COLLABORATION WITHIN THE STUDENT SUCCESS OFFICE:

INCREASING EFFICIENCIES AND PARTNERSHIPS

By

GABRIELLE SMITH

Bachelor of Science, McMaster University, 2009

A Thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In

LEADERSHIP

We accept this Thesis as conforming to the required standard

…………………………………
Pam Charbonneau, MA, Organizational Sponsor

…………………………………..
Brigitte Harris, PhD, Thesis Supervisor

…………………………………...
Ron McCarville, PhD, External Reviewer

…………………………………...
Eileen Piggot-Irvine, PhD, Committee Chair

ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY

December 24, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all at Royal Roads University: staff, faculty and my incredible cohort colleagues. Thank you for joining me on this journey, for encouraging me and for pushing me to be the best I can be. I am truly grateful that I have had the opportunity to meet all of you and get to know you throughout this adventure.

To my supervisor, Dr. Brigitte Harris. Thank you for always encouraging me, providing constructive feedback and for continuing to be supportive as time passed by! I have appreciated knowing that you are always on the other end of an email or Skype if I needed you. Thank you for pushing me to accomplish something wonderful.

To my sponsor, Pam Charbonneau. Thank you for being an incredible role model and someone I truly look up to. I am so grateful for the support and encouragement you have provided me over the last year as I have completed this project. I know that you have and will continue to do incredible things in the SSO and I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to be a part of it. Thank you as well to the Student Success Office staff for participating, asking questions and being invested in making the SSO an incredible place to work.

To all of my family and friends. Thank you for always asking how my project was going. It was your encouragement and comments that kept me moving forward. Thank you all for sharing your school and thesis writing stories with me and understanding that a little push was always welcome.

And finally, to Greg. Thank you. Words cannot express how incredible grateful I am to you for all of your support and encouragement with this program and thesis over the past few years. Thank you for making dinner, doing the laundry, and keeping everything in order while I spent hours reading and writing! Thank you for all of the reading, comments, feedback and discussion we have had – I know it has made us both better people. As this chapter of our lives comes to a close, I truly cannot wait for what will come with the next!

ABSTRACT

In collaboration with internal stakeholders, this action research project answers how the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo can strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office.   With participation from Student Success Office staff members, research methods included an online survey and interview matrix, adhering to the ethical standards of both Royal Roads University and the University of Waterloo.   The data documented an understanding of the current state and possibilities for the future for the Student Success Office. Key findings and conclusions show a lack of office wide relationships, inconsistent knowledge sharing, perceived silos and a desire for increased internal collaboration. Recommendations include reviewing the mission of the office, focusing on office-wide initiatives and training, creating frameworks for knowledge sharing and considering different team and project staffing models for increased collaboration and overall efficiency.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE: FOCUS AND FRAMING

In order to be efficient with time and resources, organizations must re-evaluate their work processes and revisit the overarching goals of the organization, including having a clear understanding of their aims and stakeholder needs (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004, p. 4). As financial resources at post-secondary institutions across Canada begin to diminish, it is imperative for student affairs departments within universities to foster internal relationships so as to encourage partnerships, collaboration and knowledge sharing amongst individuals with common goals.

At the University of Waterloo, a large Canadian post-secondary institution, organizational silos have become a topic of conversation amongst campus departments and academic units. In addition, internal silos have been noted within the Student Success Office (SSO), a student services department within the University (P. Charbonneau, personal communication[1], November 2013). As a newly developed department, the Student Success Office has seen significant growth in a short period of time, and with that growth, the current staffing structure and project management process may have allowed for duplication and inefficiencies within the office. For change to occur within the department, there must be increased opportunity for collaboration and partnerships within the Student Success Office, which has the potential to positively impact the level of service provided to students and campus partners.

When this inquiry began, I worked in the Student Success Office as the Coordinator, New Student Transition. In my role, I supported new university students and their families as they entered post-secondary education. In addition, I worked with other staff in the Student Success Office and from across campus with similar goals, as well as drew on resources from others to

---

[1] All personal communications in the report are used with permission.

provide timely and relevant information to students in their transition. As I completed my inquiry based on partnerships and collaboration, I acted as an internal researcher within my own department, allowing me to include personal research and observations as well as incorporate data and opinions provided by stakeholders, other staff within the office (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). This inquiry was a great opportunity to work with individuals within my workplace to assist with internal efficiencies and collaboration opportunities, which led towards fulfilling the overarching goals of the Student Success Office. As the research continued, I took on another role within the University, leaving the Student Success Office. This allowed me to then have an external view, and incorporate additional third person inquiry from my new perspective outside of the office.

Throughout my inquiry, the aim was to answer the following question: How can the Student Success Office strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office? I came to an understanding of this topic by asking the following sub questions:

1. What is the current relationship structure within the Student Success Office?

2. What is the current level of internal knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office?

3. How would focus on relationship building and partnership strengthen internal collaboration?

4. What would allow for increased relationship building within the office?

5. What strategies for internal collaboration and information sharing can be implemented to positively impact efficiency within the office?

Significance of the Inquiry

Understanding that the main purpose of higher education institutions, including the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo, is to holistically educate and support students, staff must continually look for opportunities to work with others and share best practices and assessment techniques (McMurray & Sorrells, 2007, p. 1219). Building these collaborative relationships must be everyone's responsibility instead of being left to senior administrators and department heads. By creating opportunities and communication channels for collaborative practice amongst staff who are working on similar projects, there is the opportunity to create meaningful new services and streamline existing programs, all while using limited resources more efficiently and effectively (P. Charbonneau, personal communication, October 2013). Having staff seek opportunities to collaborate with others, within their own areas or within the larger organization, lays the foundation for future co-operation and partnerships.

With the recent appointment of a new director of the Student Success Office and the need for the creation of a strategic plan within the office, the timing was right to dig deeper into the organization of the department and revisit relationships, shared knowledge and how the system works together. By approaching this topic through action research, involving stakeholders and members of the department, as well as having the support of the director and management team (Stringer, 2007, p. 43), I believe there is the opportunity to create significant change in the efficiency and partnerships within the office. By digging to the root of why things happen as they currently happen and providing a structure for alternate solutions, I believe that sustainability and continued growth and development within the department is possible.

Stakeholders who will benefit from a change in the way collaboration occurs within the Student Success Office include staff members, students, staff and faculty from across campus and senior administration. By focusing on relationship building and knowledge sharing within the office, a culture of staff collaboration will be fostered, encouraging staff to revisit why they do what they do, and seek assistance from those working with similar goals (McMurray & Sorrells, 2007, p. 1219). If this inquiry was not pursued within the Student Success Office, the department may miss opportunity to create efficiencies and increase effectiveness, therefore having challenges adjusting to the evolving needs of students. Without change, resources will be used ineffectively, and knowledge sharing will not occur, creating duplication of work in various aspects of the department (P. Charbonneau, personal communication, November 2013). This will result in lack of development and strategic thinking for the Student Success Office.

Organizational Context

The University of Waterloo is a post-secondary institution located in Waterloo, Ontario. As of 2013, the University of Waterloo has a student population of 35,000 and over 3,500 staff and faculty who support the learning and development of these students in more than 300 departments across campus (University of Waterloo, 2013). Structured with six faculties and centralized ancillary and support services, Waterloo is one of the fastest growing institutions in Canada, having been established in 1957 (University of Waterloo, 2013). With a changing student population, and further research highlighting the importance of the areas of student development and support within higher education, the University of Waterloo established a campus-wide Student Success Office in the fall of 2011 (Student Success Office, 2013).

Though the name 'Student Success Office' suggests all-encompassing responsibility, its goal is not to be the sole department responsible for ensuring students achieve success during their university experience. In fact, it was designed to continue to support campus initiatives to encourage student success – be it socially, personally or academically, with persistence and retention through to graduation. The mission of the Student Success Office is "to help students achieve success by fostering and supporting a fulfilling university experience [and] to empower every student to achieve success in learning and in life" (Student Success Office, 2013). As the office was developed within a short time period, there is a lack of understanding among staff, students and campus partners regarding the office's mission (C. Read, personal communication, September 2013). With the Student Success Office pressured to deliver programs and results from the onset of the department, programs and services may have been created with haste, with collaboration and partnerships lacking both internally and externally. This lack of collaboration and communication has resulted in duplication of services and missed opportunity for partnership (P. Charbonneau, personal communication, October 2013).

Led by a Director, the Student Success Office consists of four overall teams. The approximately 45 employees within the Student Success Office cover a wide variety of subject areas, as seen in the organizational chart in Appendix A.   Each area within the office is broken down into further teams, with the structure at the onset of this research as follows: Student Experience includes New Student Transition, Student Development and International Student Experience; Learning Services includes the Success Coaches; Innovation includes Velocity; and the Outreach and Engagement and Operations teams (Student Success Office, 2013). Adaptations to this staffing model have occurred over the course of this inquiry, with the Student

Experience and Learning Services teams merging, under one assistant director (Appendix B).

The staff structure of the office supports projects within these smaller teams, where each group

has different goals, mandates, and differing, yet often overlapping, partners, external to the

office. The director of the Student Success Office reports to the Associate Provost, Students,

who manages all student services and ancillary services including Housing and Residences,

Retail Services and Athletics (Appendix C). The Associate Provost, Students reports to the

Vice-President, Academic and Provost, who works directly with the President of the University

of Waterloo. Prominently positioned within the structure of the University of Waterloo, the

director of the Student Success Office, the sponsor of my inquiry, is the direct connection to

senior administration and other departments university-wide.

By refocusing on the structure within the Student Success Office, as well as creating

opportunities for relationship building and knowledge sharing amongst employees, the

opportunity exists for increased internal collaboration. These strengthened partnerships will lead

to increased efficiency within the department, allowing for further development, targeted

programming, resource savings, and a shift in how services are delivered.

Systems Analysis of the Inquiry

To understand the system that surrounds the Student Success Office, one must consider

the integration of numerous components or elements working for a common goal (Senge, 2006).

The ability to see and understand all the moving parts is called systems thinking, "a discipline for

seeing wholes… a framework for seeing interrelationships... for seeing patterns of change"

(Senge, 2006, p. 68). Within large educational institutions, systems thinking can be applied to

the challenge of "silos," which are a common occurrence (Fox, 2010, p. 50). Stemming from a

lack of communication and collaboration between departments on university campuses, silos can be barriers to the overall success and efficiency of the institution. Often these silos are perpetuated by individuals or departments who are not system thinkers (Senge, 2006, p. 7), though they are all working independently for the common good of the students. By fostering collaboration and partnerships both within and across departments, strides can be made to reduce silos within the system as much as possible, thereby creating intentional and streamlined learning and development supports for students.

Just as with the whole University, silos occur within the Student Success Office, as "interrelated and interdependent parts" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012) of the system, different teams within the office do not always collaborate and communicate effectively. Bolman and Deal describe a framework, models of ways that things occur within an organization, which helps individuals understand and analyze systems (2003). The four frames, structural, human resources, political and symbolic, each relate to "a set of ideas or assumptions you carry in your head" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, Ch 1, para 2). The system within the Student Success Office can be viewed using this framework, especially through the structural, human resources and political frames. The structural and human resources frames are often connected within the Student Success Office as structured roles and defined teams in the office impact the feeling of power, individual ownership of projects and relationships or lack thereof that are found amongst staff. In a similar manner, the office can be seen through the political lens when considering the relationship with other areas on campus, and the struggle for power over various initiatives pertaining to student success. By understanding how the system currently functions and

evaluating strengths and areas of weakness, there exists opportunity to implement positive change.

In order for change to occur within the Student Success Office and the overall system, there is need for "a holistic framework that encourages inquiry into a range of significant issues: people, power, structure, and symbols [and] passionate, unwavering commitment to principle, combined with flexibility in understanding and responding to events" (Bolman & Deal, 2003, Ch 1, para 16). This will allow all those involved in the change to have a holistic, system wide view on each situation and understand the overall impact of actions taken and change occurring within the office.

The Student Success Office focuses on several areas of holistic student success. The complete system of the Student Success Office includes all internal teams, external influencers and partners, and a wide scope of stakeholders, including students, the primary client base for the office.
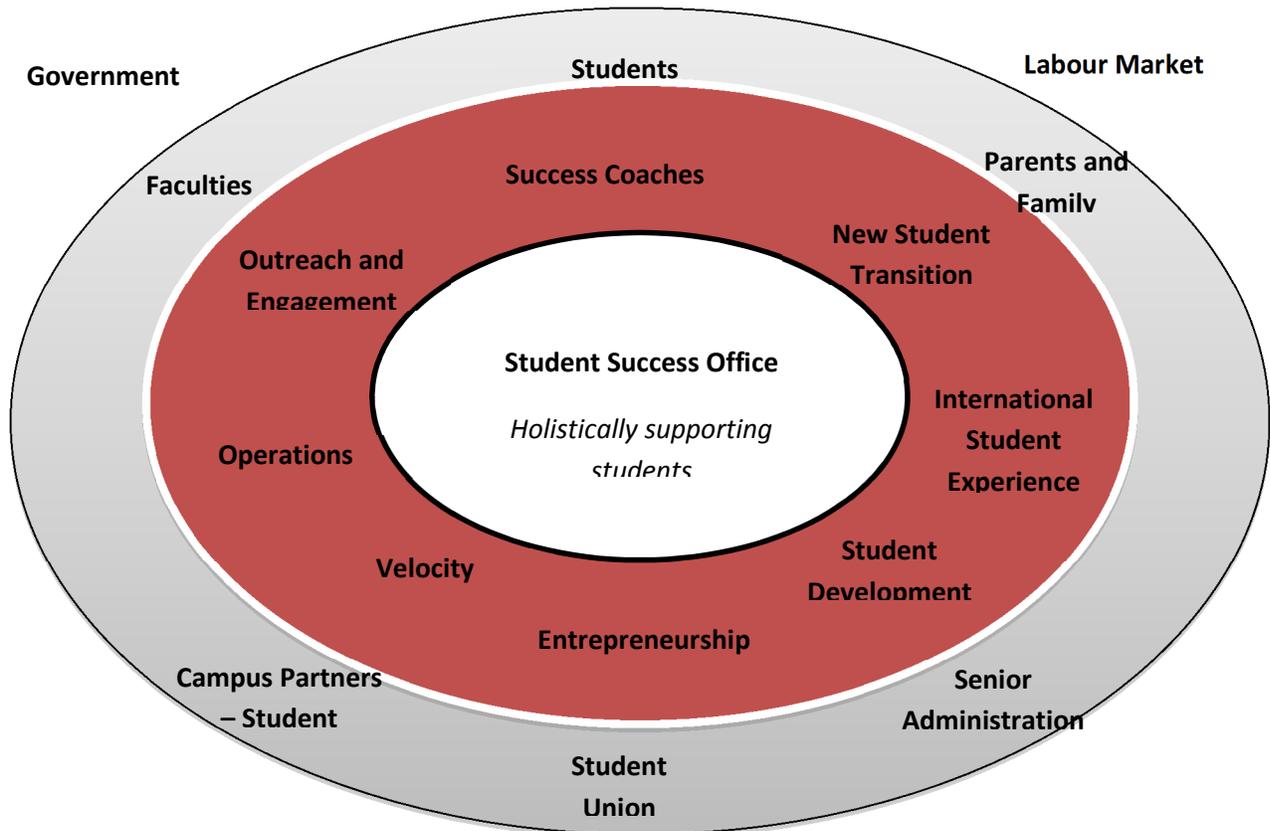
Figure 1: *Student Success Office Internal and External Systems*

Various groups are stakeholders in this systems inquiry including the internal system within the office, primarily staff – front line staff, managers and directors, and the external system. These external stakeholders, as demonstrated within the outer circle in Figure 1, include students, the primary client for the Student Success Office; the six faculties that comprise the University of Waterloo – Applied Health Sciences, Arts, Engineering, Environment, Math and Science, including their staff and faculty members; other student services campus partners including but not limited to Housing and Residences, Athletics, Counselling Services and Health Services; and senior administration on campus, including the Associate Provost, Students, the Vice-President, Academic and Provost and the President of the University of Waterloo, who oversee operational priorities and budgets. In addition, other external stakeholders include the

student unions on campus, with the Federation of Students representing all undergraduates and the Graduate Students Association representing the graduate student population; and parents and family members of our students, who the Student Success Office view as partners and supporters in their student's success. Outside of the second circle exists additional external stakeholders whose impact on the Student Success Office and the University of Waterloo are significant, yet distinctly different than daily operations. These partners include the provincial and federal government, who regulate higher education within Canada, as well as the labour market which influences the need for specialized education and training for students looking to enter the workforce (University of Waterloo, 2013). These individuals and groups all play a role in the operations and success of the office as they are both recipients and investors in all elements of the department. By creating change within the internal system of the Student Success Office, all external system partners will be impacted (Senge, 2006). Throughout the inquiry it was essential to continually focus both internally and externally to ensure that all stakeholders' voices are heard and that everyone will be able to play a role in creating this change.

Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the creation of the Student Success Office, and the growth and challenges it has faced since its inception. As noted, there are multiple stakeholders both within and external to the office who would benefit from increasing partnerships and collaborative practice within the office. In the following chapter, I will look to current literature to further understand partnerships, collaboration, and the impact of relationship building and knowledge sharing within an organization. Following that, the chapters will outline the research I undertook, as well as outline findings, conclusions and recommendations for the Student Success Office.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides academic literature support for the inquiry question: how can the Student Success Office strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office? This literature review will center on two significant areas of focus within this inquiry – partnership elements and collaboration. Further literature analysis within each of these topic areas will focus on components of partnership and collaboration as they relate to the Student Success Office.

Partnerships Elements

The initial topic of research within this inquiry is partnership and more specifically, elements of successful partnerships amongst staff members within an organization. This section focuses on information sharing, including knowledge and information transfer, and internal communication; and internal relationship building, including creating a culture of trust and strengthening partnerships through ongoing collaboration**.**

Information sharing

This inquiry is centered on internal communication and connections, and the impact they have on knowledge and resource sharing within the Student Success Office. As Reddy and McCarthy (2006) stated, "most best practice programmes combine two key elements: explicit knowledge such as best practices databases (connecting people with information), and methods for sharing tacit knowledge" (p. 595). By understanding partnerships and supporting knowledge acquisition and transfer within relationships, change has the potential "to lead to better performance because of enhanced cohesion, decision making and coordination" (Lauring & Selmer, 2012, p. 89).

Knowledge and information transfer

While information is defined as "data put into a context" (Chaboyer & Blake, 2008), knowledge is considered to be "information in action" (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011, p. 22), where the receiver is able to interpret the information and take steps to act on it. In a similar way, information sharing means transmitting the information, while knowledge transfer is "about creating and managing the processes to get the right knowledge to the right people at the right time and help people share and act on information to improve organizational performance" (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011, p. 22). It is this idea of purposeful dissemination and ability to act that is important to understand when looking at communication habits within an organization.

When considering information and knowledge available within an organization and the flow of these elements, "it is important to know how knowledge is communicated to people and who receives it" (Lee, 2010, p. 264). Understanding the available knowledge held by individuals and how knowledge and information sharing works within the organization are imperative components to forming a full picture of information pathways within an organization. Patrick and Dotsika (2007) noted that knowledge sharing and internal collaboration add significant value to an organization, as they allow for cohesion and overall focus on goal attainment. Similarly, "organisations which can make full use of their collective knowledge and expertise could be expected to be more efficient, effective and creative" (Lauring & Selmer, 2012, p. 89). When opportunities for sharing information and knowledge are missed, the overall effectiveness of the organization decreases because additional resources are now required to be invested to ensure the correct information is shared. In its quest for efficiency and increased collaboration amongst staff, the Student Success Office can make use of literature on creating an open environment as

an avenue to achieve their goals through a continued focus on methods of information sharing

amongst staff members (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Mazzei, 2010; Patrick & Dotsika, 2007). This

open environment, created through building strong internal relationships based on trust and

mutual respect, would allow for increased information sharing and would encouraging ongoing

discussion amongst staff.

Research supports the use of various systems and databases to share existing information

and best practices amongst staff (Patrick & Dotsika, 2007). "In order to become a source of

knowledge and learning, there is a need to establish a knowledge centre. The challenge is not just

to create new knowledge as a vast amount of highly valuable knowledge already exists" (Reddy

& McCarthy, 2006, p. 595). Focusing on the need for both system and employee engagement in

transferring knowledge, they noted:

> Best practice resources require to be actively promoted, otherwise one may end up with
> databases and people that are under-used and not fulfilling their potential. One should
> resist the temptation to focus on explicit knowledge; databases of best practices are
> insufficient. Databases point to examples and people, but it is through people that deep
> knowledge is transferred. (p. 594)

It is imperative to have staff members share their ideas, approach and knowledge of meaningful

and impactful ways of performing tasks. Through the sharing of each individual's personal

knowledge of best practices, the Student Success Office has the opportunity to become more

efficient in service delivery. Furthermore, they found that "[m]uch of best practice knowledge is

tacit – held in people's heads and not always easy to document" (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006, p.

595). Though incorporating systems and structure into information sharing is important, it is the

relationships and personal contact amongst individuals that have the greatest impact on the

successful transfer of knowledge (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011). This research can be used within the

Student Success Office, as "the best way of sharing best practices is 'on the job' and so

communities and personal contact with others who have used the best practice is key" (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006, p. 595). When open lines of internal communication exist amongst members of an organization, sharing knowledge and information can be a natural occurrence through conversations amongst individuals that happen naturally and on a regular basis. This allows for the transfer of knowledge, best practices and general information, which in turn would create efficiencies in how staff members within the Student Success Office perform tasks and work towards goals.

Internal communication

"Internal communication is generally defined as the communication flow among people within the boundaries of an organization" (Mazzei, 2010, p. 221). This flow of information and communication occurs most commonly when partnerships or opportunities for relationship formation exist within an organization. Lee (2010) agrees, noting "there are three characteristics that are the motives to promote the sharing of knowledge: features of the organizational structure, organizational culture and organizational interaction" (264). The support of leadership, positive office culture and the participation and investment of staff are integral in creating an environment where internal communication channels develop (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Mazzei, 2010; Reddy & McCarthy, 2006). In successful organizations, there must be a "strong awareness of how intangible resources, such as knowledge and employee attitudes, contribute to the company's success [in attaining their goals]. Consequently, [successful organizations] seek to promote active communication behaviours among employees" (Mazzei, 2010, p. 221) when information is shared openly amongst individuals, on a regular basis, with

strong internal communication channels amongst team members. Creating the aforementioned

culture of communication and information sharing is vital, as Lee (2010) stated:

> An organization with high cohesiveness can encourage exchange of internal resources
> and sharing of knowledge. Hence, a company can affect individual–group emotional
> connection through organizational culture and company–member interaction modes to
> ensure good knowledge sharing in the organization. (pp. 268-269)

This culture of information sharing aids in the overall goal attainment or work done towards the

mission of the organization, as staff members come together working collaboratively on

supporting that mission.

The literature also noted that diversity and available technology significantly impact

internal knowledge sharing practices (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Patrick & Dotzika, 2007; Reddy

& McCarthy, 2006). "Diversity related to internationalisation had more positive associations

with group knowledge sharing" (Lauring & Selmer, 2012, p. 98), as individuals from different

backgrounds, with experiences from various cultures and settings, are able to come together and

share their knowledge with one another. Though diversity within a team is integral to knowledge

sharing, it will not occur without strong communication skills, an open culture and a process

(Lauring & Selmer, 2012). O'Dell and Hubert (2011) agree, stating that "to cultivate a

knowledge sharing culture….you focus on engaging, communicating with, and rewarding people

to build the program and the culture" (p. 23). Creating an overall supportive environment within

an organization will allow for knowledge sharing to take place naturally.

The other contributing factor is technology (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Reddy &

McCarthy, 2006), though there are both positive and negative elements relating to the use of

technology for knowledge sharing. When discussing the positives and drawbacks of

implementing technological solutions, Patrick and Dotzika (2007) found that:

These systems provide greater amounts of information, a "glut" to some extent, that overwhelms users and inhibits its use and therein its value. This hampers the productivity of [staff] and their ability to generate the knowledge required to provide necessary "value-added" for an organisation to remain competitive. (p. 396)

It is therefore imperative to understand the needs of the employees, as well as their comfort level, how the culture is fostered, and the potential benefits to a technological approach to information sharing and communication when considering how best to transfer information internally within an organization. Additionally, when looking at the flow of information and knowledge within an organization, it is important to create a balanced environment where individuals are able to seek out information rather than it always being pushed to them, as to regulate the amount of information received (Patrick & Dotzika, 2007). In order to create a balance of approaches that best suit everyone's needs and comfort levels, organizations must consider effective methods of delivering information to staff as to not inundate them with information, yet provide meaningful and relevant information in a timely manner.

Management teams must take an active role in promoting, fostering and facilitating opportunities and structure for internal knowledge transfers (O'Dell & Hubert, 2011). Mazzei (2010) found that management "must clarify which communication behaviours to activate, which groups of employees are supposed to be active or passive, and what managerial actions are more likely to promote active communication behaviours" (p. 231). In order to achieve success and create a sustainable model of communication, this "might entail a work-flow analysis involving employees and encouraging them to initiate communication behaviours that improve organizational processes" (Mazzei, 2010, p. 231).

Additionally, training and development must be woven into organizational culture, especially in times of change, when focusing on increasing organizational efficiency (Hogvold

Olsen & Stensaker, 2013; Jayakumar & Sulthan, 2014)   Research has also found that "the role of training has broadened from primarily planning and implementing training events to include greater emphasis on engaging in complex processes deeply embedded in the organization" (Wright, 2003, p. 14), noting that correlations have been found between organizations with training programs and their positive performance. Training is seen by participating staff as most successful when it is seen as an effective method of learning, with value associated to the implementation of training material into the workplace. Training must look at the organization as a whole, understanding the context in which information is shared with the right individuals, and focusing on "organizational learning for continuous improvement" (Wright, 2003, p. 14). In looking at individual and organizational learning, participating in training programs within an organization "has positive impact on [the] reflection, learning and behavior" (Rezazadeh Bahadoran, Khosravi Babadadi & Tountab Haghighi, 2011, p. 252) of each staff member. The benefits of a structured and assessed training program must be reviewed in order to understand the impact that it would have on the relationships, knowledge sharing and communication occurring within the Student Success Office.

By understanding how staff communicate with one another, the positive effects that relationships have on communication and the culture of communication and knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office (Lee, 2010; O'Dell & Hubert, 2011), as well as the positive impact of structured training programs, there exists the opportunity "to disseminate information at all levels, to support active collaboration, project-building and common results" (Mazzei, 2010, p. 228). This dissemination of information occurs more naturally when internal partnerships and relationships are present and cultivated.

Internal relationship building

When considering the impact of relationship building and management within the Student Success Office, further discussion must be had regarding current and potential partnerships within the office. While reviewing current reporting structure and existing partnerships and relationships amongst staff, gaps or areas of strength may be identified which could allow for possible areas of focus or additional learning to occur. Within these relationships, one must focus on the impact of trust amongst employees, as "trust is an important construct in the research of inter-organizational relationships and … is a major factor in facilitating effective cooperation" (Lai, Chen, Chui & Pai, 2011, p. 66). In addition, it is imperative to understand the relationships amongst employees, as "it will not do any good if the team you are collaborating with is not prepared to share information and work together" (Hastings, 2009, p. 7). This balance of trust and strengthened partnerships through ongoing collaboration lead to positive working environments where relationships are further developed and fostered.

Culture of trust

"Interpersonal relationships between coworkers are among the most inevitable aspects of an organization" (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012, p. 21). Understanding organizational cultures, the actions, values and assumptions by which an organization functions (Linnenluecke & Griffiths, 2010) is integral when looking at the level of trust that currently exists, and the impact of staff perceptions of that culture. ``The creation of a collaborative environment includes…encouraging participation, showing concern for employees…and adopting an organizational structure that facilitates the flow of communications, social networking, and

cross-functional interactions`` (Casimir, Lee & Loon, 2012, p. 748). The value of creating a

culture open to creating and fostering relationships is further supported within Heerman's (2001)

research:

> Organizations that consistently excel typically have one thing in common. They operate
> with the clear understanding that NOTHING can ever powerfully occur organizationally
> without partnership. Deep connection, relationship and belonging are prized by leaders
> of these organizations. These leaders place high value on creating spirit-filled work
> environments where they and their employees forge reinforcing partnerships as a way of
> doing business" (p. 56, author's emphasis).

This idea of an organization fostering connections, relationships and belongings is integral when

considering what makes a supportive environment for staff (Casimir, Lee & Loon, 2012; Chen &

Chen, 2009; Dirks & Ferrin, 2001). Focusing on these requirements, the Student Success Office

can look to understand how to create a culture where these connections can grow and thrive.

Fostering a culture of trust is vital in respect to positive relationship building

amongst staff in an organization (Chen & Chen, 2009; Dietrich et al., 2010; Lee, 2010). This is

especially true when individuals from different teams within an organization work together,

combining various relationships, partnerships and approaches to problem solving. "Trust is a

particularly crucial issue for [team] success because numerous project tasks are interdependent,

making team members reliant on the functional expertise of their partners" (Chen & Chen, 2009,

p. 11172). Similarly, Linnenluecke and Griffiths (2010) and Dirks and Ferrin (2001) both found

that trust in and commitment to the organization impacted the staff engagement and relationships

within a workplace. Further to this, it has been found that ``emotions influence knowledge

sharing behavior….trust between colleagues influences their knowledge sharing behavior and

performance`` (Casimir, Lee & Loon, 2012, p. 748). Additionally, when considering the trust

formation with new teams"[t]he challenge to [team members] is initially to encourage the

development of trust and then to nurture trust throughout the various phases of the team lifecycle. Without trust, [team] members will not willingly share resources with teammates" (Chen & Chen, 2009, p. 11173). While studying past research relating to trust within organizations, Dirks & Ferrin (2001) compared studies to understand how trust impacted organizations. They agreed that a general baseline of trust and mutual respect must be present with all staff within an organization, though after that general level "while increases in trust are likely to have a direct positive impact in weak situations, they will only have a contingent impact in midrange situations and will have no impact in strong situations" (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001, p. 463). This is important to understand, in order to assess the emphasis on trust building required in each organization.

When focusing on trusting relationships within an organization, one must consider all stakeholders, including all employees and their relationships with one another. Lee (2010) notes that:

> Every member in an organization has different relationships and interactions with others. Mutual relationships can be maintained more transparently if trust is established with benign elements on the basis of inter-organizational partnerships. This is helpful to create constructive consensus, increase the acceptance of the other party's behaviour, solve problems via consultation and functional conflicts, and reduce conflicts. (p. 265)

There is an opportunity to decrease challenges and resistance simply by focusing on trust and transparency, which combine to create open information sharing within organizations. Focusing on these elements can create a stronger working environment. Chen and Chen's (2009) research found that trust "[is a] mutual benefit derived from the cooperative relationship amongst team members…can reduce team risk and uncertainty… is based on goodwill or personal friendships… [and] can intensify team bonds" (p. 11174). This culture of trust can be created

through an open and welcoming environment, where staff feel invested and involved in goals and decisions.

Further to stating that an organization is an environment of relationship building and trust, it is important to foster and support these elements within an organization from all levels. "Recognition promotes partnership and team spirit, heightened optimism, energy, joy and passion for work. It nurtures purposeful, committed action in the face of risk" (Heerman, 2001, p. 56). Recognition within an organization entails recognizing and celebrating the achievements of an individual, a team or the organization as a whole, and can be incorporated into the culture and common practices within any workplace (Hastings, 2009; Heerman, 2001). By focusing on supportive elements in the environment, additional opportunities for ongoing partnerships will arise as collaboration increases.

Strengthening partnerships through ongoing collaboration

Productive partnerships occur within organizations "[i]f the staff at an organization is prepared to share information, work together on projects (and this sometimes means giving up personal credit for shared credit), and truly collaborate on projects together" (Hastings, 2009, p. 7). Lauring & Selmer (2012) and Lee (2010) both agree, noting that these elements of trust, cohesion and information sharing are what lead to collaborative practices amongst team mates. These productive partnerships allow for strengthened relationships and it has been found that "[i]n general, mutual trust, mutual respect, mutual loyalty and mutual obligation are higher between members who have better relationships in an organization" (Lee, 2010, p. 265).

These strong connections and, therefore, opportunities for collaboration amongst staff also align with the significant impact of knowledge sharing amongst individuals. "Acquiring

important knowledge and skills within the organization through the establishment of relationships among members is helpful not only in enforcing collaboration but also in speeding up the accumulation of knowledge … for the organization" (Lee, 2010, p 265). This knowledge sharing amongst partners needs to be tied to shared goals, and "[e]ngaging in collaboration, then, requires only a couple of people and a plan to work on something of value." (Hastings, 2009, p. 7).

