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ABSTRACT

A practical, research-based theory about how colleges and universities allocate resources among budgetary units is proposed. The theory was developed from interview responses at six institutions as well as questionnaire results. In phase one, interviews were conducted with 26 key administrators centrally involved in budgetary decisions at the six institutions. A second study phase concentrated on 74 budgetary units within three of the institutions. Five theoretical concepts were proposed: centrality, resource allocations, environmental power, institutional power, and resource allocation strategies. In addition, propositions were developed about relations among concepts. Attention was focused on the interactive effects of a department's centrality, its ability to tap needed environmental resources, and the strength of its institutional roots on the share of budget funds it acquires. Two kinds of organizational power, a unit's environmental power gained by its relative ability to tap into external resources needed by the organization and a unit's institutional power gained through the strength of its internal roots in the organization, combined to explain about two-fifths of the variance in budget allocation changes. Differences between core and peripheral units were also explored. (SW)

POWER AND PERIPHERALITY: THE ALLOCATION OF SCARCE RESOURCES IN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract[1]

The paper proposes a practical, research-based theory about how colleges and universities allocate resources among budgetary units. The theory is developed from qualitative interview responses at six varied institutions and bolstered by preliminary analyses of quantitative questionnaire responses. Two kinds of organizational power, a unit's environmental power gained by its relative ability to tap into external resources needed by the organization and a unit's institutional power gained through the strength of its internal roots in the organization, combine to explain about two-fifths of the variance in in budget allocation changes. Differences between core and peripheral units are explored.

[1] See Hackman, 1983, for a more complete review of the relevant literature and a more detailed description of the study.

Introduction

Whether the times are good or bad, some departments and offices within a college or university gain greater shares of the institution's resources while other units lose much or all support. The major purpose of the study described here is to develop and propose a practical theory of resource allocations in higher education organizations which can guide future research and understanding about why some units gain and others lose.

Importance of the Problem

The proposed research is potentially important for at least three reasons: because of the current financial difficulties in higher education, because of issues particular to peripheral programs in higher education, and because of the theory's potential usefulness in understanding other kinds of organizations.

Current resource crisis. After several decades of growth in size and in scope, most colleges and universities are undergoing a period of resource decline. It is important to understand the present crisis and to develop constructive strategies for reduction.

Peripheral units. Peripheral units in colleges and universities cover a wide spectrum of non-core programs. Although many peripheral programs ostensibly acquire "total funding" from sources outside the central institutional budget, there usually are a host of uncounted costs such as space, utilities, maintenance, custodial care, and the time of university administrators. In times of financial stress, schools may consider peripheral units as likely candidates for reduction or discontinuance; they often may be viewed as more dispensable than the core units. It is important to understand

the potential vulnerability of such units and to develop effective strategies for their reduction or continuance in times of financial constraint.

General applicability. The most far-reaching implication of the proposed theory is its potential contribution to general knowledge about organizational behavior. It may be possible to begin a line of inquiry that will stretch beyond peripheral and core units in financially troubled schools...to financially healthy universities and colleges...to organizations outside of higher education. A greater understanding of the relationship between core and peripheral parts of organizations in the resource allocation process may have application beyond academia and beyond the present period of financial difficulty.

Perspectives and Theoretical Framework

Five Key Concepts

The initial theoretical framework for this research includes five key concepts, identified through a review of relevant literature and experience. The following definitions of the concepts also reflect what has been learned in analyses of data collected for the study.

(1) Centrality--the relative position of a unit on a continuum from core to peripheral.

(2) Resource Allocations--the relative share of internal organizational resources allocated to a unit, particularly changes in budget allocations but also other kinds of resources such as space and location.

(3) Environmental Power--the relative ability of a unit to tap environmental resources that are needed by the organization.

(4) Institutional Power--the strength of a unit's internal roots in the organization.

(5) Resource Allocation Strategies--strategies used by heads of units and divisions to affect resource allocations, particularly budgetary strategies.

