the regular session for the purpose of considering the Governor's recommendations and vetoed legislation. Bills that become law at a regular session are effective the first day of July following adjournment of that session unless otherwise specified.”

Virginia House of Delegates Committees List:

- Agriculture, Chesapeake, and Natural Resources
- Appropriations
- Communications, Technology, and Innovation
- Counties, Cities, and Towns
- Courts of Justice
- Education
- Finance
- General Laws

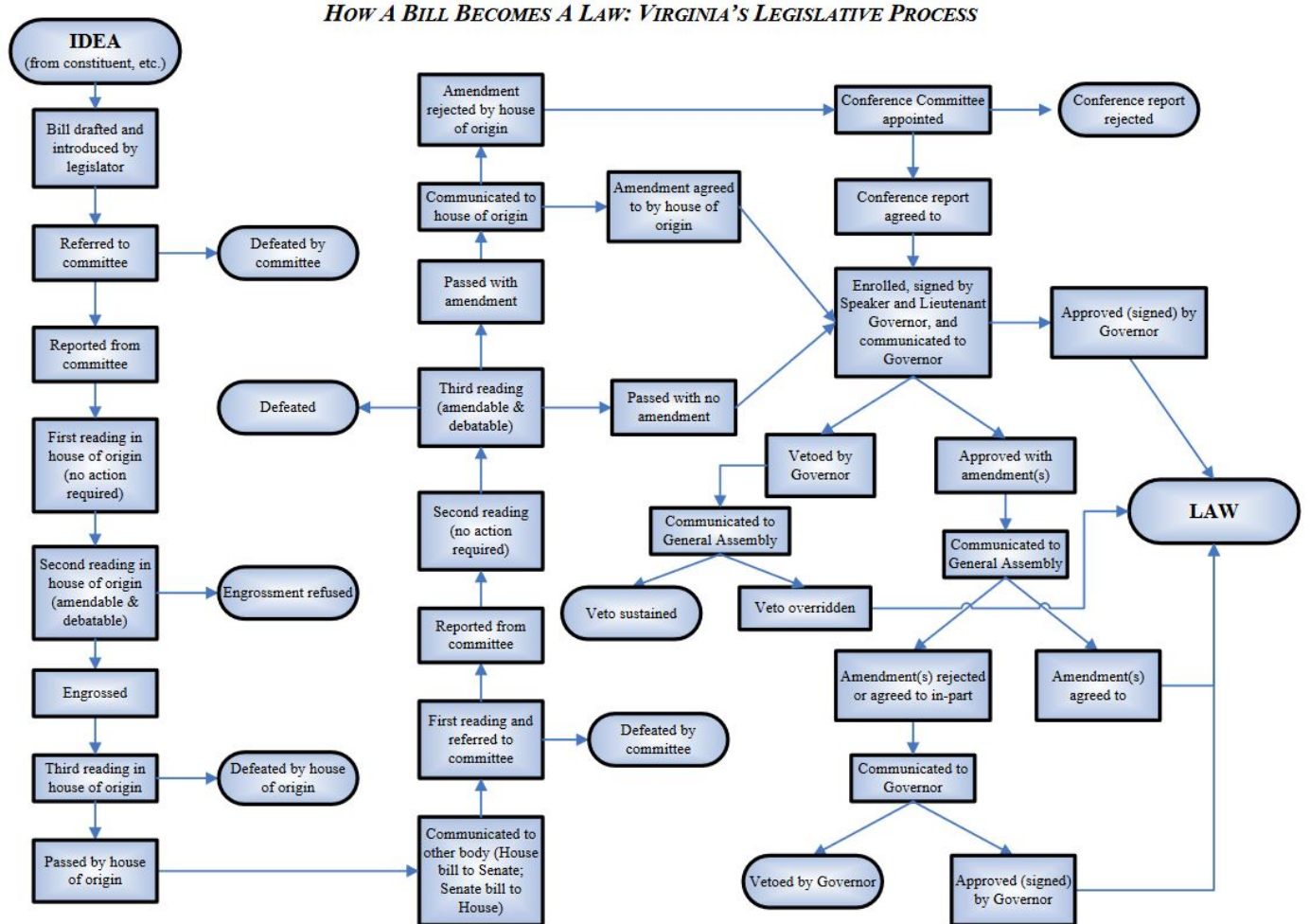
STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Health, Welfare, and Institutions
- Labor and Commerce
- Privileges and Elections
- Public Safety
- Rules
- Transportation

Virginia Senate Committees List:

- Agriculture, Conservation, and Natural Resources
- Commerce and Labor
- Education and Health
- Finance and Appropriations
- General Laws and Technology
- Judiciary
- Local Government
- Privileges and Elections
- Rehabilitation and Social Services
- Rules
- Transportation

Figure A1 – How a Bill Becomes a Law: Virginia’s Legislative Process



Office of State Governmental Relations, University of Virginia

Adapted from the University of Virginia’s Office of State Governmental Relations.