In addition to creating an environment for relationship building, it is also important to look at how these collaborative relationships are maintained, as "coworker relational maintenance behaviors are enacted through communication and may be engaged in to fulfill workers' interpersonal needs" (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012, p. 22). In an attempt to characterize co-worker relationship maintenance strategies, Madlock & Booth-Butterfield (2012) looked at employee's organizational commitment, job satisfaction, communication satisfaction, work alienation and relational maintenance strategies between coworkers. Results from this study found that employees who sustained relationships though conflict management skills, sharing tasks and being positive were more likely to have organizational commitment and those who shared tasks with one another were most likely to feel that there was open communication within the organization (Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). In similar research, Casimir, Lee and Loon (2012) found that staff members' commitment to the organization and willingness to share knowledge were directly impacted by the level of trust they felt with the organization and their colleagues, and the resulting partnerships. While Madlock & Booth-Butterfield (2012) noted that the "relational maintenance behaviors appear to parallel the interpersonal needs for inclusion, affection and control" (p. 39), Casimir, Lee and Loon (2012) focused on the impact

that the overall organizational culture had on fostering and maintaining these internal

relationships. Overall, both noted that strengthened relationships allow for increased

collaboration amongst staff, as they are aligned with the vision and goals of their organization,

and are able to work alongside one another.

Lee (2010) focused on the impact that an individual's relationships – with their

supervisor, their colleagues, and the organization – has on their knowledge sharing. Data was

gathered through surveys of individual's relationships, interactions and how they currently

shared information with others. The study findings show that "when an employee has a better

interpersonal relationships in the organization and interacts better with the organization,

supervisor and colleague, the level of his/her knowledge sharing in higher" (Lee, 2010, p. 268).

Similar to Madlock and Booth-Butterfield and Casmir, Lee and Loon, Lee's results noted that the

strength and positivity of relationships are directly proportional to ongoing partnerships and

collaboration within an organization. By focusing on relationships within the Student Success

Office, opportunity exists by which to create an environment where collaboration occurs as a by-

product.

Collaboration

The second significant element of this inquiry is collaboration and the benefits of

collaboration. The following sections focus on team organization, including cross-functional

teams, and the impact of new collaborative partnerships within an organization.

Team organization

Daspit, Tillman, Boyd and Mckee (2013) stated that an "internal team environment

influences effectiveness through shared leadership and cohesion" (p. 34). This section of the

literature review explores the implications of project team organization in relation to relationships and project collaboration. While the Student Success Office is currently structured with natural, hierarchical teams, with individuals responsible for the same function working together, other potential organizational structures include project teams or cross-functional teams (Westcott & Duffy, 2014). "In traditional hierarchical organizations, each functional area works in isolation on their part of the process…conversely, a cross-functional team brings together an array of specialists who jointly and simultaneously make…decisions" (Bishop, 1999, p. 6). Organizational efficiency, motivation, output and confidence have all been measured higher when reorganization occurs to include cross-functional teams, as the flow of communication is often a barrier within hierarchical structures with information being passed linearly up and down the staffing model (Bishop, 1999). These studies provide support to revisit the current structure and process for project team organization within the Student Success Office, with an emphasis on the fact that organizations have seen increases in collaboration with the implementation of cross-functional teams (Bishop, 1999; Daspit et al, 2013; Proehl, 1997).

Cross-functional teams

Cross-functional teams are created when "individuals from various functional areas… come together to obtain a specific goal" (Daspit et al., 2013, p. 35). When considering organizational efficiencies and collaboration, "cross-functional teams play a potentially important part in the innovation process enabling knowledge sharing, the development of trust and overcoming…organizational barriers" (Love & Roper, 2009, p. 192). It has also been found that "the use of cross-functional teams is a common practice as managers find ways to create a more responsive [organization]" (Daspit et al., 2013, p. 34).

Innovation is directly impacted by the presence of cross-functional teams, who have the ability to amalgamate a wide variety of experiences and expertise (Daspit et al., 2013; Love & Roper, 2009). In addition to each team member's direct input, they also bring with them their personal contacts and networks to whom the team may reach out, extending the overall knowledge base within the team (Dietrich, Eskerod, Dalcher & Sandhawalia, 2010; Proehl, 1997). Through their structure of a cross-section of individuals, cross-functional teams pull in all individual team members' ideas and approaches to achieving goals, and allow for structured information and knowledge sharing amongst individuals working towards a common goal with a common purpose.

Conversely, Love and Roper (2009) found that though many positives come from cross-function teams, "cross-functional teamworking is not universally good, and implemented wrongly can actually have a negative impact on innovation output" (p. 200). They suggested that cross-functional teams work best when innovating new products or services, and then seek expertise from various areas on delivery. Research also indicates that cross-functional teams are most successful when composed of diverse individuals, working together on a defined goal (Daspit et al., 2013; Dietrich et al., 2010). It has been found that cross-functional teams are not as successful when focusing on a current practice or "a focused, single disciple activity" (Love & Roper, 2009, p. 201), as it is more challenging to pull in various opinions and perspectives relating to current practices. In order to be most successful, cross-functional teams must be fully integrated and understood within the context of the organization, as "the potential impact on innovation of cross-functional teams may be lost if managers try to implement new systems in one part of the organization without understanding the complementarities involved elsewhere"

(Love & Roper, 2009, p. 201). Proehl (1997) agrees, noting as well that cross-functional team success stems from the support and guidance of executives and leaders within the organization when they look at the larger picture.

Other challenges often faced by cross-functional teams are physical location and time constraints (Dietrich et al., 2010; Hastings, 2009; Proehl, 1997). As teamwork and collaborative space are not always available, nor appropriate time, there are other opportunities for facilitating this partnership, including the use of technology. Hastings (2009) notes:

> Collaboration can happen with everyone working together at the same time—synchronous collaboration—or in stages, with some people working at different times—asynchronous collaboration. Technology helps with asynchronous work—forums and message boards are great ways to communicate when people are working at different times of the day, due to either time zone or scheduling issues. Tools like instant messaging, Web conferencing, and whiteboard sharing are more appropriate for synchronous work, as they allow fast communication for participants in the same virtual location. (p. 7)

In order to effectively manage physical space and time restrictions, understanding the use and limitations of these technologically supported tools is essential for productive information sharing and collaboration amongst individuals on cross-functional teams (Dietrich et al., 2010; Proehl, 1997).

Looking at tools that are beneficial and allow for desired productivity and results within an organization and its structured teams is imperative, as "[t]he act of collaborating does not need to be based on technology to be effective, and even technological solutions won't work if a culture of sharing and working together is not in place to begin with" (Hastings, 2009, p. 7). In addition, the culture of trust within the organization must be present for cross-functional team members to truly come together and collaborate on projects (Proehl, 1997). This aligns with the

research stating that the base of relationships and an open environment to foster partnerships

must exist within an organization in order for positive outcomes and future growth to occur.

New collaborative partnerships

In researching collaboration amongst teams, Dietrich et al. (2010) noted that:

Collaboration is a recursive process where people or organizations work together in an intersection of common goals by sharing knowledge, learning and building consensus. In collaboration processes, individuals or organizations create relationships….Relationships in which organizations operate in truly collaborative mode to achieve a common goal or gain mutual benefits…are generally characterized by trust and commitment. (p. 60)

Creating and fostering a work environment built on trust and staff commitment will allow for

overall organizational success.

"Rarely prioritized, resourced and commended…intra-organisational collaboration calls

into question existing ways of working, of decision making, and demands an explicit

examination of the organisational structure" (Diamond & Rush, 2012, p. 289). One must be

prepared for general interruption as a new partnership format is introduced, so as to allow

individuals to settle into their new roles, understanding the opportunities for collaboration that

surround them (Diamond & Rush, 2012; Proehl, 1997). Although this interruption may feel

uncomfortable, it is important for the leaders within the Student Success to foster partnerships

and internal collaboration as to create opportunities for growth and efficiency within the office.

When working with a team it is imperative to encourage strong relationships, which lead

to team cohesion, as these relationships will form the backbone of the team and the foundation

for further relationships. "If the internal dynamics of the team do not support collaborative

interactions among members, then the full potential of the team is not recognized" (Daspit et al.,

2013, p. 35). Examples of this team cohesion may include team building activities, values and

mission-creation activities, understanding the experiences and skills of other team members, and establishing a clear support network.

In pulling together individuals from a cross section of areas to work together, "although individuals represent various functional areas, when perceptions of shared purpose, social support, and voice exist, members are more likely to participate in activities to benefit the team" (Daspit et al., 2013, p. 37). Within the Student Success Office, an environment where individuals are able to identify that they are working together towards a common goal must be fostered in order to achieve collaborative partnerships. This environment would include transparent, open communication, trust and respect, and strong internal relationships.

In addition to creating strong relationships within teams, Ghobadi and Dambra (2013) stated that competition within a cross-functional team can have either a positive or negative impact on the team's results and success, depending on if the competition was for tangible or intangible resources. It was found that competition for tangible resources often led to greater communication amongst team members, while competition for intangible items, including power and attention, often led to a lack of team work (Ghobadi & Dambra, 2013). It is imperative to set up a positive environment within a team in order to discourage negative competition. By doing so, the Student Success Office facilitates opportunity for individuals to come together, focusing on working towards a shared vision.

Chapter Summary

Focused on understanding the literature on partnership and collaboration, this chapter outlined the impact of information sharing, communication, relationship building, trust and teamwork. Creating open lines of communication where information can be shared amongst

members of an organization is vital, and it is often through this open communication that

additional relationships are formed. Additionally, collaboration and partnerships are impacted

by the culture of the organization, and creating a culture based on trust, open to fostering

collaborative practice, is essential for successful organizations. This research can be applied in

many organizations, and will be impactful in creating positive change within the Student Success

Office. The following chapter looks at the inquiry questions and approach, as well as provides an

overview of the research methods and conduct. Finally, the chapter outlines the various ethical

considerations for carrying out this research.

CHAPTER THREE: INQUIRY APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the action research inquiry I undertook to answer the overall research question: how can the Student Success Office strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office. It describes the inquiry approach, research participants, data collection methods, how the study was conducted and provides an overview of the ethical considerations of this research.

Inquiry Approach

The inquiry research methodology used for this project was action research, "a systematic approach to investigation that enables people to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday lives" (Stringer, 2007, p. 1). This methodology differs from other approaches in that it provides a holistic, collaborative, research in action approach to problem solving. Staff within the Student Success Office participated in the research and will participate in the implementation of the results as they are significant stakeholders in the overall success of the office (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012). Based on improving current practice (Glesne, 2011), action research creates buy-in and ownership amongst stakeholders as they are active participants in the research process and care about the findings and results, which leads to sustainable organizational change (Stringer, 2007). Additionally, this pragmatic approach has an appreciative stance, which is researching change that is occurring within a system, focusing on what is currently working within the office and "envisioning 'what could be'" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012, p. 47). This research took place in the readiness for change cycle of the Action Research Engagement (ARE) model, focused on the context and purpose, looking, thinking and acting (Rowe, Graf, Agger-Gupta, Piggot-Irvine & Harris, 2013). Based within the first cycle of the ARE model, "Readiness for Change", time is spent understanding the organization, engaging

stakeholders, reflecting on the data collected and evaluating recommendations for the future.

From this first cycle there exists a transition to the "Change Action" cycle, where action plans

are created from the recommendation and change is adapted and evaluated by the organization

(Rowe et al., 2013). By working closely with the director and leadership team within the Student

Success Office, and including all staff in the research methods, action research and future change

is possible. Choosing action research as a methodology was integral to the overall success of this

research, as the methodology allows for collaboration and partnership, the topic of the research,

to occur throughout the research process (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012).

An approach of action research fits into the culture of learning and development within

the Student Success Office. The combination of the acceptance of research and development by

leaders within the office, along with organizational changes that have occurred recently placing

new individuals in leadership roles made this an opportune time for research and organizational

change. Supported by members of the office, internal action research allowed for relationship

building, knowledge sharing, ownership and overall positive development of the office (Coghlan

& Brannick, 2012). By nature of the process and hosting qualitative conversations through

which individuals were encouraged to consider these topics, opportunity existed to put into

action these themes of research, which will aid in the long-term sustainability of this

organizational change (Stringer, 2007).

In this primarily qualitative research, which consisted of descriptions of individual's

perspectives, data was collected, with some supplementary quantitative questions, eliciting

numeric responses to direct questions (Glesne, 2011). This combination of qualitative and

quantitative data is considered mixed-methods, where the qualitative data collected is considered

"to be supplementary to the dominant mode [qualitative] of gathering data" (Glesne, 2011, p.

14). The methods by which this research took place included an electronic survey and an

interview matrix. This multi-method approach allowed me to gain an understanding of multiple

perspectives, seeing themes and commonalities which were then translated to recommendations

and tangible action items (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012). The quantitative data gathered through

the survey gave an understanding of current feelings amongst staff related to their internal

relationships and the levels of collaboration that occurred. The remaining majority of the

questions within the survey and in the interview matrix were qualitative. They allowed for

current stories and perspectives to be shared as well as discovery of possibilities for increasing

partnership, collaboration and communication going forward.

Project Participants

The research participants within this project were staff members within the Student

Success Office at the University of Waterloo, including coordinators and managers, leading to an

approximate potential participant pool of 30 individuals. Excluded from participation were short

term contract staff, student staff and volunteers. These criteria were put in place in order to

focus on those staff who must look to build relationships and engage in knowledge sharing to be

successful in their positions. As these criteria excluded anyone over whom I have or had

influence, with individuals all being my peers or above, there was not organizational power over

participants to consider.

As the criteria noted that all participants would be from within the Student Success

Office, with the attribute of being full time staff members, selection of participants was done

through purposive sampling, "consciously select[ing] people on the basis of a particular set of

attributes" (Stringer, 2007, p. 43), so as to represent the cross-section of staff within the office (Sage Publications & Lavrakas, 2008).

In order to complete this study an informational email was sent to all eligible staff members within the Student Success Office. This email included an outline of the research, the methods and timeline, the impact of the results within the office, an invitation to participate and an opportunity to ask questions (Appendix D). There was also clear wording that participation was optional and that participants could choose to withdraw at any time. Both the survey and interview matrix were open to all participants who meet the full time staff criteria, and all other staff received communication in order to be aware of the research that was occurring within the office. For the online survey, the first research method, a target response of 75% of staff was set and a true response rate of 63% occurred, which allowed me to gather a wide variety of perspectives from staff members.

The second research method, an interview matrix, is most easily administered with multiples of four participants, and a selection plan was put into place for determining participants. It was noted that purposive selection may occur with participants to ensure that an equal number of representation from each smaller team within the department were present, with a goal of 16 participants. When individuals responded regarding their attendance, 12 decided to participate, representing all teams within the Student Success Office. As such, purposive selection did not occur.

In addition to the research participants, other individuals involved in this research included my inquiry team. The inquiry team included my sponsor, the Director of the Student Success office, as knowledge expert; two assistant directors within the Student Success Office,

who will also play a significant role in the success and further implementation of the research recommendations; a current MA Leadership student from my cohort, who supported my research methods; and my academic supervisor, for academic guidance. All members of the inquiry team participated in a confidentiality and team agreement processes (Appendix K) in order to ensure all information shared with them was upheld with confidentiality and respect to all participants.

Inquiry Methods

Data Collection Methods

From the outset of this research, my initial thought on inquiry methods was to complete a qualitative multi-method approach, including a survey and an interview matrix.   The survey allowed for the collection of individual responses related to the research sub questions, focusing on current state of collaboration and partnership, as well as possibilities for the future. The interview matrix was selected in order to capture additional thoughts in more detail, as conversation occurred amongst participants (Government of Canada, 2013). As the use of these two methods included one written and one verbal data collection method, participants were able to share their perspectives in the manner or manners most impactful for them. These two research methods, including one individual and one large group approach, allowed me to gather in-depth data from a large number of participants within the Student Success Office (Glesne, 2011).

The initial method was an electronic survey. As a "useful tool for extending the data collection process to a broader range of participants" (Stringer, 2007, p. 78), this non-probabilistic survey included Likert scale, eliciting quantitative results, and open ended questions, gathering qualitative responses, on topics relating to my question and sub-questions on partnerships, relationships, collaboration and communication, as well as office culture and

demographics (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). I developed the questions with input from my sponsor and wording aligned with the overall research question and sub-questions, as determined within the focus and framing stage of Action Research process (Rowe et al., 2013). A ten question survey was created and then piloted with a small group of individuals who work outside of the department. A feedback process accompanied this pilot, and the feedback was incorporated into the wording, structure and length of the survey before the wider release.