Although much of the proposed theory has evolved from the study itself, the initial framework is based on previous writing about resource allocations and/or organizational power (including Cameron, 1981; Dougherty, 1981; Emerson, 1962; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Lasswell & Kaplan, 1950; Melchiori, 1980; Pfeffer, 1977; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974).

Method

Two-Phase Study

In order to develop and provisionally test a practical theory of resource allocations for colleges and univeristies, a two-phase study was designed. The chosen method attempts to combine relevant previous research findings with the grounded theory method defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and further demonstrated for higher education by Conrad (1978).

In Phase I, preliminary interviews were conducted with 26 key administrators centrally involved in budgetary decisions at six varied colleges and universities. (Figure 1 briefly describes the six schools and lists the numbers and kinds of participants from each one.) The goal of this phase was to tap the experience of knowledgeable persons in order to develop the theory and to clarify questions for the second research stage. Administrators were asked (1) to describe their schools' annual budgetary process and (2) to discuss allocation experiences for four specific units that they identified as fitting one of the following groups:

Core Gainers--Units central to the institution that have increased in their relative share of the budget in recent years.
Core Losers--Units central to the institution that have decreased in relative budget share.
Peripheral Gainers--Units not central to the institution that have increased in relative budget share.
Peripheral Losers--Units not central to the institution that have decreased in relative budget share.

In Phase II, the study concentrated on three of the six institutions in more depth. For these three schools, 95 budgetary units were identified across the four unit categories, based on the central administrator interviews plus additional advice from the schools.[2] Heads of the units were asked to complete questionnaires developed from Stage I; 74 questionnaires were returned for a completion rate of 77.9 percent. (The 26 central administrators interviewed in Stage I were asked to answer a similar questionnaire.) Additional site visits to two of the three in-depth institutions made it possible to interview heads of 17 departments and divisions and to collect relevant institutional documents.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected during the two stages of the research project. Phase I data were primarily interview responses whereas Phase II encompassed interview information as well as quantified questionnaire responses.

Analyses

Analytical techniques appropriate for the data were selected. Qualitative analyses include the identification of concepts, categories, and potential future measures, in accord with the modified Glaser-Straus methodology. Interviews were transcribed. The transcripts, notes, and institutional documents contributed to the development of the proposed

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[2] The budgetary unit heads include chairs of academic departments, office directors, and also some division directors and deans. Because of the size of the participating schools and the need to get relatively even numbers of people from the four groups, it was necessary to assign academic units to the "core" category and all other units to "peripheral," even though some nonacademic units may be considered core for a particular institution and some academic departments may be viewed as peripheral.

FIGURE 1

Six Participating Schools: Characteristics and Participation Levels

Descriptive Pseudonymn	Size in 1979-80	Highest Degree	Phase I Interviews #	Phase I Interviews Descriptions	Phase II Interviews Dept Heads #	Phase II Interviews Divn Heads #	Phase II Questionnaires Central #(%)	Phase II Questionnaires DivnHeads #(%)	Phase II Questionnaires DeptHeads #(%)
State University	14,200	Doctorate	9	Pres, Acad VP, Admin&Bus VP, Dev VP, Stud VP 2 Pres Assts, 2 Acad Assoc VPs	3	8	5(71%)	11(92%)	17(65%)
Liberal Arts College	2,700	Doctorate	3	Pres, Acad VP, Admin&Bus VP	3	3	2(67%)	2(67%)	14(70%)
Comprehensive College	3,800	Master's	3	Pres, Pres Asst Admin&Bus VP			4(100%)	4(57%)	24(89%)
Women's College	550	Bachelor's	4	Pres, Acad VP, Admin&Bus VP Student VP,			3(75%)		
Technical University	7,250	Master's	3	Acad VP, Extl VP, Admin&Bus VP			4(100%)		
Regional University	9,750	Doctorate	4	Admin VP, Bus VP, Dev VP, Plng Dir			2(33%)		
TOTAL PARTICIPATION			26		6	11	20(71%)	17(77%)	55(75%)

Note: The analyses on questionnaire data reported in this paper combine responses from heads of departments such as academic chairs and office directors and from deans and division directors. Two additional questionnaires were returned too late to include in the data analyses, for a total return of 74 (77.9%)

theory, to the design of Phase II questionnaires, and also to the pool of illustrative examples. Quantitative techniques used to analyze the questionnaire responses include basic descriptive techniques, analyses of variance, factors analyses, and stepwise multiple regressions.

