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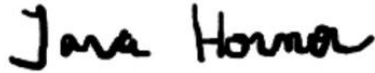
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



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School of Educational Leadership

College Recruitment of Low-Income Underrepresented Minority Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Cassady M. Ogedegbe

January 2021

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Great Grandmother Jimmie, Grandmother Martha, Aunt Brenda, Great Aunt Georgiana, and Great Uncle Bob, my five guardian angels who played a significant role in my life by continually keeping me covered in prayer and love. I know you all are smiling down on me from heaven and are very proud of the woman I have become.

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Abstract

The relationship between the use of discriminatory recruitment procedures against low-income unrepresented minority (URM) students at four-year private institutions based on enrollment managers' and college recruiters' beliefs, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions was this study's focus. Specifically, the following were investigated: (a) how enrollment managers perceive their role in recruiting low-income URM students, (b) how college recruiters understand their role in recruiting low-income URM students, (c) the effective strategies enrollment managers use to prepare recruiters for recruiting low-income URM students, and (d) the differential impact in recruiting low-income URM students versus their counterparts. A supporting factor explored further in this study is how college choice plays a part in this student population's motivation to seek higher education. Purposive sampling was used in this study to identify four four-year universities in the United States and to identify enrollment manager and recruiter participants from these institutions. Data were collected through semistructured interviews regarding enrollment managers' and college recruiters' roles, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and institutional enrollment data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. For this multicase study, nine enrollment managers and college recruiters with experience in admissions and recruitment were selected. Through narrative analysis, five themes were developed: the enrollment manager career, the college recruiter career, the low-income URM students, the recruiting of low-income URM students, and professional development. The findings indicated minimal discrimination in the recruitment procedures used based on enrollment managers and college recruiters' beliefs, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions about this student population and that this student population receives more hands-on guidance and support in the recruitment processes at these institutions than their more

affluent peers. Results further reflected how enrollment managers and college recruiters' beliefs about the hindering obstacles low-income URM students face influenced their behavioral intentions to cater more to this student population in the recruitment process. A recommendation for enrollment managers and college recruiters is to use servant and authentic leadership to support low-income URM students in the recruitment process.

Keywords: recruitment, underrepresented minority (URM) student, enrollment management, student of color, college recruitment, private university, college choice

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Low-income underrepresented minority (URM) students are the focus of significant research, ranging from studies on their academic capacities to their financial strains in high school (Reardon et al., 2012). Researchers have found that students of color earn degrees at a ratio between 1:2 and 1:3 compared to White and Asian students (Green & Wright, 2017). Other study findings have also highlighted many hurdles facing these students that can affect their motivation to complete high school and go to college. However, understanding the difficulty of being raised in a low-income household can shine a light on why enrollments in highly selective colleges are five times greater for White students than for Black students and why low- and middle-income students are likewise extremely underrepresented in the most selective colleges (Reardon et al., 2012). Findings such as these reflect Welton and Williams's (2015) findings that students of color who live in poverty are overrepresented in the lowest-performing schools and often face difficulties in covering the costs of going to college.

Lack of financial stability before and during college can hinder academic achievement and success among low-income URM students. Because of college affordability issues, baccalaureate degree attainment is lower among students from low-income families, with only 12% of students from these families earning a baccalaureate degree compared to 73% of their higher-income peers (Soria et al., 2014, p. 1). For the present study, examining how enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about this population affect their intentions in recruiting them was at the forefront. Recruitment plays a significant part in how students choose the college or university they want to attend. In this chapter, I state the problem driving this study, the study purpose, and the research questions. I also explore the recruitment impact on students from low-income families.

Statement of the Problem

Recruiters report to enrollment managers, who set recruitment goals to increase a more diverse student body. However, these goals do not detail what contributing factors affect these students' college choices, nor practical leadership approaches recruiters can use to help increase enrollment. For recruiters, recognizing the challenges facing low-income URM students can play a part in how they recruit these students. Issues such as having the funds to afford college and the lower academic ability these students often demonstrate upon high school completion remain contributing factors to low enrollment among this population (Declercq & Verboven, 2015). In a 2014 study, Soria et al. found that while many low-income students qualified for federal grants, the tuition costs for these students fell between 42% and 61% of average family income after grants were deducted compared with 11% of average family income for middle- and upper-income students. However, sensitivity to monetary costs and low academic ability is not the same for every low-income URM student, and not being aware of these challenges is perceived as an issue that encourages recruiters to recruit wealthier and more knowledgeable students.

The problem of practice is that there is a disconnect in understanding the factors that affect a low-income URM student's choice of college and a lack of data on whether the beliefs or perceptions enrollment managers and recruiters have of this population affect their recruitment efforts and intentions. Enrollment managers continue to question how much is being done to improve socioeconomic diversity, but little has been done to examine their intentions in recruiting these students. Examining how enrollment managers' beliefs could impact their decisions in creating recruitment strategies for recruiting low-income URM students could provide insights into their consideration of possible leadership approaches that could also assist in recruiting (Monks, 2018). One hard truth is Burd's (2013) finding that 10% of college

admissions directors at four-year colleges gave wealthier and affluent students an advantage in the admissions process over low-income URM students. This supports the fact that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are placed in college at a lower rate than their wealthier and affluent peers (Hodges et al., 2017). In the end, the injustices perpetrated by recruiters who discriminate against low-income URM students will prolong these discriminatory practices and maintain unequal minority representation at these institutions.

Purpose of the Study

Enrollment managers are responsible for setting institutional recruitment policies. Judging low-income URM students by their adverse backgrounds and images is problematic as it can cause reluctance to recruit this population. The purpose of conducting this qualitative study was to explore whether low-income URM students are discriminated against by recruitment procedures based on enrollment managers' and college recruiters' beliefs in misconceptions and stereotypes of this population. The goal was to help enrollment managers and recruiters see how their views can affect their efforts in recruiting these students and also to identify potential leadership approaches that can be used to help improve this population's enrollment. Qualitative exploratory multiple case study was the methodology used in this study. This approach allowed me to see, through the lens of enrollment managers and recruiters, the correlation between factors affecting students' college choices and enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about this population that affect their recruitment intentions.

Since the problem of low-income URM student's decreasing enrollment across institutions is a minimally researched topic, I believed that taking this approach would produce answers to the research questions formulated for this study. The study's key participants were enrollment managers and recruiters at four-year private higher education institutions in the

United States. Since little is known about the recruitment practices among enrollment managers and recruiters at four-year private institutions, I chose to limit this study to these individuals at four of these institutions. Data were gathered to answer the research questions stated next and were used to identify the steps enrollment managers and recruiters should take to improve recruitment procedures.

Research Questions

RQ1. How do enrollment managers perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus?

RQ2. How do college recruiters perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus?

RQ3. What effective strategies do enrollment managers use to prepare recruiters for recruiting the low-income URM student population?

RQ4. What is the differential impact in recruiting low-income URM students versus their counterparts?

Definitions of Key Terms

College recruiter. College recruiters are individuals who navigate complex sets of relationships with students, parents, and high school counselors to communicate the broad vision of their institution and details of the admissions process while simultaneously helping prospective students evaluate whether particular schools are good fits (Olson, 2018).

College recruitment. College recruitment is the process in which university and college recruiters seek out prospective students for undergraduate and graduate admission.

Enrollment management. Enrollment management is an institutional response to the challenges and opportunities that recruiting and retaining the right student body present to a

school's financial health, image, and student quality. It is a research-based process that creates a synergy among recruitment, pricing and financial aid, academic affairs, student life, and constituent relations (National Association of Independent Schools, 2019).

Enrollment manager. The enrollment manager is an administrative official responsible for the development of marketing plans for the recruitment and retention of students. The enrollment manager also coordinates institutional efforts in admission, financial aid, records and registration, and advising (Stewart, 2004).

First-generation student. First-generation students are (a) individuals whose parents did not complete a baccalaureate degree, (b) prior to age 18 years, regularly resided with and received support from only one parent and whose supporting parent did not complete a baccalaureate degree, or (c) prior to age 18 years, did not regularly reside with or receive support from a natural or adoptive parent (University of Washington, 2019).

Leadership strategy. A leadership strategy is a plan, method, or series that aligns with leadership development and institutional aspirations for obtaining a specific goal or result (Center for Creative Leadership, n.d.).

Low-income student. Low-income students are those whose family's taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150% of the poverty level (United States Department of Education, 2019).

Price sensitivity. Price sensitivity is the degree to which consumers' behaviors are affected by the price of the product or service (Ready Ratios, 2019).

Private college. Private colleges are independent schools, usually smaller than public universities that set their own policies and goals and are privately funded (Peterson's, 2019).