The second method of data collection was an interview matrix. An interview matrix is "one of the more powerful ways to get the whole group engaged in dialogue, with equal airtime, focus and consensus building as the main elements" (Government of Canada, 2013, p. 70). This group process was based on four questions, shaped by the survey results, and this data collection allowed for triangulation of results from the survey and interview matrix, incorporating and comparing results from various data sources (Glesne, 2011). By using an interview matrix as the large group method, this peer facilitated process allowed for idea generation and sharing within an open and trusting space between colleagues. The individuals responding to questions and then coming together to define themes that appeared throughout their topic, in addition to the opportunity to view the responses and themes of others participating, created ownership and buy-in with the themes (Coghlan & Brannick, 2010). While completing this research method, an ethical consideration taken into account was how to include managers in the interview matrix. In order to address power-over relationships, a safe space was formed during the interview matrix to create open dialogue, and managers and their staff were seated at separate tables, not having to answer one another's questions.

The interview matrix questions were generated from responses gathered in the survey. Similar to the survey pilot, the interview matrix questions were then tested with a small group of external individuals in order to gather feedback and understand the breadth of answers. The updated questions were then used to facilitate the whole interview matrix process, allowing for individual data collection and peer networking, as well as collective theming. The data collected included personal testimonies, and provided validity to the current feelings and future opportunities for relationship and collaboration within the Student Success Office (Glesne, 2011).

In addition to providing data for analysis, the goal was that conversations stemming from the questions would continue between participants following the conclusion of the interview matrix session (Government of Canada, 2013). As the basis of the project was to foster relationship building, knowledge sharing and collaboration, the conversations and relationship building opportunities that occurred as part of the research process were able to help cement the results amongst participants and all members of the Student Success Office, as participants had directed the conversations and felt connected to the responses.

Study Conduct

The first research method was the online survey. Administered through SurveyMonkey, the system currently used within the Student Success Office and understood by staff, the link to the survey was emailed to all potential participants The ten question survey was open for four days (Appendix E). On the first page of the survey individuals completed an electronic consent form informing participants that it was an anonymous survey, and individual responses could not be removed once submitted (Appendix F). All potential participants also received an additional

completion reminder email the day the survey closed. This timeline was determined so as to eliminate any overlap with a staff retreat workshop, as the inquiry team advised against gathering results impacted by the retreat.

Following the analysis of the survey responses, all potential participants then received an email invitation to participate in the interview matrix. The interview matrix questions came directly from themes determined in the survey, allowing for continuation and building upon the richness of the data collected.

The interview matrix was hosted in a large, comfortable space, allowing participants to be at ease. Participants were divided at various tables, with managers being at separate tables than their staff. I facilitated the interview matrix process, including a welcome and overview, ethics overview and consent form signing (Appendix H and Appendix I), and instructions. I then ran six rounds of five minutes each, allowing each individual at each table to answer all other questions, with participants recording their individual conversations verbatim on their worksheets. Additionally, there was a five minute period at the end of the six rounds for each person to reflect on their answer to their own question as well. Following these rounds, participants gathered with others who were responsible for their same question and themed the responses they heard. Each group then presented their themes, and all individuals had the opportunity to add additional themes. Participants were thanked and informed that results will be shared with the whole Student Success Office.

Data Analysis

After the completion of each the survey and the interview matrix process, all survey results and interview matrix participants' worksheets were transcribed and stored in a secure

electronic location. For the survey, responses were organized by question, and the raw data was scanned "to begin hunting for patterns in qualitative data" (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, para. 40). From that initial scan, I began coding each question's responses, using an alpha coding system within Excel. On the second sweep through responses, the coded responses were organized into groupings, and then themes. From this response analysis, the top three to five themes were used as the basis for interview matrix questions. Inquiry team members were involved in the process of determining the questions for this next phase.

Within the transcription of the interview matrix worksheets, participant coding was used for individual comments, for example, A1 for person 1 at table A. Following the same data analysis process from the survey, data was organized by question and each individual response was coded. These initial codes then allowed for sorting and theming to occur. After this was complete, the flip charts and participant themes were transcribed, and were compared to the themes found within the raw data analysis, with similarities and discrepancies noted (Ryan & Bernard, 2003).

Once these separate data analysis processes were completed, the themes from each the survey and interview matrix were compared and contrasted. This allowed for triangulation, a comparison from the various sources, of the data for further analysis and recommendations (Glense, 2011; Stringer, 2007).

Both of these data collection processes were based on gathering trustworthy data, data results that were " 'true' or 'accurate'...plausible or credible" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49), as similar responses were gathered through both methods when questions focused on common themes. There were also different participation rates for each method, meaning that different perspectives

were collected with each method (Glesne, 2011). Piloting and testing the questions in both the survey and interview matrix ensured that bias was not present from the inquiry team, and that the responses "do not merely reflect the particular perspectives, biases, or worldview of the researcher, [nor] based solely on superficial or simplistic analyses of the issues investigated" (Stringer, 2007, p. 57). By ensuring that the processes were put in place whereby participants trusted the process and felt comfortable and confident participating, information gathered is credible within the context of this research (Glesne, 2011; Stringer, 2007).

Ethical Issues

When considering this research, dignity of the person was at top of mind, as "expressed through three core principles – Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice" (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada., 2010, p. 14). As this research allowed individuals to choose to participate in all elements, giving voluntary consent, with no coercion nor harm to their person, an element considered was the potential influence of power relationships that may have occurred with some participants. While considering the criteria of participants for both the survey and interview matrix, I was not in a position of power-over, as all participants were my peers or managers amongst the team. As members of the Student Success Office are all invested in the overall success of the department, there was messaging to all staff ensuring that they are aware participation in this research was voluntary. Their individual participation in the survey remains anonymous, and they were not judged on their decisions regarding active participation in the interview matrix (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2010).

There were, however, two power-over staff structures to consider in this research, including the participation of managers in the interview matrix, and the sharing of results with the director and assistant directors within the Student Success Office. When participating in the interview matrix, participants may have had influence over others who were attending, as they may have been their supervisors. As conversations occurred on a one-on-one basis, and all individuals participating had the opportunity to answer each question, managers and their staff were seated at different tables. This aided in ensuring the comfortable environment and interest in participation allowed for open and honest responses to be gathered during the interview matrix.

In regards to sharing data with the director team within the office, it was important to inform all participants that the responses from the survey remained anonymous, shared only in aggregate form. For both the survey and interview matrix, the raw data was reviewed for identifiers before being shared with the inquiry team, which included the director of the office and the assistant directors of each of the internal teams. This information was shared with participants at the beginning of the online survey, as well as in the welcome and introduction during the interview matrix (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2010). All participants were encouraged to share open and honest answers, and confidentiality of attendees and information heard during the interview matrix was also discussed.

In addition, when running the interview matrix, ethical considerations included justice, accessibility and needs of all participants to ensure equal ability to participate (Canadian Institutes of Health Research et al., 2010). As two teams within the Student Success Office are front end service units, time was set aside for all participants to have equal opportunity to

participate in the interview matrix process if they chose. This involved working with all members of the office to determine the best time for this process, and developing communication to share with students that services were temporarily unavailable. In regards to the needs of the group, a large, quiet space was used in order to ensure that all participants were comfortable during the interview matrix. Additionally, information and instructions were shared verbally and in writing to ensure all participants understood the interview matrix process.

Chapter Summary

Through the use of action research, this inquiry was built to involve all individuals in the Student Success Office in the conversation, creating buy-in to the findings and results through their participation in the two research methods, the electronic survey and the interview matrix. Focus was also placed on ensuring that all ethical considerations were addressed prior to this research. The following chapter outlines the results gathered through this research, summarizes the overall findings and provides research conclusions supported by the findings and the literature. Additionally, I reflect on the scope and limitations of the inquiry as it occurred.

CHAPTER FOUR: ACTION INQUIRY PROJECT RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter outlines the study findings coming from an analysis of the results gathered within the electronic survey and the interview matrix, as well as conclusions drawn from the results, supported by the literature. These findings and conclusions are based on the overarching research question: how can the Student Success Office strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office, and the following sub-questions:

1. What is the current relationship structure within the Student Success Office?

2. What is the current level of internal knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office?

3. How would focus on relationship building and partnership strengthen internal collaboration?

4. What would allow for increased relationship building within the office?

5. What strategies for internal collaboration and information sharing can be implemented to positively impact efficiency within the office?

This chapter first focuses on the five study findings, the four study conclusions, and is wrapped up with an understanding of the scope and limitations of the study.

Study Findings

All findings were uncovered through the electronic survey and the interview matrix, each capturing staff members' thoughts and perceptions on collaboration, partnerships and knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office. Following the completion of coding and theming of results, the data captured by the interview matrix questions were strongly aligned with that of the survey. These results both focused on current strengths and challenges, as well as opportunities for development. As a result of the analysis, the following five findings were identified:

1. Existence of team relationships with lack of office-wide relationships;

2. Lack of knowledge regarding others' roles;

3. Belief in collaboration in theory, with a desire for collaborative practice;

4. Range of personal comfort levels regarding relationship building; and

5. Perceived siloes.

These findings are detailed below, with support from quantitative survey findings (responses were gathered on a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree) as well as quotations from qualitative data gathered through open ended questions on the electronic survey and the interview matrix. Direct quotations from the survey are noted with an S and the interview matrix, an IM.

Finding 1: Existence of team relationships with lack of office-wide relationships

Throughout the inquiry, the theme of current relationships and relationship structures within the Student Success Office was observed, with individuals differentiating between their relationships with their team mates, those within the same functional team as themselves, and their relationship with members of other small teams within the office. Respondents indicated that they had strong relationships within their team (75% strongly agreed and 16.7% agreed), while the strength of their relationships external to their individual teams were lower (8.3% strongly agreeing and 66.7% agreeing). Some respondents stated that they neither agreed nor disagreed that they had strong working relationships outside of their individual team (16.7%). In comparing the results between team relationships versus external relationships, it is evident that individuals feel that stronger relationships exist within their individual teams rather than between teams in the Student Success Office. This sentiment seems to be often linked to information

sharing between people. One survey respondent stated "I don't find that I often actually approach others outside of my team due to the amount of explanation of my role/their role that we would have to do in order to collaborate productively" (S). Another respondent stated that the lack of relationships with others external to one's own team meant that "most often it is quicker to do something on my own… instead of reaching out" (S). Focusing on the ideal future and the future of relationships within the office, another respondent stated "I am hoping that moving forward, we can become stronger in our ability to reach out to people and not stay sectioned off in our own teams" (S).

Positive results were also gathered, with findings that relationships continue to form, both formally and informally within the office, as time passes. These relationships were credited to individuals "get[ting] along with everyone" (S), feeling that others in the SSO "are open to being approached" (S) and that there is "an eagerness of office staff to help and support" (S). The "friendliness" (S) of staff was also mentioned several times, with connections to how that has increased the quality and quantity of relationships.

Within the interview matrix, results showed that "relationships need to happen in a structured and unstructured way" (IM). These connections within the office need to be based on trust, respecting the needs of others. Additionally, several comments were made about "know[ing] people as people" (IM) as well as participants encouraging others to take "time to get to know one another on a personal basis" (IM). These responses all focused on the importance of getting to know one another, and the impact that strong relationships and connections within the office can have, while noting that the environment exists for these relationships to be fostered.

Finding 2: Lack of knowledge regarding others' roles

A common theme was that participants felt that they do not know about others' roles and responsibilities within the Student Success Office, as supported by the data from both the survey and interview matrix. One survey respondent stated "I am not clear on the day to day responsibilities of many people with the office, which makes it hard to reach out and ask questions (since I don't want to interrupt them, and I'm not even sure if I would be asking the right person for help)" (S). Another respondent noted "I get the sense that others don't know the scope of my role (success coach) does" (S). These responses focused on the need for clarity on day to day responsibility of other staff, details of projects and services within the Student Success Office and an understanding of how roles and projects relate to them in their role.

The topic of understanding roles was also apparent in the interview matrix; however, it was often related to the lack of knowledge sharing. Additionally, the responses gathered within the interview matrix focused on personal participation and perceived impact within the office. Several responses focused on the importance of understanding others' roles, especially "outside of simple task-based meetings" (IM).   One individual noted that it is integral to have a "sense of what everyone is doing on a base level so it is easy to draw on others' knowledge/roles as needed" (IM). Another participant discussed having a role in "supporting people to find connections between their roles and what others do" (IM). A further response commented that in order to "understand other people's roles, take it upon yourself to know more about people and how your work could overlap with another person's in the office" (IM). These responses all focused on the connections and partnerships that come from knowing and understanding others'

roles, with a feeling that opportunities are currently being missed or overlooked because of that lack of internal knowledge.

Though a significant amount of data was collected in the survey supporting the need to increase knowledge sharing amongst staff, respondents agreed that they were knowledgeable about who to approach within the Student Success Office with specific questions (75%), though no respondents strongly agreed. When looking further at the responses, networking opportunities, communication and professional development opportunities that currently exist with other SSO staff members were all factors that contribute to their understanding of others' roles. One respondent noted "I think my increased knowledge and confidence with Student Experience Team projects, services, roles, and processes comes from the increased time we spend together (e.g., Student Experience Team Meetings)" (S). Another stated that having "knowledge generally of the areas of responsibility means I know which manager/associate director is responsible" (S). One respondent answered that "increased knowledge and confidence … comes from the increased time we spend together … similarities in the work we do, and more importantly, similarities in how we do our work (how we engage with students)" (S). The topic of increasing internal communication amongst employees to understand the full extent of everyone's roles was a common response amongst individuals, especially related to how this would help future partnerships develop within the office.

Finding 3: Belief in collaboration in theory, with a desire for collaborative practice

Survey data indicated that overall individuals strongly agree or agree that opportunity exists for collaboration within the Student Success Office (50.0% and 33.3%, respectively). Respondents noted that there were many opportunities for collaboration, including the ability to

work with other members of the office, to learn from the expertise/knowledge of others and for current small teams to work with other small teams. Other respondents focused on the need for stronger communication as well as discussed the need to review areas of overlap between projects. One respondent noted that "there are many opportunities for collaboration within the SSO, we just need to be more aware of them" (S), while another respondent stated that "before beginning a new project, we should take the time to ensure we are not duplicating work" (S). Additionally, several respondents mentioned the importance of "information sharing with other teams" (S). These subthemes of communication and information sharing in order to be collaborative were evident in all data collected. Some individuals reflected on times when collaboration had occurred, and partnerships were created. Respondents discussed that most staff within the office have a "common mission and purpose"(S). Additionally, one respondent stated that "I know that [others] have the same (ultimate) goals at the heart of what they do" (S). As apparent in the data collected, this ability for all staff in the Student Success Office to feel that they are working towards a common goal aids in the acceptance and practice of collaboration and partnership amongst staff.

The topic of collaboration was further discussed within the interview matrix. To participants, collaboration meant working together "toward a common goal/vision/purpose" (IM). Additionally, participants noted that collaboration is valuing and respecting diversity, as well as "finding the connections and commonalities" (IM) and having open communication. There were also several participants who stated that collaboration can happen "informally or formally" (IM). Participants agreed that these elements are all necessary in order to create opportunities for collaboration amongst staff within the office.

Several participants felt positive regarding opportunities for collaboration, especially regarding the ideal Student Success Office, and individuals' roles in achieving those ideals. Participants stated that the ideal Student Success Office would include "more collaboration" (IM), with an understanding that "collaboration needs to be free flowing" (IM), not forced or contrived, but occurring naturally within the office setting. An individual responded that it is everyone's role to "help facilitate these connections" (IM), while another noted that everyone must play a role in "inspir[ing] others to want a collaborative environment" (IM). There was an overall positive sense that each individual must play a role in creating a collaborative future within the Student Success Office.

A point to note is that a group of survey respondents stated that they disagreed that opportunities for collaboration with other members of the Student Success Office existed within their role (16.7%). As there was no follow up question, this should be further investigated by management within the Student Success Office when looking to facilitate opportunities for collaboration, as not all members of the office may be accepting or open to collaboration in the current structure.

Finding 4: Range of personal comfort levels regarding relationship building

Participants shared a range of emotions in terms of comfort with internal relationship building and knowledge sharing. Overall, respondents stated that they strongly agreed or agreed (66.7% and 25% respectively) that they felt comfortable approaching other staff members within the Student Success Office. Many elaborated that the personal comfort with other people in the office stems from "getting to know that individual on a personal level" (S). Additionally, one participant said that "all should make an effort to get to know their co-workers both

inside/outside work" (IM), though other participants stated that not every staff member will be open to getting to know one another on a personal level. A participant noted the need for individuals to have "awareness of what others need in the space and this might not be the same as your needs are" (IM). Additionally, having "knowledge of diverse needs" (IM) was a theme evident throughout both the survey and the interview matrix.