Development of Phase II questionnaires. Near the end of Phase I, the author began to draft questionnaries for Phase II of the study. These were based on the experience of Phase I and also on the initial tentative theoretical framework. It was expected that some concepts and categories which were not obvious in the interviews might still be found useful in a questionnaire format. (Figure 2 outlines the major topics for the three research instruments.)

Most of the questions are forced-choice and ask respondents to check or circle their best answer. Open-ended questions are placed throughout the questionnaire to tap additional categories for the proposed concepts and to develop the theory further. For example, the first strategy subsection asks about "any other aspects of the way the person above you participates in the budget process that would be helpful in understanding his or her role."

FIGURE 2

Topics Covered by the Three Resource Allocation Questionnaires

Section Topics

General Budgetary Process
- --Participants
- --Organizational Process
- --Incremental/Selective Allocations

Description of Your Department/Division*
- --Purpose
- --Increase/Decrease in Allocations
- --Centrality to Institutional Mission
- --Ability to Tap External Resources
- --Institutional Power Roots

Budgetary Strategies
- --Department Head Strategies
- --Division Head Strategies
- --Central Administrator Strategies

Institutional Emphases
- --Areas Emphasized by Adminstration
- --President's Internal/External View
- --Importance of External Resources

General Demographic Information

* Not applicable to central administrator questionnaire.

Findings

The mix of quantitative and qualitative information makes it possible to propose a theory of resource allocations bolstered by preliminary quantitative testing. In the larger research report (Hackman, 1983), analyses of the interview and questionnaire are presented and organized around two basic basic questions:

RESEARCH QUESTION I: For each of the identified theoretical concepts, how intuitively meaningful and how analytically useful is the concept in studying the allocation of resources among college and university units? What is the meaning of each concept? What categories emerge, what are their properties, and what measures can be developed?

RESEARCH QUESTION II: What propositions are gleaned through this study for further research and testing? What theoretical relationships among the concepts are supported by the exploratory analyses? What additional propositions are suggested?

Analyses of Power and Peripherality

For the present paper, let us look briefly at a set of the analyses that summarizes relationships among most of the theoretical concepts. Two of the independent variables (environmental power and institutional power) are shown to predict variance in the major dependent variable (budget allocation). The interaction among these variables differs markedly for the two extremes of centrality (core and peripheral units). Table 1 gives results of multiple regression analyses that explore the relationships among environmental power, institutional power, budget allocations, and centrality.

Developing indices. Four power indices were developed empirically from responses in two parts of the Phase II questionnaire--one set of questions designed to measure environmental power, the other for institutional power. (Attachment A shows the questionnaire items.) Categories were selected for the four indices according to their ability to discriminate (a) between

TABLE 1

Stepwise Multiple Regressions of
Environmental Power and Institutional Power
on the Budgetary Change of Core and Peripheral Units

CORE RESPONDENTS

Independent Variables	Cumulative Variance Explained 39 Unit Heads	Population	F-Ratio	Sig.
Environmental Power Index	28.6%	26.7%	14.844	.001
Institutional Power Index	41.3%	38.0%	12.663	.001

Multiple Correlation = .64

PERIPHERAL RESPONDENTS

Independent Variables	Cumulative Variance Explained 33 Unit Heads	Population	F-Ratio	Sig.
Environmental Power Index Alone	19.8%	17.2%	7.649	.01
Peripheral Power Index Added	38.1%	34.0%	9.224	.001

Multiple Corelation = .62

*Cumulative variance is given for the study sample and then adjusted for the population, based on the size of the sample.

gaining and losing core and units and (b) between gaining and losing peripheral units.

Environmental power. Environmental power is a unit's relative ability to tap external resources that are needed by the organization. The proposed theory is built on Emerson's (1962) idea that the most powerful parts of an organization are those members uniquely able to acquire resources critical for survival of the whole. The analyses suggest that the external resources which lead to such power are different for core and for peripheral parts of an organization.