Recruitment gap. A recruitment gap is an unresolved recruitment issue that affects the student's enrollment at a college or university.

Socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status (SES) is the social standing or class of an individual or group. It is often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation (American Psychological Association, 2019).

Strategic enrollment management. Strategic enrollment management (SEM) is a set of processes and policies associated with the recruitment and admission of college students, as well as the retention, academic success, and graduation of students enrolled in postsecondary education (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014).

Underrepresented minority (URM). A URM is a group whose percentage is lower than the percentage of the general population in a country. Underrepresented minorities include individuals who are African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan Native, and those of two or more races (Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, 2019).

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 1, I introduced the problem of practice, the study purpose, outlined the research questions, and provided definitions of key terms. In Chapter 2, I synthesize the existing literature on the problem of practice. I also discuss how the low-income URM student population's enrollment in college continues to fluctuate among multiple institutions, supported by the literature. I intend to inform readers of how this problem is viewed from enrollment managers' and recruiters' perspectives and to explore possible solutions to this existing phenomenon.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to investigate if college enrollment managers and recruiters discriminate against low-income URM students because of misconceptions and stereotypes about this population. In Chapter 2, I discuss this study's theoretical framework, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice, college sticker price versus actual price, and Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action. I also discuss research on low-income URM students, the role of enrollment managers and recruiters, and closing the low-income URM student recruitment gap.

I used the Abilene Christian University's (ACU) library and EBSCOhost's OneSearch engine to access research articles and studies on topics related to this study's focus and purpose. Keywords used to conduct this search were college recruitment, low-income underrepresented minority students, college choice, college sticker price, the theory of reasoned action, and recruitment leadership. By using these keywords, I was able to retrieve substantial information from the literature to support this study.

Theoretical Framework

In this study, I explored how enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about low-income URM students might affect their recruitment intentions. This study was grounded in two theories that focus on college recruitment behaviors and factors that can be applied to recruiting student populations. First, the factors that influence college choice might influence enrollment manager and recruiter beliefs about various student populations. As such, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice was an appropriate element in the present study's theoretical framework. This model describes how influential factors encourage the student's attitude in finding the right institution to continue their education. Second, Fishbein

and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action is a theoretical approach that describes how people's beliefs and attitudes influence their intentions and behaviors. Enrollment managers and college recruiters have a significant influence on their institutions' enrollment practices. Grounding the present study in both theories supported the research questions and the study purpose.

Hossler and Gallagher's Three-Phase Model of College Choice

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) generated their three-phase model of college choice by comparing existing theories on student college choices represented in other college choice models. The other models represented theories on how college-bound students decide where they want to study. This model has three stages: predisposition, search, and choice (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). I discuss each stage of the model in detail.

Predisposition. Predisposition is the phase that often receives the least attention when professionals are looking at the norm's students follow when choosing their college or university. Student ability, achievement, SES, educational activities, school characteristics, and parents and peers are influences during this phase (Tatar & Oktay, 2006). Socioeconomic status is a key influence on college choice as it has a cumulative effect on college enrollment plans (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Students with high SES are four times more likely to go to college than students with low SES (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Along with the student's socioeconomic background, the influence of significant others like parents or peers has a strong impact on college choice. Students with high levels of parental encouragement are more likely to attend a four-year selective college as opposed to a two-year institution or a nonselective four-year institution. Also, students with friends who plan to continue their education are more likely to make college attendance plans (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Involvement in educational activities is also a factor in college choice. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) stated that students who are more active in educational activities have a better chance of choosing a college and having a smoother process in selecting the school that is right for them. They further noted that schools that offer more opportunities for cocurricular and extracurricular activities provide environments that encourage more students to consider college. High schools and colleges have various organizational factors that impact this phase; among them, high school curricula quality tends to have a positive relationship with college matriculation.

Overall, according to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), the “whiches, whethers, and nots” (p. 213) are the three types of students that emerge from this phase. Whiches are students who never seriously consider not going to college. Whethers are students who apply to one to two local colleges but may not attend any of them. Nots are students who never really consider going to college or pursue noneducational opportunities (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). No matter the category in which low-income URM students fall, it is still essential to understand all factors that play significant roles in students’ college choices.

College Search. The college search phase is where potential students have more engagement and interaction with the institutions they are interested in attending. This is also the stage in which higher education institutions employ their recruitment strategies to search for students. Tatar and Oktay’s (2006) views of this phase align with Hossler and Gallagher’s (1987) that the search phase tends to be affected by the students’ college values, the student’s search activities, and the university search activities for students. The search activities for the low-income URM student population can often look different compared to their counterparts. Since the low-income URM student population has a reputation for not being academically successful,

higher education institutions need strategies that not only attract these students but support their needs. College searches among this population can be more challenging, according to Hossler and Gallagher (1987), who noted that “Black students, students from low-income families, and students whose parents have less education conduct searches which take longer and are less efficient. They are also more likely to rely on high school counselors for advice” (p. 214).

When seeking the right college or university fit, students often start with a choice set of institutions, which Hossler and Gallagher (1987) defined as a group of institutions that students decide to apply to and seek more information about so they can make better matriculation decisions. However, this stage is not the same for all students (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

When low-income URM students are seeking the right college or university fit, there is a chance that their expectations for finding the right fit can be unrealistic. There is also the chance that these students may be misinformed about the institution by recruiters or may not receive any information at all from their desired institution. Not having a clear understanding of college costs or academic requirements can hinder how low-income URM students view college as an option. College recruiters not taking the initiative to develop relationships with this student population or with their high school counselors continues to add to the problem of decreasing enrollment in this student population. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) stated,

While it is true that students do not seem to use information in a completely rational manner, the lack of accurate information about financial aid and the true cost of attendance may contribute to this problem during the search phase. Students seldom know the actual net price of individual institutions from their choice set on the basis of list price rather than net price. The lack of accurate information and a well-defined search does not mean that every student who selects a non-educational option during the search

phase was a potential matriculant. However, it has been concluded that many low-income students do not enjoy education and would be unlikely to go to college under any circumstances. (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987, pp. 214–215)

College Choice. After students narrow down their top institutions, it is then time to make the final enrollment decision. In this phase, students consider each institution’s pros and cons and compare them, which helps them make their decisions. Key influences in this stage are educational and occupational aspirations, college costs, availability of financial aid, and the college or university’s courtship activities (Tatar & Oktay, 2006). For low-income URM students, college and university courtship activities heavily influence their enrollment decisions (Tatar & Oktay, 2006). Because this population is said to be unlikely to attend college, enrollment managers and recruiters should take the initiative in increasing these activities in hopes of recruiting more of these students. Understanding the need for funds to cover college costs seems to be at the root of the decreasing enrollment for the low-income URM student issue. It is then the institution’s responsibility to fully support students and make them aware of what it takes to be a college student by implementing the right courtship strategies (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Tatar & Oktay, 2006).

Courtship can look different depending on the student’s interest in the institution (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). For low-income URM students, the chance of receiving more financial aid to cover the cost of college may make some institutions more appealing than others. As Hossler and Gallagher (1987) noted, “Financial aid does make a difference, but that large amounts of aid are necessary to move a second-choice school up to a first-choice school” (p. 216). Recruitment in this phase should be strategically marketed to each student population. Approaches should be tailored to the needs of various types of students, such as nontraditional students, first-generation

students, and international students. Specifically, with low-income URM students, recruitment efforts that reflect an understanding of the adversities they face can help these students choose the right college path. Hossler and Gallagher (1987) stated,

The use of merit awards and college communication strategies are part of what might be described as college courtship procedures. It was found that non-aid based activities like personal letters from the president, an on-campus banquet, and special certificates did appear to influence this choice phase. In fact, non-aid courtship procedures may be as important as actual financial aid awards. (p. 217)

Table 1 shows the influential factors, both individual and organizational, that compose the foundation for each college choice phase. For each influential factor, there is also a student outcome that explores the student's preferences in various higher education institutions. The most influential factors will have a direct effect on college choice.

Table 1*Hossler and Gallagher's Three-Phase Model of College Choice*

Model Dimension	Influential Factors		Student Outcomes (Search for)
	Individual	Organizational	
Predisposition (Phase 1)	Student characteristics Significant others Educational activities	School characteristics	College options Noneducational options
Search (Phase 2)	Student preliminary college values Student search activities	College and university search activities (search for students)	Choice set Noneducational options
Choice (Phase 3)	Choice set	College and university courtship activities	Choice

Note. Explanations to supplement or clarify information in the image. From “Studying Student College Choice: A Three-Phase Model and the Implications for Policymakers,” by Hossler, D., & Gallagher, K. S. (1987). *College & University*, 62(3), 207–221. (<https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ354226>).