Appendix B

Example Recruitment Email

Thank you, [name of GRO gatekeeper], for introducing us.

Dear _____,

I am a higher education administration doctoral student with the University of Virginia's School of Education and Human Development. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study that seeks to explore how practitioners make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. At the conclusion of my study, I will distribute findings and recommendations to participants for improved practice.

I am seeking participants who are willing to spend one hour being interviewed by me via Zoom. During the interview I would ask you questions about your institution's state government relations strategy and how you make decisions regarding advocating for your institution. You will not be identified in the results of this study.

If you are willing to participate, or are interested in learning more, please respond to this email by [DATE]. The interview protocol for this study has been approved by the IRB at the University of Virginia.

Thank you,
Matt Banfield
Study Reference Number: UVA IRB-SBS #3909

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Appendix C

Keyword Search

I will use the following keywords to search the Virginia Legislative Information System during quantitative data collection.

Virginia Public Institution	Keyword(s) Used to Search the LIS
Christopher Newport University	Christopher Newport University
The College of William & Mary	The College of William & Mary
George Mason University	George Mason University
James Madison University	James Madison University
Longwood University	Longwood University
Norfolk State University	Norfolk State University
Old Dominion University	Old Dominion University
Radford University	Radford University
University of Mary Washington	University of Mary Washington
University of Virginia	University of Virginia
University of Virginia's College at Wise	University of Virginia's College at Wise
	UVA Wise
	College at Wise
Virginia Commonwealth University	Virginia Commonwealth University
Virginia Military Institute	Virginia Military Institute
Virginia State University	Virginia State University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
	Virginia Tech

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to explore how practitioners make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly.

What you will do in the study: The study will be conducted between September 2020 – March 2021, with data collection to occur primarily between September 2020-December 2020. The study is part of a doctoral capstone project at the University of Virginia. The data collection tool used for this study will be an interview protocol developed for individual semi-structured interviews with participants in a virtual setting. During the interview, you can skip any question(s) that makes you uncomfortable and you can stop the interview at any time. Interviews will be video and audio recorded, and after each interview a transcript will be made, and the video and audio files will be permanently deleted. You will be provided with a copy of your interview transcript and allowed to check for factual accuracy and accuracy in my interpretation of your answers.

Time required: The study will require about one hour of your time for an interview, and approximately 30 minutes in the weeks after the interview for you to check your interview transcript.

Risks: There are no anticipated risks in this study.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you as a participant in this study. However, I plan to provide you with this study's final report, which you may find valuable in your capacity as a practitioner.

Confidentiality: The data that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. Personally identifying information will be assigned a code number, and the list connecting your name to this code will be kept in a password protected location. When the study is completed and the data have been analyzed, this list will be destroyed. Your name will not be used in any report. All video and audio recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The video and audio files of your interview will be destroyed should you decide to withdraw.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the interviewer to stop the interview. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to withdraw after your interview has been completed, please utilize the contact information below.

Payment: You will receive no payment for participating in the study.

If you have questions about the study, contact:

Matthew Banfield (PI)
University of Virginia
1709 University Avenue
Charlottesville, VA 22904
Telephone: (434) 924-5446
mb3qb@virginia.edu

Justin Thompson (Faculty Sponsor)
University of Virginia
PO Box 400260
Charlottesville, VA 22904
Telephone: (434) 924-1444
jbt4d@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs
Website for Research Participants: <http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/participants/>
UVA IRB-SBS #3909

Agreement:

I agree to participate in the research study described above.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX E

Follow-Up Email Example

Hi [participant name]:

Thank you so much for spending time with me last month and allowing me to interview you as part of my doctoral capstone project. I am reaching out today with two final requests.

First, I have attached here a copy of your interview transcript. An important part of the research process is to allow participants to double check the transcript of their interview and confirm that the contents therein are an accurate account of the conversation. Therefore, please review the attached transcript to ensure that it accurately reflects your interview. You may either make changes in redline and send it back to me, or simply confirm by reply to this email that the draft I have attached here is accurate. Note, because I have taken steps to protect your privacy in the data, your name will appear as “Participant 4,” [Institution] will appear as “Institution D,” and other identifying information has been redacted.