To summarize results about the analytical usefulness of environmental power and its interactions with centrality and resource allocations, two separate indices were created. The core index is called "Tapping External Academic Resources," reflecting the finding that the Core Gainers in the study (all are academic departments) tap such environmental resources as students, academic prestige, and the ability to help students cope with societal needs and problems. "Tapping External Financial Resources," is the index created for peripheral units because (at least in current times of financial stress and for the nonacademic units in this study) these units appear to gain internal resources when they are able to attract external financial support. Figure 3 lists the questionnaire items that contribute to each of the indices, gives the items' correlations with budgetary change, and describes the index derivations.

Multiple regressions were performed for both indices (Table 1). The core index "Tapping External Academic Resources" accounts for 28.6% of the variance in budget change among the 39 core respondents, and the peripheral index "Tapping External Financial Resources" accounts for 19.8% of of budget change variance among the 33 peripheral unit heads.

FIGURE 3

Two Indices of Environmental Power[a]

CORE INDEX: "Tapping External Academic Resources	
Correlation with Budget Change	Item Description
+.56	Prestige
+.36	Ability to cope with current societal needs
+.19	Recruitment and retention of students
-.21	Support from alumni

PERIPHERAL INDEX: "Tapping External Financial Resources	
Correlation with Budget Change	Item Description
+.40	Support from federal government
-.35	Ability to cope with current societal needs
+.21	Support from foundations
-.15	Prestige
+.14	Support from business and industry
-.13	Recruitment and retention of students

[a] The two index scores are averages of the listed items, each multiplied by the average importance rating of all respondents in an institution. Items with a negative ("-") direction are reversed. The indices were constructed in 5 steps in order to compute summary scores that would distinguish between gainers and losers separately for core and peripheral units: (1) one-way anovas were computed on the weighted current environmental power items between gainers and losers, separately for core and peripheral respondents; (2) items were chosen for each index using a rule that required higher significance for items with more missing data (0-20% missing data required $P < .49$, 21-30% missing--$P < .39$, 31-40% missing--$P < .29$, 41-50% missing--$P < .19$); (3) missing data were replaced with the product of average school importance ratings X 2 (assuming ability = "Somewhat Lower than Most"); (4) items relating negatively to budget change were reversed (1=5,2=4,3=3, 4=2,5=1); (5) the modified scores were then averaged to compute the two indices, separately for core and for peripheral respondents. (One item in the Core Index, "support from people throughout the state," is omitted from the list because it has a correlation of -.03 and therefore neither adds nor subtracts from the overall index. Future index developments on other samples should probably add a sixth step that tests for correlations once missing data are replaced.)

Institutional power. Institutional power is the internal embeddedness of a department or office within the organization. In contrast to environmental power, the relationship between this concept and budget allocations appears fairly similar for core and peripheral units. For both, there are positive correlations between budget gains or losses and self-perceptions of current power, visibility, and support of the president. Contrary to original expectations, past institutional power and longevity are negatively related to budget.

Although there are common findings for core and peripheral units, there also are some differences. Two summary indices of the institutional power questionnaire items were derived following the same procedure used for environmental power (Figure 4). Once again, the goal of index construction is to compute summary scores that would distinguish between gainers and losers, separately for core and for peripheral units.

In separate regression analyses, the two institutional power indices account for substantial proportions of variance in budgetary change. As Table 1 shows, the core index accounts for 28.0% of the change variance among the 39 core respondents, and the peripheral power index accounts for 17.0% variance among 33 peripheral respondents.

Items which make up the two indices are indicative of institutional power as originally conceived, with the major exception that perceptions of past power actually weigh negatively on both indices. All of the positive items measure aspects of a unit's present internal ties to the organization, whether through administrative support, constituent service, or general visibility.