Private Higher Education Institutions. When choosing a private education, reviews from researchers are often mixed. Some have stated that private institutions have a stigma of being too expensive and having admissions requirements that make it almost impossible for some prospective students to be admitted (Delaney et al., 2016; Thangasamy & Horan, 2016). Others, such as Eide (2018), have stated that students at private colleges tend to graduate more quickly, averaging four point five years compared to six at public institutions. Knowing that students can successfully earn better education at a highly ranked private institution is what could encourage low-income URM student’s to attend. Providing these students with the tools to succeed in their careers and cultivating support systems that prepare them for the real world

supports the mission of private institutions. These institutions typically offer smaller classes and more personal attention and mentoring from faculty (Eide, 2018). They also are more tightly knit academic communities (Eide, 2018). On smaller campuses, students can also find more ways to stand out. Eide cited examples of participating in student government or assisting faculty members in their research—positions that in large universities would often be filled by graduate students. These perks can seem intriguing to prospective students. However, whether these types of institutions take the initiative to recruit low-income URM students remains questionable.

Cartledge et al. (2015) stated,

Higher education institutions seek to attract and wield low-socioeconomic enrollment to create a diverse culture and serve societal welfare. Throughout the past half-century, American postsecondary schools endeavored to achieve targeted minority goals through governmental affirmative action directives or those of their individual boards of trustees. (p. 1)

Cartledge et al. (2015) identified many factors that affect African American students when considering private institutions. Specifically, Cartledge et al. found that athlete status, merit aid, SES, high school grade point averages (GPAs), and American college test (ACT) scores were significantly related to enrollment outcomes at private colleges. High ACT scores, for example, were a negative predictor for enrollment outcomes, indicating that the higher the ACT score, the lesser the likelihood of the student enrolling at a private college (Cartledge et al., 2015). However, Cartledge et al. noted that their data on merit aid (financial aid) were constrained because of a lack of information on final financial aid packages consisting of university grants and tuition discounts. These findings could be very comparable to the URM student population as a whole. However, what private institutions are doing to combat some of

these issues requires further research. To improve admissions recruitment practices, Cartledge et al. (2015) recommended that private institutions determine financial or merit awards for targeted SES groups based on admission decisions. They also suggested that institutions concentrate on GPAs rather than ACTs in assessing student achievement among African Americans.

If recruiters do not take the initiative to inform low-income URM students about private university options fully or do not consider offering aid to help these students pay for college, does this mean that this student population is not an enrollment priority? Discovering the steps private institutions take to increase diversity on their campuses, including the low-income URM student population, can be difficult. However, Hakkola (2019) stated that higher education leaders are responding to calls for increasing student diversity and are using various diversification rationales as well as unique language and tailored recruitment strategies. Hakkola also noted that these approaches, including different representations of diversity, may support or reject particular identities. In a discussion of other research on increasing diversity, Hakkola (2019) stated,

Current admissions strategies do not adequately address all students' needs and backgrounds, which is a result of applying admissions language and strategies that were originally geared toward traditional students. Rather than drawing from a diversity discourse designed for one type of student, as the pool of prospective students changes, college recruiters need to be able to identify and adapt their language and recruitment methods to the backgrounds and expectations of different individuals. (p. 366)

Tailoring recruitment strategies to increase diversity in student populations specifically may alter college choices among these students (Hakkola, 2019). However, Hakkola (2019) noted a significant concern regarding students identifying as racially or ethnically diverse on

their college applications and being placed on different paths for additional review. Hakkola (2019) found that at two private institutions, “All students’ applications were passed along to the director for review. If the director agreed on the first reviewers’ decisions, the application was placed on the admitted, or not admitted, applicant pathway” (p. 369). Next,

If there were disagreements, the application was placed on the path for further review and discussion at a subsequent admissions team meeting. During these meetings, recruiters were able to argue for particular applicants if they felt strongly about their admittance. (Hakkola, 2019, p. 369)

However, in the end, the director had the right to make the final decision about the applicant, even with the consideration of the college recruiters’ concerns (Hakkola, 2019). So, where does the line stop when private institutions will treat all students equally? This is an issue meriting further study, along with how the cost of a college education affects students’ college choices and whether they consider attending private institutions, which will be discussed next.

College Net Price Versus Sticker Price. The cost of a college education is a popular topic among all prospective students and their families (Başgürboğa & Açar, 2019). Specifically, for low-income URM students, their chances of receiving financial aid based on their needs are very high (Jaquette et al., 2016; Karimshah et al., 2013). In some cases, these students’ SES encourages or hinders their decision to go to college. Many researchers have found that these students often choose not to attend college because they are misinformed or not educated about the financial responsibilities college requires. Hossler and Bontrager (2014) detailed these responsibilities:

Financial factors such as costs of attendance, the availability and the amount of financial aid, and net price affect student college choice to a significant extent. Although

sometimes most students do not know exactly how much they need to pay to attend a college of their choice, the costs of attendance with any measures (such as tuition, net price, sticker price) affect the likelihood of college enrollment and the types of college in which students enroll. (p. 117)

Over the years, the issue with the lack of financial aid for many students has become more prominent across campuses. In the 1970s and 1980s, financial aid was a motivating factor in why students chose to go to college. Kinzie et al. (2004) noted that the type of financial aid, such as grants, loans, or work-study, and the amount of aid offered, in conjunction with tuition costs, strongly influenced where students went to college. In this case, understanding the differences in grant and loan money for college expenses helped make students feel more secure in earning a college degree. However, for some, “Colleges became less attractive when expenses and distance from home increased, yet became more attractive when the availability of aid increased (Kinzie et al., 2004, p. 29). Monks (2018), who investigated no-loan policies in a set of public institutions, concluded that eliminating loans from financial aid packages significantly increased the enrollment of low-income students and increased the percentage of the class that received Pell Grants.

Research findings vary on how financial aid may affect students’ college choices. Monks (2018) noted that financial aid and admissions policies might be relevant to low-income students’ enrollment decisions. However, the institutional setting may significantly influence its ability to attract low-income students as there may not be a sufficient supply of students in the area with lower SES (Monks, 2018). The influence that enrollment managers have in developing the best recruitment strategies depends on their institution’s position in the higher education market. Understanding that enrollment managers continue to be tasked with developing tuition,

fees, and aid policies designed to increase net revenues and admit an academically prepared and diverse student body can affect how low-income URM students are recruited (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014, p. 286).

Understanding College Net Price Versus Sticker Price. Hossler and Bontrager (2014) stated that “Tuition or sticker price is the published price of tuition, which often excludes fees and associated costs [such as room and board, books, and travel]”; p. 358). They also defined net price or net costs as the total cost of attendance less the financial assistance received. In some cases, loans can be subtracted from the total cost of attendance to arrive at the net price, as is the case with net price calculators required by the federal government (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014, p. 358). Understanding the difference between net price and sticker price can impact low-income URM students’ decisions in choosing a college. Higher education institutions often publish their sticker price to students with little explanation. As such, many students may misunderstand the difference between net price and sticker price. For consistency with institutional marketing plans, when college recruiters speak with students, they tend to relay information reflecting their institution’s sticker price. To understand what these terms mean, students might take the initiative and simply ask about the difference. However, the answers they may receive might not be genuinely informative.

The perception that college expenses are way too expensive can scare students from low socioeconomic backgrounds from attending college. This perception is also relevant to first-generation students whose parents do not know how the college system works. However, aid made available for first-generation and low-income students can offer them hope that they will be able to attend college. From the institution’s perspective, using the higher prices is a means of differentiating the quality; that is, the higher the cost, the better the education (Hossler &

Bontrager, 2014). Ultimately, recruiting professionals know that net price often differs from sticker price (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Nevertheless, recruiting professionals knowing these differences between price but failing to inform students supports the notion of how enrollment managers and recruiters present this information is an ongoing and multifaceted concern. Representatives of higher education institutions must take into consideration the need to correctly guide students and their families regarding college costs and available aid (Andrews et al., 2016; Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018). This means it is the enrollment managers and college recruiters' duty to ensure that students and their families are well educated about the college process. Institutions with enrollment managers and recruiters who take pride in informing students correctly not only demonstrate the support they give these students but also show their upstanding character.

In a 2019 report on financial aid benchmarks for four-year private and public institutions, the research firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz created a table with data from freshmen students at these institutions that highlighted the many categories of student need and aid. Among the key takeaways from this table was that

Ten years ago, private institutions covered 85 percent of student need. In the past decade, the average percent of need met has dropped 9 points. Today, students and their families feel mounting pressure to cover the cost of attending a private college or university.

(Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2019, p. 9)

Along with the takeaways from this table, Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2019) made some recommendations for higher education institutions to follow in the future, including that “With need on the rise and the percentage of met need down, communication is key to recruiting, enrolling, and retaining the right students” (p. 19). This communication starts with enrollment

managers preparing college recruiters to be clear about their college process. Also, for institutions to move forward with meeting the institution's mission, they must

Be proactive in communicating aid, value, and affordability to ensure awarding is simple, easy to understand, and early enough so students can make an informed college decision. Engage parents in the college financing process—target communication for different groups of students: residents, non-residents, and students with high need. Ensure the awarding plan addressability and willingness to pay but also support student retention and recruitment. (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2019, p. 19)

Figure 1 shows why students need financial aid to cover their expenses when they are not able to cover the cost themselves. The increase in need shown in this figure puts into perspective the background low-income URM students come from and what they are up against when considering private higher education institutions to attend.

Figure 1*Private First-Year Student Trend Data***PRIVATE FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS****4) PRIVATE FIRST-YEAR STUDENT TREND DATA:
FAFSA APPLICATIONS, EFC, PARENTAL INCOME, NEED**

ACADEMIC YEAR FOR WHICH AID WAS REQUESTED	Percent of freshman admits who filed a FAFSA	Percent of enrolled freshmen who filed a FAFSA	Average parental income for FAFSA filers	Average EFC for FAFSA filers	Average need for FAFSA filers	Average percent of need met	Average percent of merit aid which met need	Average unmet need (for needy students)
2018-19	69.6%	90.2%	\$111,090	\$23,207	\$36,055	75.8%	76.3%	\$11,177
2017-18	70.9%	89.6%	\$102,132	\$21,905	\$35,073	75.9%	75.9%	\$10,525
2016-17	63.5%	89.2%	\$100,037	\$20,952	\$33,724	78.8%	75.5%	\$10,414
2015-16	64.3%	89.4%	\$98,388	\$20,358	\$32,832	74.8%	75.5%	\$10,547
2014-15	66.8%	87.2%	\$103,518	\$20,834	\$28,322	74.6%	76.0%	\$10,038
2013-14	67.8%	87.7%	\$99,208	\$16,490	\$27,973	74.5%	76.9%	\$9,874
2012-13	67.9%	87.6%	\$95,855	\$15,898	\$27,290	74.1%	77.5%	\$9,665
2011-12	67.6%	88.4%	\$91,276	\$14,794	\$26,212	74.0%	77.7%	\$8,475
2010-11	68.0%	87.6%	\$90,812	\$14,582	\$25,518	75.4%	76.9%	\$8,996
2009-10	not available	87.5%	\$93,029	\$15,200	\$23,559	76.6%	80.0%	\$7,838
2008-09	not available	84.1%	\$90,312	\$18,526	\$21,783	85.8%	76.0%	\$3,843
2007-08	not available	83.4%	\$87,311	\$17,573	\$20,551	84.8%	73.0%	\$3,779

Note. The data include Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications, Expected Family Contribution (EFC), parental income, and need. From *2019 Discounting Report for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions*, by Ruffalo Noel Levitz, p. 9. Copyright 2019 by Ruffalo Noel Levitz. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

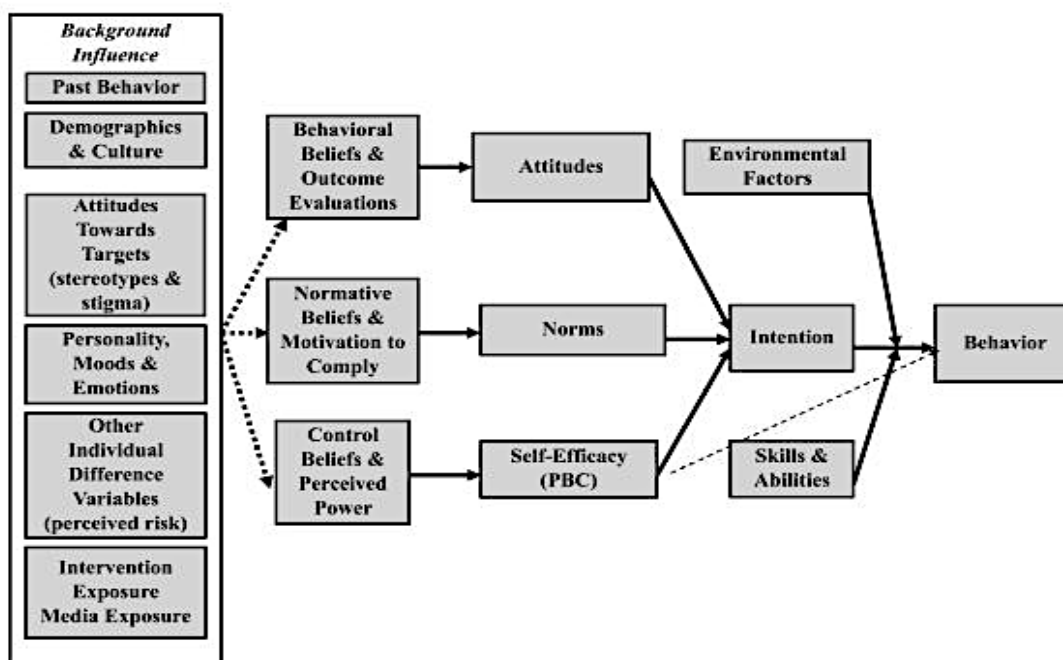
Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action

The theory of reasoned action (TRA), developed by Fishbein and Ajzen, accounts for the role of attitudes and intentions on behavior (Gass & Seiter, 2011). The TRA explains how individual attitudes and normative factors affect their behavior. This theory also attempts to look at how a person's background influences and intentions predict their future behavior, described

in Figure 2. The TRA has been widely used in research on individual attitudes and beliefs. However, to my knowledge, it has not been used as a lens for understanding and improving college recruitment processes as they relate to low-income URM students.

Figure 2

History of Theory of Reasoned Action



Note. Adapted from Chapter 9: Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior and Integrated Behavioral Model, in *Models and Mechanisms of Public Health*, by M. Mathew, K. Li, J. Kloosterman, A. Albright, & N. Taddesse, (<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-buffalo-environmentalhealth/chapter/history-of-theory-of-reasoned-action/>). Copyright n.d. by M. Mathew, K. Li, J. Kloosterman, A. Albright, & N. Taddesse. Reprinted with permission (see Appendix A).

Guo and Feng (2011) stated that if one were to assume that behavior is founded on rationality, the TRA “posits a model conceptually applicable to entire human activities” (p. 38).

In developing this theory, the notion that people care about their behavior and how their intentions are portrayed to others was foundational. Positive attitudes toward an object will encourage positive behavioral intentions; negative attitudes will encourage negative behavioral intentions (Chilcutt, 2014). An object can be “any discriminable aspect of the individual’s world, which could be a person, group of people, or institution” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 12). In my opinion, how people view certain norms that make them react positively or negatively in various situations is worthy of further research. The TRA is grounded in many factors; however, belief, self-efficacy, and behavioral intention, discussed next, are three factors that heavily support an individual’s attitude.

Belief. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) wrote that “Belief represents the information a person has about the object” (p. 12). They further noted that in previous research, “Attempts to explain discriminatory behaviors have typically referred to attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice, and ethnocentrism” (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 1). How these discriminatory behaviors are formed determines how people will carry out these behaviors backed by their beliefs. For example, information that creates misconceptions about low-income URM students’ lack of academic success and action in the classroom could result in enrollment managers and recruiters forming negative attitudes about this population. If negative attitudes are formed about this population, and they result in this population being discriminated against in admissions and recruitment strategies, it can have detrimental outcomes for students, enrollment managers, and recruiters. Understanding one’s beliefs start with knowing if facts or false interpretations support these beliefs. If beliefs are consistent with facts, people might be able to change others’ negative views of an object. For example, according to Cox (2016), it is known that

Black, Latino, and lower SES students are less able to pay for college; they are less likely to have access to a robust college-preparatory curriculum during high school; and are not necessarily well versed in the nuances of college entrance requirements, college admissions, and financial aid options. (p. 3)

Given this knowledge, enrollment managers and recruiters should be working to form strategies that support these students in hopes of helping them overcome their obstacles. If there is a significant force with a mission to help these students achieve their goals in life, there can also be room for enrollment managers and recruiters beliefs about this population to change. It is also essential for enrollment managers and recruiters to be aware of their self-efficacy and what motivates their behavior and decisions in recruiting this student population.