Second, I have three follow-up questions to ask you based on our initial conversation. Rather than scheduling another Zoom call, I have created a [short Qualtrics survey](https://virginia.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_erJQQNMwbYmOHtP) where you can reply (https://virginia.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_erJQQNMwbYmOHtP).

I kindly ask that you check your transcript and reply to the three follow up questions no later than Friday, December 11, 2020.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you need more time.

And again, thank you!
Matt

APPENDIX F

Participant Follow-Up Questions

1. Thank you for taking the time to be interviewed by me for my doctoral capstone project. I enjoyed hearing your perspective on higher education state government relations. I would greatly appreciate if you could please respond to the following three follow-up questions by Friday, December 11, 2020.

2. The following is a list of factors that you might consider when developing a holistic strategy for seeking a desired outcome from the Virginia General Assembly. Please select the attribute that best describes how impactful each factor is as it relates to developing a successful state government relations strategy.

	Not at all impactful	Somewhat impactful	Very impactful	Extremely impactful
My president’s relationships with General Assembly members and/or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My own relationships with General Assembly members and/or staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The context of a given budget or policy matter that would allow a legislator to support your ask	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working in a coalition with other Virginia higher education liaisons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution’s alumni base	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My institution’s resources (such as geographic reach, ability to showcase innovative programs and research, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bringing General Assembly members and/or staff to campus	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

3. In what ways has your president's involvement in state government relations helped your ability to secure a desired outcome from the Virginia General Assembly? In what ways has your president's involvement in state government relations hindered your ability to secure a desired outcome from the Virginia General Assembly?

4. During our interview, you described the important role that building relationships with General Assembly members and staff plays in your ability to be successful in securing a desired outcome from the Virginia General Assembly. Please describe the factors involved in building and maintaining these key relationships as well as the factors that could damage these relationships.

Appendix G

Data Management

The plan for organizing and documenting the qualitative data collected during this study include the use of file naming conventions and project and data identifiers. An example is as follows:

For video and audio recording files: A01_IDI_Oct10_MCB

In this example....

- A = audio recording (V = video)
- 01 = participant 1
- IDI = in-depth interview
- Oct10 = data collection date
- MCB = initials of data collector

For transcript files: T01_IDI_Oct10_TOct20_MCB

In this example...

- T = transcript
- 01 = participant 1
- IDI = in-depth interview
- Oct10 = data collection date
- TOct20 = date of transcription
- MCB = initials of data collector and transcriber (I will be both roles for my study)

Data Sharing and Reuse

I will not share or release the raw data collected for this study. The summary report and potential subsequent publication will include summaries of the data.

Data Preservation and Archiving

Following the conclusion of the study, I will preserve and archive the data for a period of three years. The data that is preserved will include transcripts and audio files. Transcript files will be stored in a Microsoft Word compatible format.

APPENDIX H

Codebook

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Lobbying as communication	Direct	Participant directly engages with a legislator or staff	“And I know I can, I can text X delegate and be like, Hey, you got five minutes tomorrow I need to run something by you, or hey I need your help on this.”
	Intermediary (IM)	Participant uses an intermediary to engage with a legislator or staff	“...Dr. President has met with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman and the subcommittee chairs of the money committees...”
	New forms	Participant invites a legislator or staff to tour campus	“Those things are not as common, meaning like the dinners and those, you know, because of the gift law changes under the McDonnell Administration, but we still do a lot of the campus tours.”
Practice Influencing Factors	President (PRES)	Institution’s president influences participant’s ability to achieve desired outcome from the General Assembly	“...but in the higher education state government relations world, it is expected that the president, especially that the president, will be the primary face, you know, the primary voice that the legislators see.”
	Coalition	Participant leverages collaboration with other higher education liaisons to achieve desired outcome from the General Assembly	“I think, more often than not we do work in a coalition.”
	Relationship (RELAT)	Participant invests in relationship building to achieve desired outcome from the General Assembly	“...there are changes in staffing, so it's kind of keeping that awareness and relationship alive...”
	Geography (GEO)	Participant expresses regionalism and the institution’s geographic footprint as a factor in achieving a desired	“Like, I know I can get to 25 of the legislators in Northern Virginia. I don't know that [redacted] can get to [legislator in area where Institution A is