It may well be that in times of financial stress and change (both within higher education and in the general society) that longevity and past

FIGURE 4

Two Indices of Institutional Power[a]

CORE INDEX: Institutional Power	
Correlation with Budget Change	Item Description
+.41	Power of unit presently within the institution
+.38	Number of students served
+.33	Support of president for unit
-.25	Institution's legal commitments to unit
-.22	Number times a month talk with central administrators
+.16	Visibility of unit in the institution
+.16	Visibility of unit outside the institution
-.14	Length of time part of the institution
-.14	Number of full-time-equivalent people in unit

PERIPHERAL INDEX: Institutional Power	
Correlation with Budget Change	Item Description
-.39	Length of time in the institution
+.34	Visibility of unit in the institution
+.32	Power of unit presently within the institution
+.25	Visibility of unit to board of trustees
+.16	Number times a month talk with central administrators

[a] The two index scores are averages of the listed items, which are given in order of their correlation with budgetary change. Items with a negative ("-") direction are reversed. The indices were constructed in 5 steps in order to compute summary scores that would distinguish between gainers and losers separately for core and peripheral units: (1) one-way anovas were computed on the institutional power items between gainers and losers, separately for core and peripheral respondents; (2) items were chosen for each index using a rule that required higher significance for items with more missing data (0-20% missing data required P< .49, 21-30% missing--P< .39, 31-40% missing--P< .29, 41-50% missing-- P< .19); (3) missing data were replaced with the product of average school importance ratings X 2 (assuming ability "Somewhat Lower than Most"); (4) items relating negatively to budget change were reversed (1=5,2=4,3=3, 4=2,5=1); (5) the modified scores were then averaged to compute the two indices, separately for core and for peripheral respondents. Future index developments on other samples should probably add a sixth step that tests for correlations once missing data are replaced.

institutional power are outweighed by the environmental power needed to tap critical external resources and keep the institution viable.

Environmental and Institutional Power Combined

To examine the unique and combined contributions of environmental and institutional power, two separate stepwise regressions were run: one for core respondents and a second for peripheral respondents. The distinct contributions are especially true for the two peripheral unit indices, which correlate -.03. Even for the two core unit indices, which correlate .37, the combination improves on separate explanations of variance. These relationships are illustrated graphically in Figure 5, with regression results reported in Table 1.

For core respondents, the combined environmental and institutional indices explain 41.3% of the variance in budgetary change, with a multiple correlation of .64. The environmental index "Tapping External Academic Resources" alone explains 28.6% of the variance, and the institutional power index 28.0%. For peripheral respondents, the combined indices account for 38.1% of budgetary change, a multiple correlation of .62. Separately, the variance explained is 19.8% for environmental power, 17.0% for institutional power.[3]

A second way to examine the combined power indices is shown in the contingency tables in Figure 6. Each index was divided intp "High" and "Low" scores. All of the core respondents with "High, High" scores on both the environmental and institutional power indices are budgetary gainers, and all but one of the "Low, Low" are losers. Similarly, for peripheral respondents the "High, High" respondents are all gainers and the "Low, Low" are losers. In both groups several respondents fall on the diagonal of mixed scores.

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[3] Another set of regressions that excludes division heads and adds budgetary strategies finds even higher amounts of explained variance (60.1% for 29 core department heads, 42.5% for 23 peripheral department heads).