Self-Efficacy. According to Bandura (1977),

Self-efficacy influences choice of behavioral settings. People fear and tend to avoid threatening situations they believe exceed their coping skills, whereas they get involved in activities and behave assuredly when they judge themselves capable of handling situations that would otherwise be intimidating. (p. 193)

Bandura went on to state that “Efficacy expectations determine how much effort people will expend and how long they will persist in the face of obstacles and aversive experiences. The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts” (1977, p. 194). Enrollment managers and college recruiters’ beliefs that increasing the enrollment of low-income URM students as being difficult or easy can affect their motivations in recruiting this population. Self-efficacy encompasses four factors: experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and physiological feedback. In the present study’s context, work experience refers to the experience of completing similar enrollment management and college recruitment tasks. Vicarious

experience refers to enrollment managers and recruiters seeing someone perform a task that, in turn, influences their performance. So, for example, if recruiter A observes recruiter B performing well in increasing enrollment numbers for low-income URM students, then recruiter A's self-efficacy will increase; however, if recruiter B does not perform well in increasing enrollment numbers for low-income URM students, then recruiter A's self-efficacy decreases.

Social persuasion refers to receiving encouragement to complete a task (Expert Program Management, 2018, para. 14). For instance, if a college recruiter receives support and encouragement from enrollment managers that motivates them to recruit this student population, it may help to increase their self-efficacy. If recruiters do not receive the support or assistance from their superiors, then their self-efficacy might decrease. Physiological feedback refers to being aware of the feelings and physical sensations a person encounters when confronted with performing a task (Expert Program Management, 2018, para. 15). For example, if college recruiters show signs of nervousness or anxiety about visiting Title 1 (low-income) schools, they cannot relate to these students and will not be able to keep their attention, and this could negatively affect their self-efficacy. However, if the recruiters have great feelings about visiting Title 1 schools and can relate to low-income URM students, their self-efficacy may increase. Overall, all four factors lead to an individual's behavior and motivations for performing a task. For enrollment managers and college recruiters, self-efficacy is an essential part of their behavioral intentions in recruiting this student population.

Behavioral Intention. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) stated that "Behavioral intention refers to a person's intentions to perform various behaviors" (p. 12). In the present study's context, if enrollment managers intend to prepare their recruiters to recruit low-income URM students based on misconceptions, then their efforts may reflect recruiting these students minimally or not

at all. However, if enrollment managers are aware of the misconceptions about this population but still form positive attitudes, and these positive attitudes are imparted to their recruiters, this demonstrates the behavioral intention to acknowledge these misconceptions in preparing their recruiters to recruit these students.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) further stated that “Intentions involve four different elements: the behavior, the target object at which the behavior is directed, the situation in which the behavior is to be performed, and the time at which the behavior is to be performed” (p. 292). There are many possible scenarios of how enrollment managers and recruiters form their behaviors in recruiting these students. Deciphering specific intentions can be difficult because the target object, situation, and time can change these intentions. Table 2 shows two scenarios illustrating how enrollment managers and recruiters can demonstrate their intentions.

Table 2

Specificity of Intentions

Behavior	Target Object	Situation	Time
A college recruiter may intend to set up a visit	To recruit low-income underrepresented minority (URM) students	At a low-income high school	During the first and second periods of class
An enrollment manager intends to set up a meeting to strategize with recruiters	To recruit low-income URM students	At the higher education institution	During the summer semester to prepare for fall

In reviewing these scenarios, it is evident how enrollment managers’ and recruiters’ intentions can change depending on the four elements. Whether the enrollment strategies will

work best in the fall or spring or recruiting students in a specific area can alter how enrollment managers and recruiters intend to increase low-income URM student enrollment. Enrollment managers and recruiters holding on to their beliefs and following up with intentions based on their feelings can continue to hinder these students or work in their favor.

Low-Income Underrepresented Minority Student

Many low-income URM students have lived rough lives in poverty and are rarely exposed to what college is or how they can get there. Flores et al. (2017) stated that “Attending school in an urban context seems to have a consistently negative influence on college enrollment, and therefore, college degrees remain even less attainable for this population (p. 899). Cox (2016) supported the same argument in stating that such students are “less likely than their white or more affluent peers to graduate from high school, less likely to enroll in college, and less likely to successfully earn a college degree” (p. 2). Further observation revealed that low-income URM students do not receive the same recruitment efforts or encouragement as their counterparts. This disparity supports the notion that students who come from households where their parents have attended college and who are considered middle to upper class have a distinct advantage over other students (Berumen et al., 2015; Jaquette et al., 2016).

Hoxby and Avery (2013) observed that many recruiters devote significant resources to recruiting low-income students who apply and on programs to increase their numbers of low-income applicants that vary in results. Because low-SES students are the minority in higher education, “their underrepresented identity is likely to be quite often salient to them, regularly reminding them of their differences from others which also causes others to judge based on these differences” (Jury et al., 2017, p. 26). Higher education is far from being a culturally neutral environment for low-SES students because the system is built and organized on middle and

upper-class cultural norms, unwritten codes, or “rules of the game” (Jury et al., 2017, p. 25). Trying to live up to their counterparts’ social norms and standards discourages these students from considering higher education. Also, the lack of outreach programs designed to recruit low-SES students and a lack of transitional support for students who may be the first in their family to attend a university add to the problem (Karimshah et al., 2013, p. 6). Increasing the enrollment of these students should be a joint effort between all higher education professionals, and one possible way is to show concern for these students’ futures (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). If there is a more strategic recruitment plan where student services departments take the initiative to reach out to inform these students of their options, their efforts can assist in eliminating this problem (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014).

When low-SES students enter higher education, they can face unknown rules that contribute to psychological issues that may be reflected in their emotional experiences, identity management, self-perception, and motivation (Jury et al., 2017). Ensuring that these students are aware that they are just as valuable as their affluent peers and do not have to live up to social norms can be life-changing (Jury et al., 2017). The number of low-income URM students applying to college and the failures they experience often paint a negative picture to the enrollment management team. Research findings continue to show that even high-achieving low-income students are far less likely to graduate from college than their more affluent peers (Millett & Kevelson, 2018, p. 6). Findings like these suggest that since these students are unsuccessful in college, they should not be heavily recruited (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). However, this is the biggest misconception that deters these students from enrolling (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). Studies have shown that students from low socioeconomic backgrounds continue to be typically placed at lower rates than students from higher socioeconomic

backgrounds and that Latino and Black students are placed at lower rates than White or Asian students (Hodges et al., 2017). Even though these students are perceived as being incapable of reaching college success, it does not mean their possibilities have an end (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017; Hodges et al., 2017).

Since the high cost of college plays a significant factor in low enrollment among low-income URM students, these students are often advised to attend community colleges first. Millet and Kevelson (2018) noted that minority, first-generation college students are disproportionately more likely than White first-generation college students to enroll at two-year colleges, at which there are no minimum qualifications. Promoting community college over a university encourages the thought that two-year colleges are the only options for these students, especially when university representation is nonexistent in their schools. Judging these students by their standardized test scores, monetary issues, and what others feel they cannot achieve overlooks their potential for being successful college students (Hodges et al., 2017). If recruiters follow these perceptions, these students can continue to go unrecognized due to their race and culture, which again affects their enrollment (Hodges et al., 2017).

Students who fall into the low-income URM category are also considered first-generation students. Since these students seem to check off many boxes related to their background, in reality, they are fighting two battles—of not being prepared for college because they are the first person to attend in their family and also living in poverty. According to Jury et al. (2017), “First-generation students tend to have a lower grade point average and are more likely to leave college without a degree than are continuing-generation students (i.e., students who have at least one parent with a bachelor’s degree or higher”); pp. 24–25). If enrollment managers and college recruiters are thinking outside of the box in comparing these students to their more affluent

peers, then this should generate ideas of how these low-income URM students can be supported adequately in the admissions process (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). Feelings of discouragement among low-income URM students when comparing themselves to their counterparts should not be reinforced by a lack of effort from any enrollment management team (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). As Jury et al. (2017) stated, “Indeed, higher education is a new and often unfamiliar environment for low-SES students, and they frequently have difficulty embracing their new identity as college students, but they still should be a priority” (p. 26). Low SES students regularly report feeling like they do not belong, which also affects their motivation to stay in college and see through to the end (Jury et al., 2017).