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

		outcome from the General Assembly	located]. That doesn't mean that they're ineffective, I just, I don't know about their reach.”
	Issue context (IC)	Participant expresses the context of an issue (such as political context) as a factor in achieving a desired outcome from the General Assembly	“Given our governor was in such turmoil early in his term, all of these things have impacted certainly our strategies, and I would say for us, you know, we, we've had a change in strategy given the turmoil that the governor experienced.”
	Brand (BR)	Participant describes their institution’s reputation as a factor in achieving a desired outcome from the General Assembly.	“[Institution], you know, had become known around the state for this sort of thing, so when I go into [name of legislator]’s office, it’s easier to ask.”
	Experience (EXP)	Participant describes their professional experience and/or expertise as a factor in achieving a desired outcome from the General Assembly.	“I had worked for the [committee name] Committee for several years before taking my current role at [institution]. That experience is helpful for knowing the process and the players.”

APPENDIX I

Analytic Memo Examples

Monday, October 26, 2020

After Interview #1

I was really pleased with this interview. The participant provided a lot of detailed information. While it felt at times as though we were jumping around from the script I had outlined in the protocol, I do think that at the end of the day we covered all the important topics. My impression from the conversation, without yet reviewing the transcript, is that from this participant's perspective there are two key elements to effective government relations. The first is relationships. This participant took so much care to detail the effort that goes into building relationships with legislators and staff, including knowing when to contact them (literally what time of day), what sorts of topics require immediate and direct communications, how to build new relationships, and knowing who to talk to about an issue so as to not make folks mad. The second key ingredient appears to be trust and involvement of the president. According to this participant, the institution's president carries a lot of sway and can "charm" legislators by showing them respect by taking the time to come visit their office or inviting them to campus. Furthermore, this participant has the trust of their president, which seems to matter. For instance, when a legislator calls and asks a question, this participant knows they can make a commitment without having to always go back and speak to their boss and/or the president. This appears to build credibility with policymakers. Regarding body language, the participant took a long pause to consider the question "How do you measure success in your job?" This confirmed for me, right at the beginning, that government relations is not an easily measurable product.

Thursday, December 3

Upon completion of interview transcriptions

Now that all four interviews and transcripts are complete, I've begun to notice a few themes. First, two of the participants appeared to be more seasoned practitioners than the other two participants. This was evident in both the breadth and depth of their answers, but also in the fact the latter two participants often referenced the former two participants as models of effective state government relations. A second theme that I think has emerged is regarding the role of the institution's president. All participants referenced their president as playing a role in their work, although there was mixed reaction as to whether the role was a positive or a negative one in varying contexts. I should tease this out in my follow-up questions to participants. Another major theme that seems to be emerging has to do with campus tours. While the literature on lobbying as communication would generally place this in a less effective bucket of forms of lobbying, all four participants noted the value that campus tours had in their work. Another initial

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

theme that appears to be emerging from the data is related to coalitions. While the literature discusses interest groups as a historical benefit/partner to higher education, all four participants declined to list unaffiliated interest groups as part of their practice, and instead offered working in a coalition of other public institutions as a major asset. Finally, a major theme that appears to be emerging from the data has to do with relationships. All four participants stressed the importance of relationship building as both a tool for effective state government relations and as a factor of measuring success in their jobs. I should tease this out as well in follow-up questions. Overall, the participants' experiences seem to closely map with the three forms of communication that the literature describes for lobbying: direct, intermediary, and new forms. Although, based on an initial assessment, I might reorder this to read intermediary (president) followed by new forms, with direct as a constant and/or transcendent element.

Appendix J

Interview Protocol

Note to interviewer: Based on the semi-structured nature of this data collection design, participants should be allowed to expand upon their answers in a way that is accurate to their lived experiences. Therefore, it is possible that there will not be enough time to address every question in this protocol. The interviewer must ensure that each participant is asked the numbered questions in bold typeface; the indented questions below each bold question should be used to facilitate follow-up dialogue, time permitting.

[Script prior to interview] Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. As you know, my study seeks to explore how practitioners make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly. This study will benefit higher education practitioners who may use the study's findings to guide their own approach to state government relations. Furthermore, there has not been a lot of research on this topic, so this study will also serve as a baseline for future scholarship.

Our interview today will last approximately 60 minutes. During the interview I will ask you about your experience as a government relations officer, how you conceptualize your institution's state government relations strategy, how you perceive effectiveness in state government relations, and the factors that influence the decisions you make regarding which government relations techniques to utilize.

Prior to today, you were asked to complete an Informed Consent form, which you signed and returned to me. I would like to audio/video record this interview; all files of such will be destroyed after a transcript has been produced. For the purposes of this recording, do I have your permission to video and audio record our conversation?