FIGURE 5

Shared Variance among Power Indices and Budgetary Change

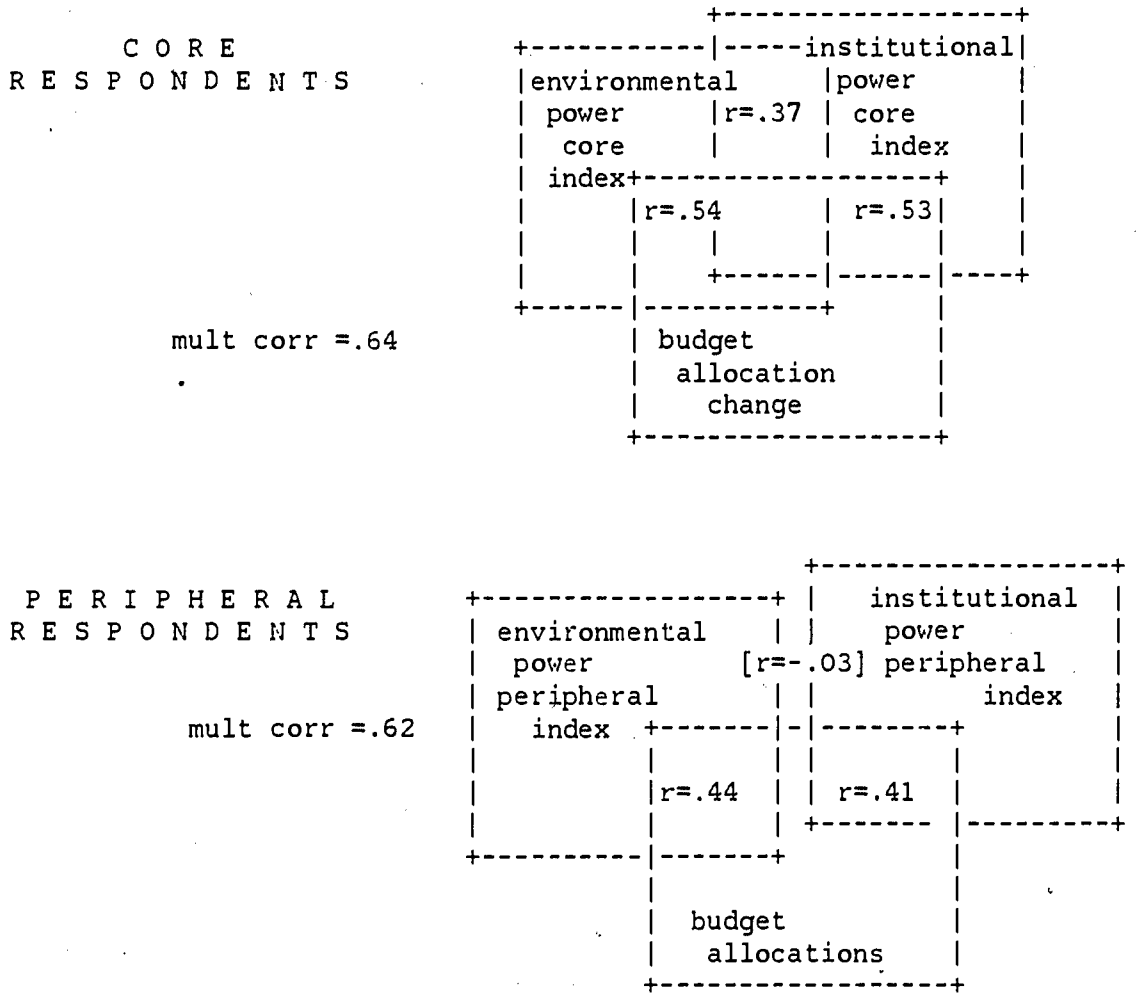

FIGURE 6

Contingency Tables

CORE RESPONDENTS

Environmental Power Core Index

		LOW	HIGH
Institutional Power Core Index	LOW	10 LOSERS 1 Gainer	4 Losers 5 Gainers
	HIGH	3 Losers 3 Gainers	0 Losers 13 GAINERS

PERIPHERAL RESPONDENTS

Environmental Power Peripheral Index

		LOW	HIGH
Institutional Power Peripheral Index	LOW	2 LOSERS 0 Gainers	7 Losers 2 Gainers
	HIGH	8 Losers 6 Gainers	0 Losers 8 GAINERS

Summary and Conclusion

This paper describes a study that aims to develop a practical theory of resource allocations in colleges and universities. Five theoretical concepts are proposed: centrality, resource allocations, environmental power, institutional power, and resource allocation strategies. The study also develops propositions about relations among the concepts. We have focused here on one set of relationships by exploring the interactive effects of a department's centrality, its ability to tap needed environmental resources, and the strength of its institutional roots on the share of budget funds it acquires.

Preliminary conclusions about the the proposed theory must be tempered by the fact that the regression analyses and the four indices used in these analyses inevitably capitalize on the specific small sample from which data were gathered. Also, the exploratory nature of the present research precludes the more definitive conclusions that could be drawn from a hypothesis-testing study.