It is said that university systems sustain social inequalities by promoting attitudes, speech, behaviors, and knowledge that align more with high SES families than with low SES families (Jury et al., 2017, p. 29). Higher education systems continuing to be more supportive of high SES families while giving low SES families minimal effort maintains recruitment injustices among low-income URM students. Not only has recruiting low-income URM students proven challenging for some institutions, understanding the extent to which economic and cultural capital influence this population is also challenging. Jury et al. (2017) noted that

Low-SES students have a lower chance of success in higher education not only because of less access to economic capital (i.e., financial resources) but also because of less access to cultural capital (e.g., knowledge, behaviors, and values that can be more or less familiar to an individual and more or less promoted in a system). The parents of low-SES students lack familiarity with the dominant culture of the university system and, as a result, are unable to effectively transmit the ‘appropriate’ cultural capital to their children. (Jury et al., 2017, p. 29)

It is known that schools in lower-income areas have fewer resources. The resources needed for students to be successful in high school and prepare them for college are almost nonexistent at Title 1 schools, which are schools that receive federal funding to help lower-income students who are at risk of falling behind or are behind in their studies, with the goal of bridging the achievement gap between low-income students and other students (Clark, 2019). Even with Title 1 funds, issues remain regarding sufficient financial resources so that students can receive better books for test prep or money to support college access programs that prepare students for college. Exploring the influence that resources and parental or peer influence have on low-income URM students and exploring how these same resources influence enrollment managers and recruiters can help in generating solutions for the lack of support these students receive in recruitment and admissions processes.

Role of College Enrollment Managers and Recruiters

College recruitment procedures vary among higher education institutions, and enrollment managers are at the forefront of creating strategic recruitment plans. College recruiters use a variety of strategies to carry out these plans and meet enrollment goals, including visits to high schools, colleges, and other outreach events (Olson, 2018). Further, college recruiters are responsible for navigating “complex sets of relationships with students, parents, and high school counselors to communicate the broad vision of their institution and details of the admissions process, while simultaneously helping prospective students evaluate whether a particular school is a good fit” (Olson, 2018, p. 127). Previous research on identifying strategies for recruiting a generalized student population can be taken into consideration. However, there is minimal existing research on how enrollment managers and college recruiters use strategic leadership in

recruiting low-income URM students. I discuss the role of strategic leadership in recruitment next.

Strategic Leadership

In recruitment, strategic leadership encompasses making clear and concise plans to achieve institutional goals and align tasks to fulfill the desired goals. Huntie (2018) stated that “Strategic leadership enhances an organization’s sustainable competitive advantage through not only its strategy but also its vision, values, culture, climate, leadership, structure, and systems” (p. 322). When strategic leadership is practiced, it is typically demonstrated by top-level managers such as enrollment managers, the present study’s focus. Coban et al. (2019) stated that “Employees want to have a vision in which direction they should work. It is the strategical leader who will give this direction to employees. The strategical leader is also a leader who has strategical thinking and strategical planning skills” (p. 131). There are many leadership approaches some may see fit to be effective in increasing enrollment of low-income URM students. However, it is the enrollment manager’s commitment to using strategic leadership and planning that guides college recruiters in their recruitment efforts (Burch et al., 2015).

Not every student is the same, but adopting a strategic leader mindset where both enrollment managers and college recruiters demonstrate flexibility and adapt to student needs is vital in helping students excel (Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018). Huntie (2018) identified the dimensions of strategic leadership as strategic orientation, strategic execution, and strategic alignment. Strategic orientation includes (a) customer orientation, or knowing one’s customers and how to serve them; (b) competitor orientation, or knowing one’s key competitors and how to address the challenges they present; and (c) cost orientation, or knowing the costs of products and services and how to save costs (Huntie, 2018). Huntie further defined strategic execution or

implementation as using organizational structure tactics, incentives, and control systems to help implement strategies. Strategic alignment reflects how the organizational strategy aligns with internal and external organizational functioning (Huntie, 2018). Some institutions use older enrollment management models that do not include student services departments; others use strategic enrollment management (SEM) models that emphasize the importance of strategic leadership, which has been shown to result in significant enrollment gains (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Strategic enrollment management models demonstrate the notion that it takes every department in a higher education institution to ensure that students are succeeding and receiving the support they need (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014).

Enrollment Management Versus Strategic Enrollment Management

Hossler and Bontrager (2014) defined enrollment management as “both an organizational concept as well as a systematic set of activities designed to enable educational institutions to exert more influence over their student enrollments and total net tuition revenue derived from enrolled students” (p. 43). Enrollment management began in the 1960s to mid-70s, when university leaders developed various strategies to understand and enhance student enrollment. According to Kinzie et al. (2004), these changes, which reflected new marketing techniques and a focus on retaining students, formed enrollment management’s foundation. As students became savvier and technology advanced, it was the institution’s responsibility to keep up with the trends for enrollment tactics to be effective (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Some of these techniques included improved marketing plans that reflected targeted mailing strategies and telemarketing techniques to attract more students (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Adopting these techniques resulted in admissions officers doing their jobs more efficiently and having a better idea of how to communicate with students in hopes of getting them to enroll (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014;

Kinzie et al., 2004). Having communication plans that called for admissions officers to cater to specific student populations also worked in enrollment management teams' favor (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Tracking how students made their choice in higher education institutions and taking these results to generate new recruitment tactics all encompassed the beginning of enrollment management.

Enrollment management models continued to change to serve the needs of future generations better. While the foundation of enrollment management only encompassed the essential recruitment functions, it grew and changed over the years and became more strategic. In the 1990s, typical enrollment management programs reflected a mixture of marketing, admissions, public relations, financial management, statistics, institutional research, and enrollment projections (Kinzie et al., 2004). Most models also brought together admissions and financial aid (Kinzie et al., 2004).

Hossler and Bontrager (2014) described SEM as “a comprehensive approach to integrating all of the university’s programs, practices, policies, and planning related to achieving the optimal recruitment, retention, and graduation of students” (p. 43). They further defined SEM as comprising the following components:

- Characteristics of the institution and the world around it.
- Institutional mission and priorities.
- Optimal enrollments (number, quality, diversity).
- Student recruitment.
- Student fees and financial aid.
- Retention.
- Institutional marketing.

- Career counseling and development.
- Academic advising.
- Curricular and program development.
- Methods of program delivery.
- Quality of campus life and facilities.

Strategic enrollment management became the best option for higher education institutions when institutional leaders realized that increasing enrollment for students takes more than having support from just the admissions and financial aid departments (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). For enrollment strategies to be more productive, all 12 SEM components should be included as these components result in efficient systems for recruiting all student populations (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). What needs to be explored further is if an institution is still operating under the enrollment management model rather than a strategic enrollment management model, how are enrollment managers and recruiters filling in the gap with the recruitment of the low-income URM student population? Do their behavior and intentions change depending on the institution's idea of what is useful to recruit these students? Could the fact that some institutional departments do not have a plan in collaborating to recruit this student population that, in turn, affects enrollment managers and recruiters' intentions no matter their beliefs? There could be many questions and theories generated from understanding both enrollment models. However, the overall goal of recruiting the low-income URM student population seems to render that there needs to be a solid structure of support and encouragement (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017; Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). Having this structure can help to eliminate the lack of recruitment these students face in hopes of increasing their enrollment.

Lack of Recruitment Efforts Targeting Low-Income Underrepresented Minority Students

The issue of minimal effort in recruiting low-income URM students continues to dishearten many across campuses (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). Even though recruiting students from this population has been a challenge for many institutions, the issue of them being minimally supported in the admissions and recruitment process has progressed over the decades (Cestau et al., 2017). Low-income URM students are still thought of as at-risk students who rarely entertain the thought of furthering their education. As Bastedo and Bowman (2017) stated, “For students from low-SES high schools, the differential opportunities available to these students make equivalent academic qualifications far more difficult to obtain” (p. 67). Various researchers such as Bastedo and Bowman (2017), Cox (2016), Harris and Smith (2016), and Declercq and Verboven (2015) have noted that higher education institutions see the importance of recruiting these students and offering them the same opportunities as their counterparts. Still, actual efforts remain to be seen in the recruitment field. Bastedo and Bowman (2017) stated that “Although there is evidence that admissions officers have preferences for lower SES applicants from underserved high schools, these preferences have been demonstrated empirically when academic qualifications are considered on an all-other things-equal basis” (p. 67). Recruiting this student population may be a goal for some institutions, but how enrollment managers’ and recruiters’ intentions may affect their recruitment efforts is still a concern.

The issue may not be whether the stereotypes mentioned above of these students are true or not, but rather that they are not offered the same opportunities or recruitment efforts as their counterparts for other reasons. Bastedo and Bowman’s (2017) findings supported this notion. They suggested that “the lack of access for low-SES students in colleges may be partially due to a lack of high-quality information rather than an unwillingness to consider class-based disparities

or an overreliance on any litmus test for admission” (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017, p. 73). High-quality information that covers admission, financial aid, and academic major options comes from college recruiters, and providing this information sets a student on the right path to college (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017). If low-income URM students do not receive this college information, how can they be encouraged to go to college and combat the negative stigmas society forms about their population? Further exploring this issue could open the door to knowing why these students are being served this injustice (Jaquette et al., 2016). The failure to recognize inadequate efforts to recruit this student population continues to be an injustice that hinders their college opportunities (McKinney & Hagedorn, 2017).