___ Yes ___ No

If yes: Thank you. Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recording function or keep something you said off the record. *If no:* Thank you for letting me know. I will only take notes of our conversation and will not use the video/audio recording function.

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? [Discuss questions]

If any questions (or other questions) arise at any point in this interview, please feel free to ask them at any time.

Begin by building rapport – talk about myself and my experience and interest with this topic. Connect this with the participant's professional history.

[Background Information]

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

How long have you been in the role of [professional title]?

How many years have you held a job as a state government relations officer at an institution of higher education, regardless of institution or state?

What was your most recent job before working as a state government relations officer at your current institution?

How many years has your institution had a state government relations officer?

Including yourself, how many full-time employees' primary job duties pertain to state government relations? Do you engage volunteers or university employees on a fractional basis that might increase the total effort dedicated to state governmental relations?

Does your institution employ a for-profit law, consulting, or lobbying firm or individual for state relations?

[Transition to Research Question: How practitioners make decisions regarding state lobbying strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly.]

I would now like to ask you several questions regarding how you develop a state government relations plan for your institution.

- 1. First, I would like to begin broadly and ask you to describe effective state government relations – what is it and how does it occur?**
- 2. There are many state issues, spanning policy and appropriations, that affect public institutions of higher education. What is the process at [name of institution] for determining which issues will be tracked through state government relations?**

Are there types of legislation that are more critical to your efforts?

How is this list of state priority issues segmented? For instance, are some of the issues “track only” while others are selected to pursue a more active engagement approach with policymakers?

What factors, both internal and external, does [name of institution] consider when identifying this priority issue list?

Please tell me about the role you personally play in naming these issues.

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

What kind of changes, if any, are made to this priority issue list throughout the course of a legislative session?

Is there anything else you would like to share regarding how [name of institution] identifies priority issues for state government relations?

Over the next several questions, I am going to ask you about how to implement your institution's government relations strategy. My goal for these questions is to better understand how you align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly.

3. First, tell me about how you personally present supporting information or data to legislators or their staff? This could include, for instance, meeting with legislators (or their staff) or testifying at hearings.

Are there certain issues that more frequently warrant an approach like this?

What factors influence you to take a direct communication approach?

Do you perceive a direct communication approach to be effective and why?

What downside is there to a direct communications approach?

4. Let's switch gears a bit and think now about using intermediaries to present information or data to legislators or their staff. This could include, for instance, leveraging [name of institution]'s president to contact a legislator or testify at a hearing, asking influential alumni to contact legislators. Tell me about how your institution uses these approaches.

Are there certain issues that more frequently warrant an approach like this?

What factors influence you to utilize an approach that involves an intermediary?

Do you perceive the use of an intermediary to be effective and why?

What downside is there to utilizing an intermediary?

5. Now I would like to look at a third approach to government relations – opening new forms of communications. This could include, for instance, inviting a policymaker to campus or publicly thanking a policymaker for a legislative decision. How do you use new forms of communication as a means of gaining access to legislators (or their staff)?

Are there certain issues that more frequently warrant an approach like this?

STATE LOBBYING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

What factors influence you to utilize an approach that involves opening new channels of communication?

Do you perceive the use of opening new channels of communication to be effective and why?

What downside is there to opening new channels of communication?

6. Thank you. I want to transition now away from thinking about government relations as a form of communication and talk briefly about interest groups. The literature tells us that interest groups play a major role in state government decision-making and are historically an asset to institutions of higher education. **How do you view interest groups or coalitions with other aligned parties as part of [name of institution]'s state government relations strategy?**
7. **Considering all of these broad categories we have discussed – direct communication, intermediates, new channels, and interest groups – help me better understand how these approaches might overlap. In other words, how do you align context, resources, strategies, and techniques in a way that successfully yields desired funding, new laws, or changes to existing laws from the Virginia General Assembly?**
8. **Are there public institutions in Virginia that you think are especially effective with their state government relations efforts despite relatively thin resources?**

[Conclusion]

Thank you so much for speaking with me today. Before we conclude this interview, is there something about your experience as a government relations officers at [name of institution] that we didn't discuss today, but you think influences how you make decisions regarding state government relations strategies when seeking appropriations, new laws, or revised laws from the Virginia General Assembly?

Thank you for your time today. This concludes our interview. In the coming weeks I will send you a few follow up questions, as well as a copy of this interview transcript. I'll invite you to review the transcript and make edits for accuracy.

Do you have any questions for me?

I am now turning off the recording function.