Other respondents commented that the comfort that individuals had in the Student Success Office. One staff member noted that "I've always felt comfortable approaching other individuals. I also find that the majority of SSO employees are very approachable, especially with our open concept office" (S). Another said "I feel comfortable approaching members of the SSO outside my team due to the fact that we are all here for the same reason: to help students succeed at university" (S). Yet another credited comfort levels to the importance of "make[ing] an effort to engage in small talk" (S). These personal attributes and individual feelings, which may stem from individual's extroverted or introverted personalities, are important to understand as they each impact how individual staff members are able to relate to one another, creating connections, relationships and opportunities for collaboration in the future.

In addition to focusing on individuals' distinct needs, participants also discussed that no matter the comfort level, "everyone needs to be interested and invested in sharing the office environment" (IM), making it a comfortable space for all those who work there, both physically and emotionally. Another participant furthered the idea of creating a comfortable environment, stating that "role modeling…needs to happen top down and bottom up" (IM), with all staff members playing a role in creating a supportive workplace, demonstrating these actions to other staff members – both those in leadership and coordinator roles. Staffs' ranges of personal

comfort levels and staff support must be considered when looking at opportunities for increased collaboration within the office, as to create a sustainable collaborative environment based on trust.

Finding 5: Perceived project siloes

In addition to focusing on silos amongst staff members within the Student Success Office, survey data was collected regarding silos amongst projects and services within the office, with resulting duplication. A respondent noted that "disconnected programs/supports with overlapping goals are prevalent" (S) within the Student Success Office, while another noted that the disconnection creates repetition, and stated that when beginning to work on a project "we should take the time to ensure we are not duplicating work" (S). Another respondent, when discussing who should work on projects in order to create efficiencies, stated that information and skills "could be better leveraged by others in the office so they can focus on their area of expertise" (S) referring to individuals' past experiences and knowledge that they contribute to the office. In contrast to Finding 2, lack of knowledge of others' roles, this finding was based on participants observing a lack of current collaboration between teams and projects.

Participants also discussed how project alignment will ideally occur within the Student Success Office in the future, with one individual stating "the less [project] ownership the better because everyone will feel the need to work together" (IM). Another participant furthered that idea, saying that "programs/projects [will be] less individual focused but one office focused instead" (IM). These responses related to how true collaboration and partnership amongst projects will come when individuals are open to working together and letting go of individual ownership. One individual summarized the entire theme, stating "I am hoping that moving

forward, we can become stronger in our ability to reach out to people and not stay sectioned off in our own teams" (S). By reaching out and asking for assistance on projects, participants noted that increased efficiencies within the Student Success Office are possible.

Additionally, the questions on partnerships and collaboration within projects in the Student Success Office also elicited responses regarding the impact of office alignment on external partnerships within the greater University community. As many projects within the Student Success Office occur in partnership with other stakeholder groups, efficiencies are also possible when considering these working relationships. A participant noted that while there may currently be confusion about who is responsible for what projects, in the ideal future "externally, other offices on campus [will] know what we do" (IM), with individuals understanding the overall mission and goals of the office, as well as having an understanding of the projects and services supported within the Student Success Office. Another staff member noted that partners of the Student Success Office, both current and new partners, will "want to be involved, because they respect that we are doing things well" (IM). This stemmed from the idea of how staffs' positive feelings on project alignment in the Student Success Office would then translate into their project work with others on campus, with that positive feeling spreading to new campus partners and potential collaborative relationships.

Study Conclusions

Conclusions within this research answer the overall inquiry question of strengthening internal partnerships in order to foster collaboration, in addition to the five subquestions asked throughout the inquiry process. In reviewing the research findings, supported by literature, the

following conclusions have been made about collaboration and partnerships within the Student

Success Office. These research conclusions, as aligned with the research subquestions, include:

1. Current relationship structure within the Student Success Office

2. Current level of internal knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office

3. Focus on relationship building and partnership strengthening internal collaboration

4. Increasing relationship building within the office

5. Strategies for internal collaboration and information sharing to positively impact
    efficiency within the office

These conclusions are described in additional detail below.

Conclusion 1: Current relationship structure within the Student Success Office

When reviewing the study findings, an overarching theme that emerged was the

importance of focusing on relationships, and opportunities to build and strengthen new and

existing relationships. The data and findings focused on various methods of relationship building

and the impact that relationships have on collaboration.

The initial subquestion within this research asked: w*hat is the current relationship*

structure within the Student Success Office? Through research findings one and four, it became

apparent that strong relationships do currently exist within the Student Success Office on small

functional teams, with staff expressing a desire to build further relationships throughout the

broader office. An additional element of this interest in building relationships was an

understanding that personal comfort levels with relationship building differs for all staff, which

impacts current relationships. Supported by Casimir, Lee and Loon (2012), individuals'

personalities, along with the organizational culture, play a substantial role in how relationships

occur within a workplace. This individual comfort level should be considered when creating frameworks for relationship building within the Student Success Office.

With few strong relationships outside of their small teams, there is a direct impact between this barrier and the lack of knowledge and information sharing that occurs within the office (Hastings, 2009; Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). Understanding relationships between staff must always be considered when understanding how an organization functions.

Conclusion 2: Current level of internal knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office

This study investigated both a current state observation and a request for suggestions on strategies to incorporate information sharing in order to impact efficiency within the office. The second research subquestion asked: *what is the current level of knowledge sharing within the Student Success Office?* Staff within the Student Success Office have a lack of knowledge of others' roles and, with that, are not able to articulate the expertise that each individual brings with them to the team. This causes a potentially negative impact on intra-office collaboration and efficiency in providing services to students. In contrast, though the individual role and experience knowledge is not present, many individuals have a general understanding of most projects that occur within the office due to the personal relationships they have built amongst themselves. The importance of creating an environment open to information sharing, facilitating knowledge sharing and forming structured information sharing opportunities and frameworks is supported extensively through the literature (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Maszzei, 2010; Patrick & Dotsika, 2007). A supportive environment where staff members feel empowered to learn from one another is essential for knowledge and information to flow amongst staff members.

Though staff identified inconsistent information sharing and knowledge transfer amongst members of the office is a concern, there exists an opportunity to focus on this topic when considering effective partnerships and collaboration within the Student Success Office. Effective partnerships will require open information sharing between staff, as well as a concerted effort towards making the work environment collaborative on a regular basis. This is supported by substantial research, indicating that information sharing is impacted by "organizational structure, organizational culture and organizational interaction" (Lee, 2010, p. 264). A clear understanding of the culture is essential when considering the flow of information within the Student Success Office.

Conclusion 3: Focus on relationship building and partnership strengthening internal collaboration

Research subquestion three asked: *how would focus on relationship building and partnership strengthen internal collaboration?* As shown in the findings and supported with the literature, creating an open and welcoming environment where individuals get to know one another leads to increased positive relationships and a subsequent increase in internal collaboration (Heerman, 2001; Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). With opportunity for individuals to learn more about each other's roles, as well as the strengths, experiences and perspectives that they bring to the office, staff will begin reaching out to one another more frequently to ask for assistance. Increased collaboration will also occur as a byproduct of new and strengthened relationships within the Student Success Office (Chen & Chen, 2009).

While seeking out information on the current relationship structure within the Student Success Office, responses included reflections on challenges with the current staffing structure

within the office, perceived silos that currently exist within the office and possibilities for how staff could work together differently in the future. With a focus on strong partnerships and relationships on small teams that currently exist, opportunity exists to create larger working groups or teams by which to accomplish the tasks and projects of the office.

As there have been changes in the staff structure within the Student Success Office, with additional roles added, small teams shifted, and a management level being used more prominently, it is important to revisit the current relationship structures and understand how team work is being accomplished. Review of the reporting structure and team dynamics must be a continual practice so as to ensure ongoing development, as complacency within working environments due to lack of teamwork has the ability to create an inefficient organization (Daspti et al., 2013; Dietrich et al., 2010; Proehl, 1997).

Cross-functional teams are strongly supported within the literature, as they allow for the melding of knowledge, approaches and ideas when solving problems, therefore increasing the overall teamwork within an organization (Ghobadi & Dambra, 2013). Internal team dynamics must also support collaboration in order for it to occur (Daspit et al., 2013). Additionally, true collaboration "calls into question existing ways of working, of decision making and demands an explicit explanation of the organizational structure" (Diamond & Rush, 2012, p. 289). This is where there exists the possibility of creating cross-functional teams, working groups, or Communities of Practice within the Student Success Office in order to utilize strong relationships and knowledge sharing to foster internal collaboration.

These opportunities for increased cross-team collaboration and partnership will allow for both ongoing growth and development of staff within the Student Success Office, as well as creating efficiencies on the deliverables produced by the office.

Conclusion 4: Increasing relationship building within the office

Continuing on the topic of relationship building, subquestion four inquired on: *what would allow for increased relationship building within the office?* The data collected showed an overall desire from staff members to create an environment where more relationship building activities could be fostered, both formally and informally. The implementation of relationship building activities has a direct impact on work culture (Hastings, 2009; Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). Conversely, the need for a positive work culture is also supported in the literature, as fostering a culture of trust and mutual respect amongst staff on all levels is imperative when looking to build strong relationships and teams (Lai et al., 2011).

As demonstrated in the findings, relationships and culture of the workplace have a significant impact on one another. Lee noted that creating such a culture within an organization leads to "mutual relationships… maintained more transparently" (2010, p. 265), which aligned with data collected supporting the need for increased relationships across the office in order to create an environment where collaboration is natural. This is further supported by Madlock and Booth-Butterfield (2012), who found that creating a strong and cohesive work environment increases the natural communication flow that occurs within an organization. The outcome of creating a supportive working environment and implementing communication pathways and systems to be used by staff members is that relationships will be fostered on a more frequent

basis, with the foundation of this strengthening being based in greater information sharing, leading to increased collaboration amongst staff members.

Conclusion 5: Strategies for internal collaboration and information sharing to positively impact efficiency within the office

The final research subquestion asked: *what strategies for internal collaboration and information sharing can be implemented to positively impact efficiency within the office?* In addition to information transfer, Reddy and McCarthy's research discussed the positive impact that sharing best practices have on an organization (2006), which is an area in which the Student Success Office should develop. The Student Success Office should work to find the best methods for staff to share already known internal knowledge amongst themselves. As with all organizations, there are significant resources available, as "a vast amount of highly valuable knowledge already exists" (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006, p. 595) amongst staff within the office. This can be done both formally and informally, with the creation of knowledge sharing techniques used and supported by all members of the office (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Mazzei, 2010; Reddy & McCarthy, 2006). By creating a knowledge sharing framework by which Student Success Office staff members on all levels could share information, opportunities for increased collaboration will emerge and become more natural within the office (Mazzei, 2010). Additionally, the efficiency of the office will be positively impacted as resources will be used effectively to meet the overall mission and vision within the Student Success Office.

Questions in this research examined if collaboration was possible amongst members of the office and, if so, what strategies could be implemented to increase opportunities for collaboration. Responses gathered were very positive, in that collaboration seems to be a goal of

many individuals within the Student Success Office, but additional support and frameworks must be put in place in order for increased partnerships, resource and knowledge sharing. Throughout the research, focus was placed on how a work environment based on trust and respect will positively impact collaborative opportunities (Chen & Chen, 2009; Dietrick et al., 2010; Lee, 2010). This trust then translates into individuals reaching out and working together (Chen & Chen, 2009). By focusing on creating opportunities for collaboration, the goal of having individuals connect with each other to solve problems they are facing can be achieved. Collaboration in and of itself is rooted in connections and relationships amongst staff members, allowing them to work together seamlessly in a productive manner (Heerman, 2001). In addition to strong partnerships and relationships within an organization, Love and Roper focused on the impact that team structure plays in creating a collaborative workplace, with the goal of "overcoming…organizational barriers" (2009, p. 192).

Some participants reflected on the ideal Student Success Office five years in the future, and their role in accomplishing that vision. Almost every response gathered mentioned that collaboration would be second nature, with individuals always working together and lending a hand to one another in order to achieve mutual goals. With this increase in collaboration, through strengthened partnerships and open communication, the Student Success Office will increase their efficiency in both projects and service delivery (Lauring & Selmer, 2012; Mazzei, 2010; Patrick & Dotsika, 2007). From there, collaboration and efficient work practices would spread to partnerships external to the Student Success Office, allowing for more integrated services to be offered with the goal of increasing the level of student support by various departments across the University of Waterloo.

Scope and Limitations of the Inquiry

When completing an inquiry project internal to one's own organization, one must look at the scope of the inquiry and the limitations of the inquiry in its current format. As with all action research, this research was carried out in a particular setting, with a specific context, and should not be generalized (Rowe et al., 2013). Three other elements to be considered in this research included staff within the department, the timeline of the inquiry, and role changes that occurred throughout the inquiry.

This research took place within the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo, and called on staff within the office for participation. The Student Success office is a relatively small department, made up of a group of small teams. Each small team has its own goals and areas of focus, and participants from each of these teams may have impacted the data collected in that certain themes were magnified or, conversely, not mentioned because of different elements impacting the experience of those participating. The size of the department, as well as the structure of small teams and the focus on student development and experience, all of which are reflected within this report, must be considered by a reader looking to use the results within their own organizational setting.

In regards to timing, the research topic of collaboration and relationships within the Student Success Office was first determined to be a good fit for the project in the fall of 2013 and the Student Success Office was in the midst of significant change. With a new Director and senior leadership within the University of Waterloo, the fall 2013 and winter 2014 academic terms were a time of renewal and refocusing for the Student Success Office. With early conversations on the scope, goals and next steps for the office being focused at a strategic, rather

than operational, level, this time of change created a feeling of unsettledness amongst staff members. Throughout the year, new initiatives and plans have been put in place, and direct changes have occurred within the Student Success Office since the data was initially collected. Some of these elements of change include the addition of new staff members, changing roles and reporting structure, and the creation of a leadership team of managers within the Student Success Office, who work together to ensure alignment of projects, resources and messages. These changes impact and support this research, and should be considered in partnership with the conclusions and recommendations provided in this report.

Part way through the research period, I took on another position within the University of Waterloo and left my role within the Student Success Office. Though this removed me from the day-to-day observations within the department, I had been a staff member within the Student Success Office for three years and, as such, continued to have strong connections with individuals within the office. I was able to draw on my own experiences and observations both through the research and analysis stages of the project. Though a limitation in that I was not a part of the changes that occurred throughout this time period, this separation provided a new perspective as I analyzed the current state and recommendations for the Student Success Office.

Chapter Summary

Through a thorough analysis of the research data and literature support, the above findings and conclusions focus on the overall research topic by bringing to light the current state and possibilities for the future of the Student Success Office. These findings and conclusions relate to relationships, collaboration, information sharing and staffing structure, all of which must be areas of focus for the Student Success Office moving forward. In the final chapter of

this inquiry, I will draw upon the findings, conclusions and literary support to provide overall

recommendations to the Student Success Office. Additionally, I will touch on the implications

that this research has on the office and possible areas for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: INQUIRY IMPLICATIONS

The final chapter of this inquiry is comprised of study recommendations put forward to the Student Success Office, including reviewing the mission of the office, creating a system for knowledge sharing, implementing training for staff and exploring new staffing models. In addition, a review of the organizational implications that this study and recommendations have and implications this research will have on future inquiries are included. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the report.

Study Recommendations

After completing this study and reviewing the findings and conclusions, the following four recommendations were put forward to the Student Success Office:

1. Review the mission and vision of the Student Success Office, with a focus on centrally supported programs and services;

2. Create a strategy and system for structured knowledge sharing amongst staff;

3. Implement office wide training and relationship building initiatives; and

4. Explore project based teams as a method of facilitating intra-office collaboration.

Described below, these recommendations are supported by the findings and conclusions of this action research within the Student Success Office.