Given these caveats, it is still possible to conclude that the results are promising. Analyses of interviews and questionnaire responses at six varied colleges and universities yield a number of useful findings for the further study of organizations in higher education.

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Attachment A

Items Used to Create Environmental Power Indices[a]

7. On each of the following items, how do the contributions of your budgetary unit compare with those of other similar units? (i.e., with other academic teaching units, academic non-teaching units, research units, public service units, or nonacademic administrative/support units) Please circle the number that best describes your unit's relative contribution for each item.

5 = Much Higher Than Most Similar Units
4 = Somewhat Higher Than Most Similar Units
3 = About the Same as Most Similar Units
2 = Somewhat Lower Than Most Similar Units
1 = Much Lower Than Most Similar Units
0 = Uncertain or Doesn't Apply

1 2 3 4 5 0 a. Financial support from outside.
1 2 3 4 5 0 b. Recruitment and retention of students.
1 2 3 4 5 0 c. Recruitment and retention of faculty.
1 2 3 4 5 0 d. Recruitment and retention of staff other than faculty.
1 2 3 4 5 0 e. Prestige.
1 2 3 4 5 0 f. Ability to cope with current societal needs and problems.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *g. Support from people in the community.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *h. Support from people throughout the state.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *i. Support from the state legislature.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *j. Support from the federal government.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *k. Support from foundations.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *l. Support from business and industry.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *m. Support from alumni.

15. Colleges and universities bring in a variety of resources from outside the institution. Please indicate how important you believe each of the following outside resources are to the future health and viability of your campus. Please circle the number that best describes each item's importance for the future of your institution.

5 = Very Important
4 = Quite Important
3 = Somewhat Important
2 = Slightly Important
1 = Not Important
0 = Uncertain or Doesn't Apply

1 2 3 4 5 0 a. Financial support from outside.
1 2 3 4 5 0 b. Recruitment and retention of students.
1 2 3 4 5 0 c. Recruitment and retention of faculty.
1 2 3 4 5 0 d. Recruitment and retention of staff other than faculty.
1 2 3 4 5 0 e. Prestige.
1 2 3 4 5 0 f. Ability to cope with current societal needs and problems.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *g. Support from people in the community.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *h. Support from people throughout the state.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *i. Support from the state legislature.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *j. Support from the federal government.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *k. Support from foundations.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *l. Support from business and industry.
1 2 3 4 5 0 *m. Support from alumni.

*"Support" could include money, students, advice or other contributions.

[a] A respondent's answers to the items in Question 7 are weighted by the average response of all participants from their school to corresponding items in Question 15.

Items Used to Create Institutional Power Indices

9. To the best of your knowledge, please indicate how your unit compares with other similar budgetary units in the institution on each of the following characteristics. Circle the best number for each item.

5 = Much Higher Than Most Similar Units
4 = Somewhat Higher Than Most Similar Units
3 = About the Same as Most Similar Units
2 = Somewhat Lower Than Most Similar Units
1 = Much Lower Than Most Similar Units
0 = Uncertain or Doesn't Apply

1 2 3 4 5 0	a. Length of time your unit has been part of institution.
1 2 3 4 5 0	b. Number of full-time-equivalent people employed in unit.
1 2 3 4 5 0	c. Percentage of faculty among the unit's nonclerical and nonservice staff members.
1 2 3 4 5 0	d. Number of students your unit serves.
1 2 3 4 5 0	e. Power your unit presently has within the institution.
1 2 3 4 5 0	f. Power your unit had five years ago.
1 2 3 4 5 0	g. Institution's legal commitments to the unit (e.g., contracts, restricted endowments).
1 2 3 4 5 0	h. Ease of direct access to the president.
1 2 3 4 5 0	i. Support of the president for your unit.
1 2 3 4 5 0	j. Support of dean or director to whom you report.
1 2 3 4 5 0	k. Number times a month you talk with central administrators.
1 2 3 4 5 0	l. Visibility of unit in the institution.
1 2 3 4 5 0	m. Visibility of unit outside institution.
1 2 3 4 5 0	n. Visibility of unit to board of trustees.