Many have argued that colleges and universities are not doing enough to enroll low-income URM students and that emphasizing selectivity, test scores, and tuition revenue over socioeconomic diversity progresses the issue (Burd, 2013; Monks, 2018). More importantly, “rather than recruiting heavily in low-income high schools with large populations of URM students, institutions often focus recruiting efforts on affluent high schools, with large populations of students who are high-achieving and willing to pay high tuition prices” (Jaquette et al., 2016, p. 642). If colleges want to enroll these students actively, they must work to align their efforts with the mission of creating a diverse and academically strong student body (Gurantz et al., 2017). Recruiters who follow their enrollment manager’s instructions and do not take the initiative to go beyond their target area to help lead low-income URM students to success continue this cycle (Jaquette et al., 2016). Colleges and universities increasingly engage in admissions recruitment efforts by hiring regional recruiters or implementing extensive merit aid policies, but this does not speak to the issue of enrollment managers or recruiters demonstrating their good intentions for recruiting these students (Harris & Smith, 2016).

Enrollment managers locating geographic areas with high concentrations of academically and financially desirable students and assigning their recruiters to only these areas exacerbates the issue (Harris & Smith, 2016). When expanding recruitment activities, it should be considered whether enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about low-income URM students are affecting their intentions of recruiting them, which would continue the injustice for these students. However, efforts to create campus cultures that affirm students' of color cultural backgrounds and traditions will work in the institution's favor (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014, p. 500). No matter the enrollment managers' or recruiters' beliefs about this student population, they must work toward creating racially diverse student bodies (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014). "Accomplishing racial diversity in student populations can be achieved through targeted recruitment efforts, outreach to high schools with large numbers of students of color, and employing recruiters knowledgeable about communities of color" (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014, p. 500).

Closing the Gap in Recruiting Low-Income Underrepresented Minority Students

Many low-income URM youth want out of their harsh living conditions and environments, which produce very few college graduates. Yet, these young people may have a hard time seeing a way out if they are not presented with options that give them hope when it comes to their futures. Financial assistance for attending college and supporting the "belonging rank" are among the most significant factors for achieving success among low-income URM youth (Chang et al., 2016, p. 16). Growth and change are challenging, and it can take unpredictable experiences to trigger both (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). Students' postsecondary educational expectations can reflect their innate sense of their future possibilities (Kim & Nuñez, 2013). However, if these students never think about going to college because of their

environments, they will continue down that same path until someone helps alter their thinking (Kim & Nuñez, 2013).

The mission of recruiting is to provide all students the option of going to college (Harris & Smith, 2016). Specific to low-income URM students, gaps in recruitment result in these students being consistently overlooked (Jaquette et al., 2016; Kim & Nuñez, 2013). Students who perceive education as a valuable tool for growth believe it is an essential step in pursuing careers that would not just provide a comfortable living but also allow them to live out their values (Stone, 2018). Therefore, as an enrollment manager or recruiter, it is essential to know that enrollment numbers are not the most significant reward but that changing students' lives for the better is the most meaningful reward (Harris & Smith, 2016; Jaquette et al., 2016). Little research has been done on how to close the gaps in recruiting these students or on which leadership approaches would be most effective for doing so, which is why I sought to find solutions that could be used across various institutions. Eakins and Eakins (2017) stated that "The new concept of leading diversity efforts in recruiting and retention needs to be innovative and introduced in a manner that will support URM students in achieving their greatest academic excellence" (p. 51). As a higher education professional, I believe that students should be the main priority, no matter their race, gender, or SES. If more people in this profession thought this way, it might help close recruitment gaps and ensure that every student receives the same recruiting effort. Research from various studies has methodological limitations in identifying the best practices for recruiting this student population, which makes it challenging to demonstrate the best method.

Chapter Summary

This literature review covered the present study's theoretical framework, Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice, college net price versus sticker price, Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action, low-income URM student, the role of enrollment managers and recruiters, and closing the recruitment gap. Each topic consisted of subtopics that I explored in detail in the context of this study. While there has been a significant amount of research in each area, I found no existing research on how enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about low-income URM students might affect their recruitment efforts. This gap in the literature supports the research questions developed for this study. It affirms determining how behavioral intentions of enrollment managers and recruiters may affect low-income URM students' college choices.

The methodology I used to conduct the present study is presented in Chapter 3. I detail the steps I followed to examine how the behavioral intentions of enrollment managers and recruiters affect the low-income URM students' college choices through the lens of two models: the three-phase model of college choice and the theory of reasoned action. I also describe the study sample and detail the design and methods; participant population and sample size; instrumentation; data collection and analysis; ethical considerations; and assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 3: Research Method and Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the obstacles low-income URM students face when pursuing higher education and to further what is known about enrollment managers' and recruiters' beliefs about these students that may affect their recruitment efforts. There were four research questions.

RQ1. How do enrollment managers perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus?

RQ2. How do college recruiters perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus?

RQ3. What effective strategies do enrollment managers use to prepare recruiters for recruiting the low-income URM student population?

RQ4. What is the differential impact in recruiting low-income URM students versus their counterparts?

To adequately answer these research questions, I determined that a qualitative paradigm would be the best fit. In this chapter, I explain the research design and methods, the participant population and sample size, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Research Design and Method

I chose a multiple case study design because it provided a more in-depth look into the recruitment experiences of enrollment managers and recruiters for the low-income URM student population across multiple institutions. Merriam (2009) stated, "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 40). To complete

this study, I used the multiple case study approach to collect qualitative data from enrollment managers and college recruiters from four private universities to gauge the motivators for their lack of recruitment of low-income URM students. Gustafsson (2017) stated that the difference between single and multiple case studies is that multiple case studies help in understanding differences and the similarities between cases. Multiple case studies also enable analyzing data in each situation and across situations (Gustafsson, 2017). Since multiple case studies can be used to predict different results for expected reasons or predict similar outcomes in the studies using this approach, it helped in targeting which behavioral and intentional factors affect enrollment manager and college recruiter recruitment efforts.

For this study, a case-based research design facilitated collecting qualitative data from enrollment managers and recruiters that reflected the strategic enrollment management plans at four institutions. The data were then used to generate insights into how each institution's strategic enrollment management plan reflects positive or negative intentions in recruiting low-income URM students. To analyze the data, I conducted a comparative analysis for all four institutions that included comparing the semistructured interviews with enrollment managers and college recruiters from the four private universities, each institution's strategic enrollment management plans, and institutional enrollment data from the integrated postsecondary education data system (IPEDS). This method was best for comparing how effective each institution is in recruiting low-income URM students. Conducting only one case study would not have generated sufficient results from multiple institutions and thus would not have provided insights into if this phenomenon carries across multiple institutions. Overall, focusing on multiple cases yielded results that may facilitate creating and using a strategic enrollment management plan that includes better recruitment approaches for increasing low-income URM student enrollment.

Population

The population for this study was four four-year private universities in the United States. I used the following criteria to select these institutions: (a) undergraduate student population of 800 or more, (b) diversity on campus, (c) the institution's strategic enrollment management plan, and (d) undergraduate enrollment data for students who identify as African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/Alaskan Native, or two or more races on campus, (f) closed admission enrollment deadlines, and (g) average annual cost of \$40,000 or lower. Before conducting this study, I had identified three institutions. However, not all three institutions were able to participate in this study. I chose other institutions with the same criteria previously described, which allowed me to expand the study focus to four institutions. The four institutions were given pseudonyms of University A, University B, University C, and University D. Their student populations included undergraduate students enrolled in any undergraduate program on campus. Diversity on campus among students, faculty, and staff is apparent at each institution, with the institution's website and organizational structure supporting this tenet. The institutions must have demonstrated plans for strategic enrollment with the support of enrollment management plans from previous years.

The enrollment percentages for undergraduate students at all four institutions were as follows: African American/Black, 8.6%; Hispanic/Latinx, 17.6%; Native American/Alaskan Native, 0%; and two or more races, 4.3%. At each institution, the percentage of students who receive income-based Pell Grants intended for low-income students ranged from 13% to 25%. This information, supported by IPEDS, also provided demographic information for other areas like retention and graduation that was helpful in this study. All four institutions range from being predominately White institutions to having higher percentages in various ethnicities other than

White but are not considered to be historically Black colleges or universities. These four institutions are also miles apart from each other as they are in different states. This population was appropriate for the present study's problem and purpose because it encompassed the perspectives of enrollment managers and recruiters from different private institutions. I believed that gaining perspectives from these individuals at institutions in various areas of the United States would also generate exciting aspects to explore regarding the recruitment approaches at these institutions and whether they were perpetuating the recruitment gap among low-income URM students.