Recommendation 1: Review the mission and vision of the Student Success Office, with a focus on centrally supported programs and services

Understanding that the Student Success Office has undergone significant growth and change since its formation in 2011, the current management team should review the mission and vision of the office to ensure that it is still in line with the overall direction intended by the University, as aligned to the University of Waterloo's Strategic Plan (Student Success Office,

2013). By including staff in making modifications to the overarching goals of the office, opportunity exists to create overall understanding and ownership of the mission and vision. From there, it will be important to facilitate discussions on each element, team and project within the office, focusing on if and where these pieces strategically fit within the goals of the office. This alignment of individual, team and project goals with the mission and vision of the Student Success Office will allow for decisions to be made about where to use resources, as well as allow individuals to feel stronger connections between their work and the goals of the office (Kinzie & Kuh, 2004).

Creating an office aligned under one current and accepted mission will allow for an environment where individuals work in agreement towards a common purpose (Senge, 2006). When staff members know what they are striving for, workplaces are opened up to stronger communication, relationships and teamwork, as individuals want to support one another. Clarity in the mission, vision and goals of the Student Success Office may also lead to a larger sense of ownership and pride on the services provided by the office (Senge, 2006). By aligning the work of the office to a renewed shared mission, all staff will have the opportunity to understand and feel invested in a broader perspective of the services offered by the Student Success Office. This will allow staff to feel an overall sense of ownership for all services within the office, not limited to the projects and deliverables that they are directly involved in (Fox, 2010).

With staff in the Student Success Office coming together with a common purpose, creating increased partnerships and collaboration internally, additional focus must be placed on how information is shared and communication occurs on all levels and between all staff within the office. As collaboration increases, methods of information sharing must become more

defined and communication channels between individuals must be developed and fostered in order to ensure overall efficiency of the Student Success Office.

Recommendation 2: Create a strategy and system for structured knowledge sharing amongst staff

As a department with a large staff and many areas of focus, the Student Success Office should create a framework for documentation and information sharing to be used on a regular basis by all staff members. Accessible to all, possibly using Microsoft SharePoint or a shared network drive, overviews and details of projects should be centralized so that individuals can find any information when needed (Patrick & Dotzika, 2007). Shorter updates could also be circulated via a weekly centralized email, focusing on changes and upcoming events or projects. This would allow for staff to understand what is happening in the Student Success Office as a whole, as well as allow them to share the information with individuals outside of the office (Lauring & Selmer, 2012). Similarly, there is also value in having individuals share their learning from professional development opportunities, to pass on their new knowledge so that others' around them are able to benefit as well.

With a wide breadth of knowledge, expertise and experience of staff members within the Student Success Office, lunch and learn sessions have a place in disseminating SSO staff members' knowledge to all members of the office. The Student Success Office management team should solicit input from staff on topics of interest and of value and create a structured Lunch and Learn program, with presenters from each area, both managers and coordinators. Not only would this allow individuals to learn from their peers and have a stronger understanding of their projects or areas of expertise, it would also allow the presenters to experience sharing their

knowledge, practicing different approaches that work best in different settings (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006).

Communication amongst staff is integral in regards to the sharing of knowledge and information. In addition to these structured frameworks for knowledge sharing, the Student Success Office must understand how individuals connect with each other on an individual basis. Though conversations occur organically in the open and shared environment within the office, technology can also be used as additional methods of communication (Patrick & Dotzika, 2007). To increase the collaboration that occurs, the Student Success Office should consider integrating an instant messaging system for all staff, which would allow for virtual collaboration with individuals connecting over quick questions, or increased efficiencies in the office, including front desk staff advising of the arrival of individuals for appointments. There are several products used by other departments within the University and the Student Success Office should seek IT advice on which products would best address the needs and incorporate these technologies along with an online knowledge and information database.

Staff within the Student Success Office should continue to be encouraged to have informal conversations to learn more about others, their areas of expertise and the projects that they are working on. Whether this occurs around the water cooler, in the kitchen throughout the day, walking to the washrooms or by individuals sitting down for lunch together, this informal staff engagement leads to increased trust, respect and, in turn, the sharing of ideas and collaborative partnerships amongst staff.

Recommendation 3: Implement office wide training and relationship building initiatives

In order to create additional avenues for information to be shared amongst all staff members, as well as structured relationship building opportunities, office-wide training and relationship building initiatives, including meetings and retreats, should be implemented. Office-wide events are advantageous as they allow for everyone to be involved at the same time, breaking down hierarchy, hearing the same messaging and learning from the questions of others around them (Wright, 2003). This is especially important when key information or decisions are being shared, so as to decrease the variations and conversations that may occur, leading to additional silos, when the sharing of information is divided into small teams (Lauring & Selmer, 2012).

With a renewed focus on the mission and vision of the Student Success Office, general training should be developed for all staff to ensure that everyone has a base knowledge of student development and adult learning theories, as well as an understanding of current research and trends in the field of student success and higher education. A broad understanding of these core theories is a fundamental component of the success of staff within the Student Success Office as they support programs and services aligned with these theories. As various staff members within the Student Success Office have knowledge on these topics, internal resources should be used. In this way, having individuals share their knowledge and experience would create an effective learning environment. The Student Success Office should create Communities of Practice (CoP), by which individuals with similar roles, goals or theme areas can work with each other to learn from each other and accomplish tasks (Mazzei, 2010). Though driven by staff members leading

each CoP on specific topics, this practice should be encouraged and supported by the management team. The use of Communities of Practice would provide significant benefits to the Student Success Office, as it would allow for increased internal communication and an environment where staff feel comfortable connecting with one another on these topics (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006). By aligning these messages with the overall goals of the office, there will be cohesion of knowledge, with individuals able to work together from the same place (Senge, 2006). This training, based on research and best practices, should be ongoing in order to provide a consistent level of learning (Reddy & McCarthy, 2006). Additionally, a method of orienting new staff members and co-op students on the mission, vision, goals and projects of the office as a whole is vital in integrating new team members, ensuring that they are able to succeed in their role as integral members of the office.

From this initial training program, the Student Success Office should continue to bring all staff together on a regular basis for office-wide meetings, focusing on specific and timely topics, information updates and centralized learning for all. The act of bringing all staff together allows for a strengthened culture of trust and increased transparency in decision making process of management within the office, with staff feeling as though they are a respected and important member of the team (Lai et al., 2011). The incorporation of Communities of Practice within the Student Success Office will also fulfil the goal of bringing individuals together, as staff would work with each other to learn from each other and accomplish tasks (Mazzei, 2010). By bringing individuals together with a common theme, problems can be solved more effectively with different ideas and approaches being put forward by the group.

Connecting to the importance of information sharing, the Student Success Office should develop a method of sharing updates on external partnerships with all staff members. As there are often situations where various people within the office interact with the same individuals from other departments within the University, relationship status updates are integral in ensuring efficiencies when interacting with others (McMurray & Sorrells, 2007). This could be included in regular management team meetings to be shared with all staff or incorporated into office-wide meetings or retreats.

In order to foster a welcoming environment, based on trust, connections and positive relationships, the Student Success Office should continue to host socials and team building activities (Chen & Chen, 2009; Lee, 2011; Madlock & Booth-Butterfield, 2012). Smaller get-togethers such as snacks in the office, pot lucks, welcome/goodbye/celebration parties allow for comradery building and individuals to feel more connected to the office. Along the same lines, larger events, including holiday parties and project or event celebrations should occur in order to celebrate achievements by the office. There should also be focus on team building, with facilitated group activities to strengthen soft skills and connections amongst team members (Hastings, 2009). This may include retreat days, office outings or time set aside for individuals to work together.

When considering the impact of these office-wide initiatives, the Student Success Office must also spend time reviewing the current staffing and team structures, and be open to changes that may allow for additional collaboration and overall office effectiveness.

Recommendation 4: Explore project based teams as a method of facilitating intra-office collaboration

As this research has demonstrated a sense of siloing occurring within the Student Success Office, a focus must be placed on reviewing the current staffing structure and small team model of the office (Fox, 2010). From there, consideration of changes to this model must occur, including an openness to creating project based, cross-functional teams if an opportunity for development exists. By including individuals with different backgrounds, on different functional teams, and different staffing levels, the various opinions and experiences of team members have the potential to work creatively.

In order for project based or cross-functional teams to be successful, there must be a clear understanding and agreement on what decisions can be made by the team (Daspit et al., 2013; Ghobadi & D'Ambra, 2012). This will allow for staff investment, as well as increased confidence by the team in progress that can be made. Additionally, cross-functional teams will create a stronger sense of community and less individual ownership over projects and services provided by the office (Love & Roper, 2008). The more ownership and support provided by the office as a whole creates an increased focus on collaborative practice by all staff members.

By focusing on all four of these recommendations, the Student Success Office has the opportunity to increase collaboration and efficiencies within the office through both information sharing and strengthened relationships amongst staff.

Organizational Implications

Over the course of the past year, relationships and collaboration amongst staff members within the Student Success Office have been the topic of focus for this inquiry project. This

research process has focused on the first loop of organizational action research, including understanding the purpose, looking, thinking and acting, all as part of the readiness for change cycle (Rowe et al., 2013). As the inquiry now begins to enter the transitional phase, with the data, conclusions and recommendations being passed on to the Student Success Office, it becomes the responsibility of staff within the office, those involved and invested in the future outcomes, to be champions of this possible change. With the completion of this first action research cycle, success lies in the acceptance of change, how Student Success office leadership and staff implement the recommendations and implications if recommended change does not occur.

Acceptance of Change

As part of managing change within an organization, it is not only the act of change, but the preparation and set up of the change that are of extreme importance as well (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012). The acceptance of this inquiry topic by the director of the Student Success Office allowed for the goal of planned change, "where there is a clear goal and vision of the future and the leadership devises a roadmap to reach it and influence how it is reached" (Coghlan & Brannick, 2012, p. 65), and now all staff within the office have the opportunity to engage in those goals and participate in the roadmap of change.

In order for positive change to stem from this inquiry, the findings and recommendations must be accepted by staff on all levels within the Student Success Office. This includes the understanding of all individuals that it is not change for change's sake, but for forward movement and positive outcomes as a result for all members of the Student Success Office. By focusing on these tangible topics including the relationships of staff members with one another,

their communication and knowledge sharing methods and the current and possible opportunities for collaboration, this change can be accepted with positive outcomes for all involved. This process will begin with a review of the final report, including findings, conclusions and recommendations by all staff members within the Student Success Office. From there, facilitated discussion will occur, with staff having the opportunity to ask questions of the report, as well as begin to brainstorm steps to move forward. This will be the beginning of the creation of an action plan within the Student Success Office (Rowe et al., 2013).

With the goal of planned change and the implementation of the inquiry recommendations now shifting to the Student Success Office during the change action cycle (Rowe et al., 2013), it is important that staff feel accepting of the change. This acceptance will lead to investment by staff members in the outcomes of the change, and individuals will want to be involved in the creation and implementation of new strategies and ideas within the office. Stringer (2007) suggests involving all internal stakeholders in each element of the change process – reviewing, evaluating and modifying, as well as celebrating successes, as it allows them to see the progress and "reinforces their sense of community" (p. 140). With the action plan directed from the management team within the office, focusing on the positive opportunity for development in order to create ownership from staff on all levels will be integral to the overall success of change as encouraged by this report.

Implementing Recommendations

Opportunity to implement positive change exists within the Student Success Office if the findings and recommendations presented within this research are accepted by all staff members.

These recommendations include the implementation of information sharing frameworks, relationship building exercises, and increased opportunity for collaboration within the office.

Throughout this inquiry process, open communication has occurred with director of the Student Success Office, including sharing research findings, conclusions and recommendations for next steps. Her input and feedback has been included along the way, as well as incorporating updates on changes that have occurred within the office that may impact this research, including new positions, reporting structures, and working groups on items including training and documentation. In addition to the communication with my sponsor, following the data collection and analysis stage I was invited to share the draft findings, conclusions and recommendations with the full management team, comprised of the group of staff members within the Student Success Office who manage small teams. This group had just begun formally meeting, with the goal of reviewing current processes within the Student Success Office and discussion of steps forward. The management team was very supportive of the information shared, asking questions about the collected data as well as the literature review, all of which has been included in this document. There was a brief discussion at the end of the meeting, inviting me to return to the full management team when the project was complete to review the final conclusions and recommendations. In addition to this, I have been invited to attend a full Student Success Office staff meeting to share the completed inquiry project, including conclusions and my recommendations for next steps. This will allow for discussion and questions from all staff members directed at me in regards to the inquiry, and at the director and management team regarding next steps. From this point, the director and management team will be responsible for continuing the momentum, taking the recommendations and creating steps to move forward. As

I have taken on a new role at the University of Waterloo outside of the Student Success Office, this is where my formal involvement in the process will end, though my interactions with staff and projects within the Student Success Office will allow me to witness change as it occurs.

Sharing the final versions with both the management team and the full staff team will allow for facilitated discussion about changes that have occurred since this research took place, as well as for the director and management team to begin a discussion about the creation of an action plan for the Student Success Office. This discussion will occur within the management team as they continue to create a strategic plan for the Student Success Office, considering this research as the change action cycle begins (Rowe et al., 2013).

By understanding how information and knowledge are currently shared, as well as methods of communication that work best within the office, current successes and areas of development can be categorized and time can be invested in determining the most efficient and useful ways of inter-staff communication. A review of current practices should be carried out, with the opportunity to include this topic in a future staff retreat within the Student Success Office, as each individual will have different experiences and practices. From this review, the information can be synthesized by the management team and further research can take place amongst staff to discuss different options that could be implemented for increasing communication within the office. This focus on information sharing will allow for increased efficiency amongst staff as they share their ideas, experiences, research and best practices with one another. By creating structured formal frameworks as well as informal opportunities for individuals to share their ideas, these conversations will lead to increased collaboration as staff reach out to one another in order to solve problems in the future.

In order to create strengthened partnerships within the Student Success Office, a focus must be placed on strengthening current relationships and enhancing new relationship opportunities amongst staff. This includes staff getting to know each other on both a personal and professional basis, so as to understand one another's roles, their strengths, and how they might work together in the future. An area of potential action for this recommendation would be to have the Social Committee, a group within the Student Success Office, review the current social activities and participation, as well as poll staff to understand where additional opportunities for social interaction may lie. In addition to this, each manager within the Student Success Office should facilitate a discussion within their small teams to understand how relationships have shifted with the changes in the office, and discuss what other teams or individuals their staff should work on building relationships with. This focus on relationships built upon trust and mutual respect and understanding will allow for strengthened connections within the Student Success Office, leading to true partnerships amongst individuals, both inside and outside of the current team structure. Fostering relationship development will also be integral if changes are made to the staffing model with the possibility of cross-functional team or project based working groups.

The implementation of an information sharing framework and a focus on relationship building opportunities within the Student Success Office will lead to an increase of natural collaborative practice amongst staff. Stemming from their understanding of one another's roles and projects, as well as an increased sense of pride, ownership and aim towards a common purpose of the office, strengthened relationships will translate into partnerships and teamwork within the office. This will allow for sharing of resources and new connections to be formed by

individuals who may not have had the opportunity to work together in the past. This form of working together and reaching out for assistance can then extend to the work that all staff engage in with external partners and stakeholders, as collaboration becomes a key goal of the Student Success Office as a whole.

Though this change will need to be led by the management team within the office, it is the acceptance, implementation and engagement by all staff that is critical to allow these recommendations to result in positive change. I encourage the management team within the Student Success Office to consider hosting regular staff retreats to revisit the topics of collaboration, communication and partnership on a regular basis in order to create a plan for change, implement change and measure the success of any change in these areas. This will allow for continued opportunity for staff participation and investment.

Implications of No Change

Though this action research inquiry has been presented to the director, and the final version will be shared with the assistant directors, managers and staff within the Student Success Office, the possibility exists that the recommendations may not be considered or implemented within the office. This could occur for several reasons, including inopportune timing, such as a lack of time to dedicate to making changes with the current project load; lack of support for change by management; lack of investment by staff on all levels to incorporate recommendations into practice; or overall aversion to adapting the current methods of relationship building, communication and collaboration that occur within the office. As the sponsor of this inquiry, the director of the Student Success Office has been extremely supportive and I will look to her to be

the champion of change through the implementation of the recommendations outlined in this inquiry.

This report provides significant support on how to focus on building and strengthening relationships amongst staff within the Student Success Office, creating an understanding of how information flows and is shared amongst staff and identifying various frameworks and team structures that could be implemented within the office. Though every recommendation and suggestion, driven from data gathered from staff participants and literary support, do not need to be implemented, the incorporation of some ideas will allow for significant positive change and forward movement towards a collaborative, efficient office to occur. Without a renewed focus of aligning staff on various teams within the office around a common purpose and a centrally supported and accepted mission, siloing, divisions and missed opportunity will continue to occur.

Implications for Future Inquiry

As this research occurred within the Student Success Office at a time of change, with significant focus, staffing and process changes taking place since the data was initially collected, there is an importance of understanding the current state when implementing these recommendations. Future research within the Student Success Office could be done in a year's time to understand and measure the impact of changes that have occurred naturally within the office, as well as of a result of this inquiry's recommendations.

A topic of inquiry to further research is that of understanding the effectiveness of knowledge sharing amongst team members. This could include ensuring that individuals in cross-functional teams share their experiences and expertise in a meaningful and impactful manner, so as to influence the productivity of the team (Dietrich et al., 2010; Ghobadi &

Dambra, 2012). There is a current lack of academic literature support on the effectiveness of cross-functional and project based teams within student affairs in higher education. Research on this topic would be appreciated and could be incorporated by various post-secondary institutions.

Understanding that recommendations in this research included a focus on relationship building, knowledge sharing and collaboration amongst staff within the Student Success Office, another area of potential further research would be understanding the impact that these changes have on the relationships that staff within the Student Success Office have with other departments and faculties across campus (McMurray & Sorrells, 2007). Measuring the impact on these external stakeholders, including service delivery to students, will be important to understanding the full impact of this research and the implementation of the recommendations.

Report Summary

Following the completion of this inquiry, the final report was shared with the director of the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo. Further conversations about the findings, conclusions and recommendations may occur as she considers how to incorporate this report into the management of the Student Success Office. As the new strategic plan for the Student Success Office is currently in development, an ideal opportunity exists to incorporate these recommendations into the plan and day to day activities of staff within the office, with a continual focus on relationships, departmental collaboration and efficiency. The director also has the opportunity to share new practices with campus partners through her strong external relationships, and lead the way for positive change at the university wide level.

Once the research was completed and themed, draft recommendations were shared with all assistant directors and managers within the Student Success Office, allowing them to ask

questions and provide input on areas for continued focus. After the final report is shared with the director, an updated version will be presented to the management team at a meeting. This will allow for questions to be asked about recommendations and a conversation to be facilitated on how to implement and actualize these recommendations.

Finally, opportunity exists in which the aggregated data and recommendations will be shared during a Student Success Office team meeting to all staff, and copies of the final report will be made available to all participants. This will allow the office and all staff members, including all participants, to review the data, findings, conclusions and recommendations together to developing as a whole. By doing so in a large group, questions may be asked regarding the inquiry as well as directed at the director, assistant directors and the management team regarding implementation.

This action research inquiry explored how the Student Success Office can strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office. Through a renewed focus on relationship building, communication and information sharing, and team work, there exists significant opportunity to increase the collaborative practice within the Student Success Office, and therefore the overall efficiency of the office.

REFERENCES

Bishop, S.K.(1999). Cross-functional project teams in functionally aligned organizations. *Project Management Journal, 30*(3). 6-12. Retrieved from http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/ehost/detail/detail?sid=111bb8b2-f776-4db3-8a2f-a3c5a5368089%40sessionmgr114&vid=0&hid=123&bdata=#db=buh&AN=2791584

Bolman, L. & Deal, T. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2010). *Tri-council policy statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans*. Retrieved on March 6, 2014 from http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf

Casimir, G., Lee, K. & Loon, M. (2012). Knowledge sharing: influences of trust, commitment and cost. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 16*(5). 740-753. doi: 10.1108/13673271211262781

Chaboyer, W. & Blake, S. (2008). Information sharing, knowledge transfer and patient safety. *Nursing in Critical Care, 13*(3). 121-132. Retrieved from http://web.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/ehost/detail/detail?vid=4&sid=ccf19b63-9e25-4f0c-b4a0-26970eebbb67%40sessionmgr4003&hid=4209&bdata=#db=c8h&AN=2009899240

Chen, T. & Chen, Y. (2009). Advanced multi-phase trust evaluation model for collaboration

between coworkers in dynamic virtual project teams. *Expert Systems with Applications,*

36, 11172-11185. doi: 10.1016/j.eswa.2009.02.090

Coghlan, D. & Brannick, T. (2010). *Doing action research in your organization* (3rd ed.).

Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Daspit, J., Tillman, C. J., Boyd, N. G., & Mckee, V. (2013). Cross-functional team effectiveness:

An examination of internal team environment, shared leadership and cohesion influences.

Team Performance Management, *19*(1/2), 34-56. doi: 10.1108/13527591311312088

Diamond, J. & Rush, L. (2012). Intra-organisational collaboration in one UK university:

Potential for change or missed opportunity. *International Journal of Public Sector*

Management, *25*(4), 287-300. doi: 10.1108/09513551211244115

Dietrich, P., Eskerod, P., Dalcher, D., & Sandhawalia, B. (2010). The dynamics of collaboration

in multipartner projects. *Project Management Journal*, *41*(4), 59-78. doi:

10.1002/pmj.20194

Dirks, K.T. & Ferrin, D.L. (2001). The role of trust in organizational settings. *Organization*

Science, 12(4). 450-467. doi: 1047-7039/01/1204/0450/$05.00

Fox, A. (2010). Don't let silos stand in the way. *HRMagazine, 55*(5), 50. Retrieved from

http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/docview/205070701

Ghobadi, S. & D'Ambra, J. (2012). Knowledge sharing in cross-function teams: A cooperative

model. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, *16*(2), 285-301. doi:

10.1108/13673271211218889

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA:

Pearson Education.

Government of Canada, National Managers' Community (2013). *Tools for leadership and*

learning: Building a learning organization. (3rd ed.). Retrieved on March 6, 2014 from

http://www.managers-gestionnaires.gc.ca/documents/toolkit_e.pdf

Hastings, R. (2009). Collaboration. *Library technology reports*, *45*(4), 7-9. Retrieved from

http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/ehost/detail?sid=2f135d35-1308-406f-

8f5a-

93f94c3bd5cf%40sessionmgr110&vid=1&hid=126&bdata=#db=aph&AN=43280592

Heerman, B. (2001). The power of partnership. *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, *24*(2),

56. Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca

/docview/219175305?accountid=8056

Hogvold Olsen, T. & Stensaker, I. (2013). A change-recipient perspective on training during

organizational change. *International Journal of Training and Development, 18*(1). 22-36.

doi: 10.1111/ijtd.12018

Jayakumar, G.S.D.A & Sulthan, A. (2014). Modelling: Employee perception on training and

development. *SCMS Journal of Indian Management, 11*(2). 57-70. Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca
/docview/1543741421?accountid=8056

http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/docview/1543741421/abstract?accounti
d=8056

Kinzie, J., & Kuh, G. D. (2004). Going DEEP: Learning from campuses that share responsibility
for student success. *About Campus, 9*(5), 2-8. doi: 10.1002/abc.105

Lai, C., Chen, C., Chui, C., & Pai, D. (2011). The impact of trust on the relationship between
inter-organisational collaboration and product innovation performance. *Technology
Analysis & Strategic Management*, *23*(1), 65-74. doi:10.1080/09537325.2011.537107

Lee, H. (2011). Demonstrating the importance of interaction socialization in organization.
Systems Research and Behavioural Science, 28, 264-269. doi: 10.1002/sres.1066

Lauring, J. & Selmer, J. (2012). Knowledge sharing in diverse organisations. *Human Resource
Management Journal*, *22*(1), 89-105. doi: 10.1111/j.1748-8583.2010.00158.x

Lavrakas, P. J. (2008). *Encyclopedia of survey research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
Publications.

Linnenluecke, M.K. & Griffiths, A. (2010). Corporate sustainability and organizational culture.
Journal of World Business, 45. 357-366. doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2009.08.006

Love, J. H. & Roper, S. (2008). Organizing innovation: Complementarities between cross-
functional teams. *Technovation*, *29*, 192-203. doi: 10.1016/j.technovation.2008.07.008

Madlock, P.E. & Booth-Butterfield, M. (2012). The influence of relational maintenance

    strategies among coworkers. *Journal of Business Communication, 49*(1), 21-47. doi:

    10.1177/0021943611425237

Mazzei, A. (2010). Promoting active communication behaviours through internal

    communication. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *15*(3), 221-234.

    doi:1 0.1108/13563281011068096

McMurray, A. & Sorrells, D. (2007). Student services and the college classroom: Some ideas for

    collaboration. *College Student Journal, 41*(4), 1218-1223. Retrieved from

    http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca/ehost/detail?sid=97d11d83-f5c6-44d7-

    ab02-7b904acd5708%40sessionmgr110&vid=1&hid=114&bdata=#db=s3h&AN=

    28341375

O'Dell, C. & Hubert, C. (2011). Building a knowledge-sharing culture. *The Journal for Quality*

    and Participation, 34(2). 22-26. Retrieved from

    https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca

    /docview/884214955?accountid=8056

Patrick, K. & Dotsika, F. (2007). Knowledge sharing: developing from within. *The Learning*

    Organization, 14(5), 395-406. doi: 10.1108/09696470710762628

Proehl, R.A. (1997). Enhancing the effectiveness of cross-functional teams. *Team Performance*

    Management: An International Journal, 3(3). 137-149. Doi:

    10.1108/13527599710179860

Rezazadeh Bahadoran, H.R., Khosravi Babadadi, A. & Tountab Haghighi, S. (2011). An

empirical study on evaluating training program: A case study of university employee.

Management Science Letters, 1. 247-252. doi: 10.5267/j.msl.2011.04.005

Reddy, W. & McCarthy, S. (2006). Sharing best practice. *International Journal of Health Care

Quality Assurance*, *19*(7), 594-598. doi: 10.1108/09526860610704213

Rowe, W.E, Graf, M., Agger-Gupta, N., Piggot-Irvine, E., & Harris, B. (2013). Action research

engagement: Creating the foundation for organizational change. *Action Learning, Action

Research Association Inc, Monograph Series No. 5*.

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard H. R. (2003). *Techniques to identify themes in qualitative data.*

Retrieved March 6, 2014, from http://www.analytictech.com/mb870/readings/ryan-

bernard_techniques_to_identify_themes_in.htm

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization*. New

York, NY: Currency Doubleday.

Stringer, E. T. (2007). *Action research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Student Success Office. (2013). *About Student Success.* Retrieved from

https://uwaterloo.ca/student-success/about-student-success

University of Waterloo. (2013). *Who we are.* Retrieved from https://uwaterloo.ca/about/who-we-

are

Westcott, R.T. & Duffy, G.L. (2014). Team organization and purpose. *THe Journal for Quality

and Participation, 37*(3). 8-12. Retrieved from

https://ezproxy.royalroads.ca/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.royalroads.ca /docview/1627999505?accountid=8056

Wright, L. (2003). Training it its organizational context: Sharing responsibility. *Performance Improvement Quarterly, 16*(4). 5-22. doi: 10.1111/j.1937-8327.2003.tb00291.x

APPENDIX A: STUDENT SUCCESS OFFICE FORMER ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
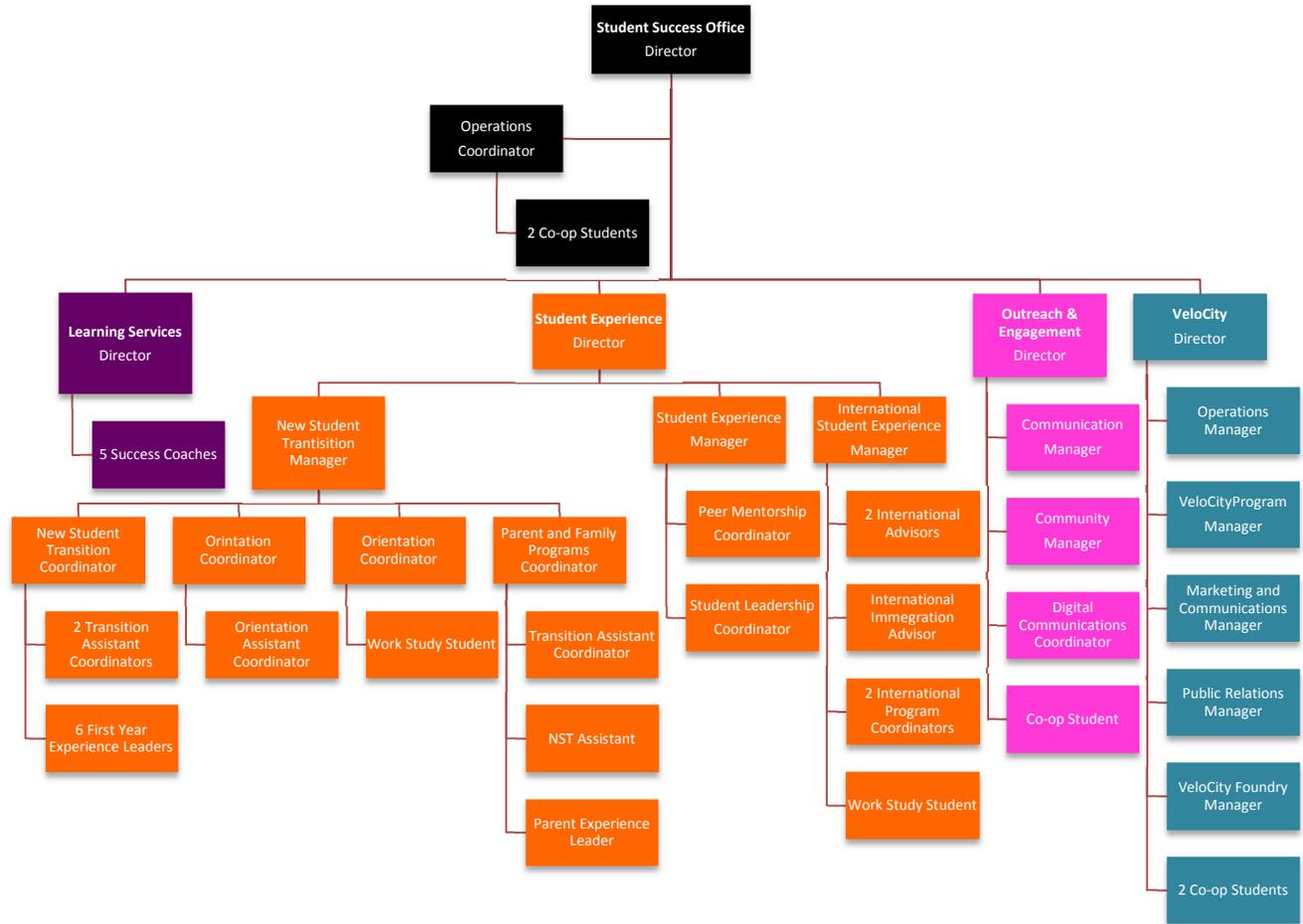
Figure A1. Former Staff Structure of the Student Success Office

APPENDIX B: STUDENT SUCCESS OFFICE NEW ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
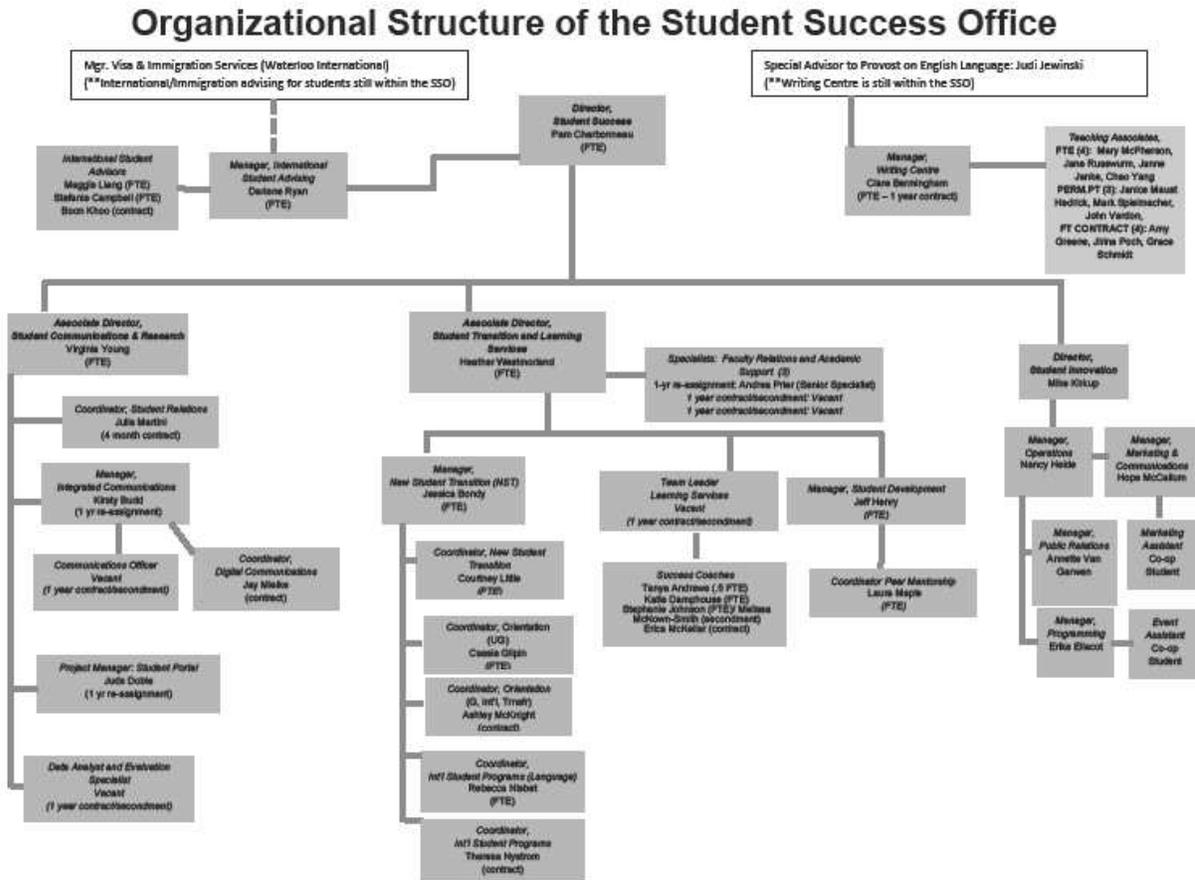
Figure B1. New Staff Structure of the Student Success Office

Retrieved from https://uwaterloo.ca/student-success/sites/ca.student-success/files/uploads/files/sso_orgchart_aug2014.pdf. Copyright 2014 by the Student Success Office, University of Waterloo. Used with permission.

APPENDIX C: ASSOCIATE PROVOST, STUDENTS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART
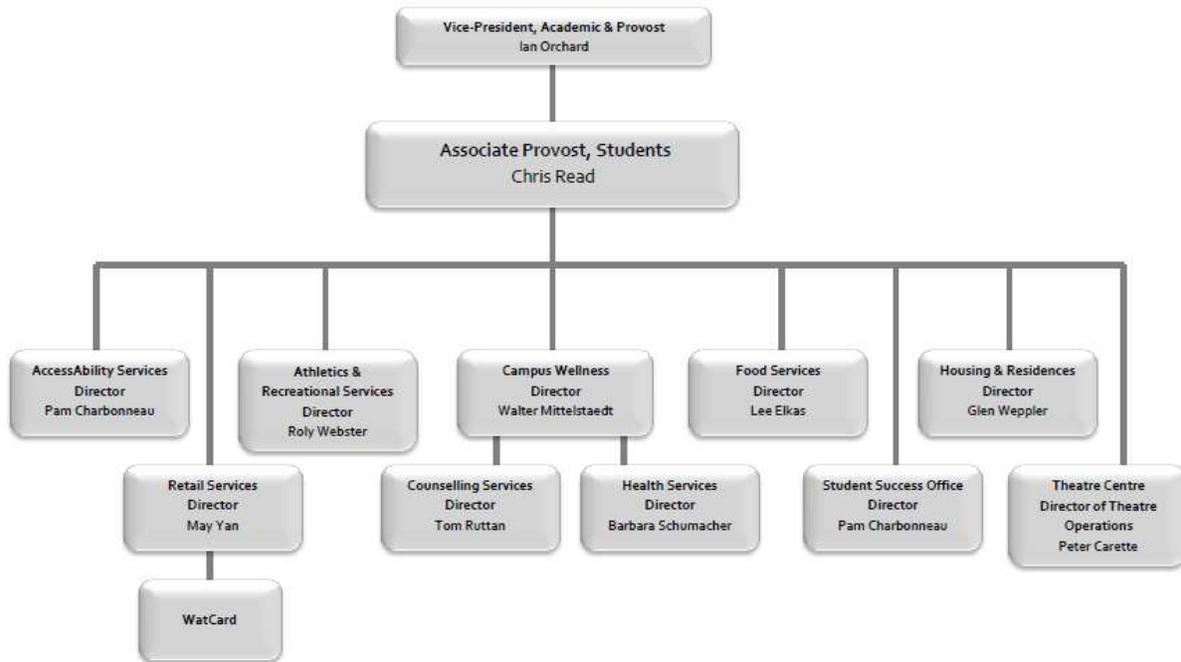
Figure C1. Associate Provost, Students Organizational Chart, University of Waterloo

Retrieved from https://uwaterloo.ca/secretariat-general-counsel/sites/ca.secretariat-general-counsel/files/uploads/files/org13_5.pdf. Copyright 2014 by the Secretariat & Office of General Counsel, University of Waterloo. Used with permission.

APPENDIX D: EMAIL INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

(Email invitation to all potential participants within the Student Success Office)

Dear _____,

I would like to invite you to be part of a research project that I am conducting. This project is part of the requirement for my Master's Degree in Leadership, at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. XXX XXX, Director, School of Leadership Studies: XXX@RoyalRoads.ca or XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX.

This project has been reviewed by and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee and as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

The objective of my research is to focus on relationship building, knowledge sharing and opportunities for partnerships within the Student Success Office, titled "Collaboration with the Student Success Office: Increasing Efficiencies and Partnerships. You have been invited to participate in the research as you are a full-time staff member within the Student Success Office.

There will be two phases of this research, an online survey and an interview matrix. You are invited to participate in either the online survey, the interview matrix, or you may participate in each of these two phases.

The first phase of my research project will consist of an online electronic survey and is estimated to last 15-20 minutes. The survey will open on Monday, May 26th and will be open for three days, until Wednesday, May 28th at 4:30pm. On Monday morning you will receive an email inviting you to participate, including a link to the online survey.

The second phase of the research will consist of an interview matrix, a group interview process. The date of the interview will be determined at a later date, and will last approximately 1.5 hours. When more information becomes available, you will receive an email invitation to register.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to not submit the survey or withdraw from the interview matrix at any time without prejudice.

I realize that due to our collegial relationship, you may feel compelled to participate in this research project. Please be aware that you are not required to participate and, should you choose to participate, your participation would be entirely voluntary. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw from the online survey and/or the interview matrix without prejudice. If you do not wish to participate, simply do not reply to the requests. Your decision to not participate will also be maintained in confidence. Your choice will not affect our relationship or your employment status in any way.

Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have additional questions regarding the project and its outcomes.

If you have any additional questions about my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Gabrielle Smith
Email: XXX@uwaterloo.ca
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext XXX

All the best,
Gabrielle

APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONS

Collaboration within the Student Success Office Survey Questions

1. I have strong working relationships with members of the Student Success Office, within my team (e.g. International Experience Team, Success Coaching, etc).
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

2. I have strong working relationships with members of the Student Success Office, outside of my team.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

3. I feel comfortable approaching individuals outside of my team for assistance on projects.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly Disagree

4. If you Agree/Strongly Agree, what makes you comfortable approaching individuals outside your tem for assistance? (open text)

5. If you Disagree/Strongly Disagree, what would make you comfortable approaching individuals outside your team for assistance? (open text)

6. I feel knowledgeable about who to approach within the Student Success Office when I have specific questions.
   - Strongly Agree
   - Agree
   - Neither Agree nor Disagree

- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

7. If you Agree/Strongly Agree, what makes you knowledgeable about who to approach within the Student Success Office when you have specific questions? (open text)

8. If you Disagree/Strongly Disagree, what would make you knowledgeable about who to approach within the Student Success Office when you have specific questions? (open text)

9. Opportunities for collaboration with members of the Student Success Office exists within my role.
    - Strongly Agree
    - Agree
    - Neither Agree nor Disagree
    - Disagree
    - Strongly Disagree

10. If you Agree/Strongly Agree, what opportunity for collaboration exists? (open text)

APPENDIX F: ELECTRONIC SURVEY CONSENT

(To appear on the first page of the electronic survey)

My name is Gabrielle Smith and this research project, Collaboration within the Student Success Office: Increasing Efficiencies and Partnerships, is part of the requirement for a MA in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. XXX XXX, Director, School of Leadership Studies: XXX@RoyalRoads.ca or XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX.

The research will consist of this survey and is estimated to take 15-20 minutes to complete. The anticipated questions will refer to relationships, knowledge sharing and opportunities for partnerships within the Student Success Office. In addition to submitting my final report to Royal Roads University in partial fulfillment for a MA in Leadership, I will also be sharing my research findings with the Directors within the Student Success Office. In addition, all participants within the Student Success Office will be able to access the information in part of the final report.

The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. All individual data gathered will be kept confidential. All aggregate data will be shared with the Student Success Office following the completion of the research, and a copy of the research can be made available to you.

All data gathered will be stored on the SurveyMonkey servers. As the SurveyMonkey servers are hosted in the United States, American authorities reserve legal right to access this data under the Patriot Act. Information gathered in this research will be downloaded from the server at the end of the survey, and stored in a secure location for one year. Following this, all raw data will be destroyed. As this is an anonymous survey, individual participants' data cannot be removed once submitted.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time while completing the survey without prejudice. Similarly, if you choose not to participate in this research project, this information will also be maintained in confidence. Once you have submitted the survey, you may not withdraw your responses, as they will be a part of the anonymous survey data. Your completion of this survey will constitute your informed consent. By providing this consent, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee.

However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

If you have any additional questions about my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Gabrielle Smith
Email: XXX@uwaterloo.ca
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext XXX

APPENDIX G: ELECTRONIC SURVEY PARTICIPANT APPRECIATION

Thank You

(To appear on the last page of the electronic survey)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey and participate in this research, Collaboration within the Student Success Office: Increasing Efficiencies and Partnerships. The information collected throughout this research will be used to provide recommendations for partnerships and relationship building amongst staff within the Student Success Office.

The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. All individual data gathered will be kept confidential. All aggregate data will be shared with the Student Success Office following the completion of the research, and a copy of the research can be made available to you in late fall 2014.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

Thank you again for your participation in this research.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone, as listed below.

Gabrielle Smith
XXX@uwaterloo.ca
XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX

At any point throughout the research, you may also touch base with my academic supervisor or project sponsor with any questions or concerns:

Dr. XXX XXX   XXX XXX
Director, School of Leadership Studies   Director, Student Success Office
Academic Supervisor   Project Sponsor
XXX@RoyalRoads.ca   XXX@uwaterloo.ca
XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX   XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX

APPENDIX H: INTERIEW MATRIX INFORMATION LETTER

Interview Matrix Information Letter

My name is Gabrielle Smith and this research project, Collaboration within the Student Success Office: Increasing Efficiencies and Partnerships, is part of the requirement for a MA in Leadership at Royal Roads University. My credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by contacting Dr. XXX XXX, Director, School of Leadership Studies: XXX@RoyalRoads.ca or XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX.

The research will consist of this interview matrix and is estimated to take 1 hour and 30 minutes to complete. During this time, you will participate in one on one conversations with three other individuals sitting at your table. You will each be assigned one question and will have the opportunity, through a series of six rounds, to ask your question to each of the three individuals, and have your question answered by each of the three individuals. Following this, all participants will be asked identify themes within the responses to their question. The anticipated questions will refer to relationships, knowledge sharing and opportunities for partnerships within the Student Success Office.

All data collected in the interview matrix will be electronically transcribed, with original files stored in a locked location. The transcribed interview matrix data will be stored electronically on a secure server, backed up on an encrypted hard drive. This data will be destroyed at the end of one year.

The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. All individual data gathered will be kept confidential. All aggregate data will be shared with the Student Success Office following the completion of the research, and a copy of the research can be made available to you.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview matrix without prejudice. If you chose to withdraw following the interview matrix, every effort will be made to remove your individual responses from the data before it is aggregated. If you wish to withdraw, please contact Gabrielle Smith, contact information below.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or

XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

If you have any additional questions about my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Gabrielle Smith
Email: XXX@uwaterloo.ca
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext XXX

APPENDIX I: INTERIEW MATRIX CONSENT FORM

Interview Matrix Consent Form

By signing this form, you agree that you are over the age of 19 and have read the information letter for this study. Your signature states that you are giving your voluntary and informed consent to participate in this project. By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the investigator or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

All data collected in the interview matrix will be electronically transcribed, with original files stored in a locked location. The transcribed interview matrix data will be stored electronically on a secure server, backed up on an encrypted hard drive. This data will be destroyed at the end of one year.

The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. All individual data gathered will be kept confidential. All aggregate data will be shared with the Student Success Office following the completion of the research, and a copy of the research can be made available to you.

☐ I commit to respect the confidential nature of the interview matrix by not sharing identifying information about the other participants.

You are not required to participate in this research project. If you do choose to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time during the interview matrix without prejudice. If you chose to withdraw following the interview matrix, every effort will be made to remove your individual responses from the data before it is aggregated. If you wish to withdraw, please contact Gabrielle Smith, contact information below.

☐ I agree to participate in this study.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee. However, the final decision about participation is yours. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

If you have any additional questions about my research project, please contact me at:

Name: Gabrielle Smith

Email: XXX@uwaterloo.ca
Telephone: XXX-XXX-XXXX ext XXX

Name: (Please Print): _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX J: INTERVIEW MATRIX PARTICIPANT APPRECIATION

Thank You

(To be distributed via email following the interview matrix)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this interview matrix and participate in this research, Collaboration within the Student Success Office: Increasing Efficiencies and Partnerships. The information collected throughout this research will be used to provide recommendations for partnerships and relationship building amongst staff within the Student Success Office.

The information you provide will be summarized, in anonymous format, in the body of the final report. At no time will any specific comments be attributed to any individual. All individual data gathered will be kept confidential. All aggregate data will be shared with the Student Success Office following the completion of the research, and a copy of the research can be made available to you in late fall 2014.

This project has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through a University of Waterloo Research Ethics Committee as well as a Royal Roads University Research Ethics Committee. Participants who have concerns or questions about their involvement in the project may contract the Chief Ethics Officer, Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@uwaterloo.ca or the Office of Research at Royal Roads University at XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX or XXX@royalroads.ca.

Thank you again for your participation in this research.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via email or phone, as listed below.

Gabrielle Smith
XXX@uwaterloo.ca
XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX

At any point throughout the research, you may also touch base with my academic supervisor or project sponsor with any questions or concerns:

Dr. XXX XXX	XXX XXX
Director, School of Leadership Studies	Director, Student Success Office
Academic Supervisor	Project Sponsor
XXX@RoyalRoads.ca	XXX@uwaterloo.ca
XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX	XXX-XXX-XXXX ext. XXX

APPENDIX K: INQUIRY TEAM MEMBER LETTER OF AGREEMENT

Inquiry Team Member Letter of Agreement

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for a Master of Arts in Leadership Degree at Royal Roads University, Gabrielle Smith (the Student) will be conducting an inquiry research study within the Student Success Office at the University of Waterloo to understand the Student Success Office can strengthen internal partnerships in order to foster increased collaboration within the office. The Student's credentials with Royal Roads University can be established by calling Dr. XXX XXX, Director, School of Leadership, at (250) 391-2600 xXXX or email XXX@RoyalRoads.ca

Inquiry Team Member Role Description

As a volunteer Inquiry Team Member assisting the Student with this project, your role may include one or more of the following: providing advice on the relevance and wording of questions and letters of invitation, supporting the logistics of the data-gathering methods, including observing, assisting, or facilitating an interview or focus group, taking notes, transcribing, or reviewing analysis of data, to assist the Student and the Student Success Office organizational change process. In the course of this activity, you may be privy to confidential inquiry data.

Confidentiality of Inquiry Data

In compliance with the Royal Roads University and the University of Waterloo Research Ethics Policies, under which this inquiry project is being conducted, all personal identifiers and any other confidential information generated or accessed by the inquiry team advisor will only be used in the performance of the functions of this project, and must not be disclosed to anyone other than persons authorized to receive it, both during the inquiry period and beyond it. Recorded information in all formats is covered by this agreement. Personal identifiers include participant names, contact information, personally identifying turns of phrase or comments, and any other personally identifying information. Personal information will be collected, recorded, corrected, accessed, altered, used, disclosed, retained, secured and destroyed as directed by the Student, under direction of the Royal Roads Academic Supervisor.

Inquiry Team Members who are uncertain whether any information they may wish to share about the project they are working on is personal or confidential will verify this with Gabrielle Smith, the Student.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understand this agreement.

_____   _____   _____

Name (Please Print)   Signature   Date