Sample

The sample consisted of nine enrollment managers and college recruiters. This sample size was sufficient for answering the research questions developed for this study and yielded deep and rich data on the topic of the recruitment gap among low-income URM students. Having the desired sample of nine participants also allowed me to provide a general view of how enrollment managers and recruiters from different campuses exhibit the same or different behaviors toward recruiting this population. I used a multicase sampling method in this study. Since the institutions selected have enrollment management departments with five or more employees, it was essential to identify the best participants from each department for this study. Using the multicase sampling method allowed me to determine if specific findings held true at one institution or more broadly, as per Saldaña and Omasta (2018). I also used purposive sampling to identify the institutions and participants that I felt would yield the data needed to answer this study's research questions. Etikan et al. (2016) described purposive sampling as "The deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses. Simply put,

the researcher sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience” (Etikan et al., 2016, p. 2).

After selecting Universities, A, B, C, and D based on the criteria previously noted, I then identified enrollment managers and college recruiters for semistructured interviews based on their higher education experience, the study needs, and their availability and willingness to participate. To secure enrollment manager and recruiter participation, I contacted these individuals by email and included a recruitment flyer to explain the study and request their assistance. To reach the anticipated sample size, I continued to communicate with enrollment managers and recruiters from four-year private institutions until I obtained the desired sample size. My plan was to limit the number of participants to three individuals per institution, including at least one enrollment manager and recruiter per institution. However, for University A, I was only able to recruit two enrollment managers and four college recruiters and only one enrollment manager for University B, C, and D. I believed that the number of participants from each institution would provide ample data for the comparative analysis. To ensure that the selected participants were the right fit for this study, I researched them by reviewing their institution website biographies, which included their education and experience related to enrollment management and recruitment. I followed this process for every participant to ensure consistency and relevancy to this study.

Instrumentation

I gathered information reflecting various perspectives from enrollment managers and college recruiters in hopes of finding solutions to the recruitment gap among low-income URM students. To collect this information, I constructed two interviewing protocols, one for enrollment managers and one for college recruiters. These protocols included questions based on

the research questions for this study, tailored to the two participant groups to elicit their specific viewpoints. Topics covered in the interview questions included (a) factors that encourage low-income URM students to attend college, (b) low-income URM student recruitment efforts, (c) low-income URM student recruiting initiative changes, (d) the difference in recruitment strategies for low-income URM students versus high-income non-URM students, (e) the most significant challenges in recruiting low-income URM students, and (f) practical leadership approaches used to increase low-income URM student enrollment. Before using these protocols in participant interviews, I field-tested them by convening an expert panel to review the questions and ensure the instruments' relevance and validity. I transcribed the interview responses and used NVivo qualitative analysis software to code the information gathered in the interviews.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Once the process of selecting enrollment managers and recruiters from four private universities was complete, I used semistructured interviews to collect data. Because of the unforeseen circumstances with the COVID-19 pandemic, I offered videoconferencing as the only option for conducting the interviews. The video conferencing software included using Zoom. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) stated that semistructured interviews “have a degree of structure but also offer researchers significant latitude to adjust course as needed; researchers make such adjustments as a result of their in-interview analysis” (p. 91). Using this interviewing approach allowed me the flexibility to ask additional probing questions to help enrollment managers and recruiters expand on their experiences with this student population.

The interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes in duration. I also took field notes during my interviews with the study participants, which helped to support trustworthiness in this study.

The third element in the data collection process was using document analysis to evaluate each institution's strategic enrollment management plan and institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. The data collection process took two months. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, de-identified, and stored on a secure and encrypted hard drive to ensure security and anonymity for all participants.

In Vivo Coding

I used in vivo coding to derive critical themes from the interview transcripts. Manning (2017) stated that in vivo coding is valued for its usefulness in highlighting participants' voices and for relying on the participants to give meaning to the data. In vivo coding requires assigning labels while grouping interview responses to look for related themes (Center for Innovation in Research and Teaching, n.d.). In vivo coding allowed me to condense a substantial amount of data to a manageable amount for data analysis. Merriam (2009) described data analysis as "the process of making sense out of the data and making sense out of data involving consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read, it is the process of making meaning" (p. 175). Using in vivo coding, along with NVivo data analysis software, allowed me to identify themes and patterns in the enrollment manager and recruiter interview responses. Since this study was exploratory, it was also best to analyze data simultaneously with data collection.

Narrative Analysis

I used narrative analysis to analyze the data gathered for this study. Bhatia (2018) described the narrative analysis as a method used to "analyze content from various sources, such as interviews of respondents, observations from the field, or surveys. It focuses on using the stories and experiences shared by people to answer the research questions" (p. 1). Other data

analyzing methods, such as discourse or grounded theory, were not the best fits for this study. Since discourse analysis “focuses on analyzing the social context in which the communication between the researcher and the respondent occurred” (Bhatia, 2018, p. 1), it was not beneficial because it focuses solely on researcher and respondent communication without considering the strategic enrollment plans’ impact on this issue. Grounded theory “explains why a certain phenomenon happened by studying a variety of similar cases in different settings and using the data to derive causal explanations” (Bhatia, 2018, p. 1). This approach would not serve this study’s purpose because I did not have the access or resources to explore this case in different settings other than four-year private institutions in the United States. I estimated it would take two months, at most, to analyze the data. Overall, providing these results gave an in-depth understanding of the factors surrounding the recruitment of low-income URM students from the study participants’ perspectives.

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness

Guaranteeing study credibility is one of the most essential factors in collecting and analyzing data. Saldaña and Omasta (2018) stated that credibility refers to “the audience’s belief that the way a researcher conducted the study and the analytic processes and outcomes of the work has generated findings that make sense and persuade readers that an effective or trustworthy job was done” (p. 271). To establish credibility, I first gained consent from enrollment managers and recruiters to participate in the study by providing an informed consent form. I offered the participants an opportunity to refuse participation before moving forward with the interviews. To receive honest answers, I built a rapport with the participants and explained the importance of answering questions truthfully, with examples. To support transferability, I followed Shenton’s (2004) guidance on interpreting all study boundaries to ensure that readers

were fully informed before making judgments about transferability among various institutions. Shenton (2004) stated that to make an informed decision on transferability; the researcher should provide to the reader

(a) the number of organizations taking part in the study and where they are based; (b) any restrictions in the type of people who contributed data; (c) the number of participants involved in the fieldwork; (d) the data collection methods that were employed; (e) the number and length of the data collection sessions; and (f) the time period over which the data was collected. (p. 70)

To ensure the dependability of this study, I reported it in detail, which will enable future researchers to repeat the work, by describing the research design, details on data gathering, and the effectiveness of the data collection methods (Shenton, 2004). Lastly, to ensure confirmability, I used multiple data collection methods for data triangulation, which included a comparative analysis of the data. Triangulation is vital to ensuring credibility and confirmability, and it is useful in reducing researcher bias (Shenton, 2004). I ensured that the field-tested interview protocols for the semistructured interviews, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and institutional enrollment data from IPEDS were explained in detail for transparency on why these methods were selected for this study.

Researcher's Role

As a former university recruiter, one of my goals was to increase diversity among students. However, when I began working at the university, the list of schools to recruit students from included more higher-income schools than lower-income schools. I witnessed recruiters choosing to visit the higher income-area schools, and I wondered how the university could expect to increase diversity if recruiters were not going to the schools that were densely

populated with low-income URM students. In speaking with my former coworkers about the reasons behind their lack of recruitment of this student population, their responses baffled me. Some reasons given were concerns about their safety, they felt the students were not academically capable of meeting admissions requirements, and they could not relate to these students' lifestyles.

Hearing these responses brought me back to my days as a low-income URM student who had the same stigma held over my head. College recruiters did not visit my high school for these same reasons. Even though statistics show that these students tend to be stereotyped, the statistics do not reflect the times when these students are not offered opportunities equal to their counterparts because of these stereotypes. So, in the present study, I acted as an observer of enrollment processes through document analysis of the institutions' strategic enrollment management plans and institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. I also served as a subjective participant in conducting semistructured interviews in which I guided enrollment managers and recruiters through questions on aspects of recruiting low-income URM students. The researcher plays an active part in the study by maintaining daily activities that support the effort in collecting data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I collected data from enrollment managers and recruiters with whom I had had no personal relationship to reduce introducing undue bias during data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of findings.

Ethical Considerations

I submitted this study to Abilene Christian University's institutional review board (IRB) for approval before data collection (see Appendix C). All personal data collected from the participants were de-identified, anonymized, and stored on a secure encrypted computer and hard drive. In approaching potential participants, I provided full disclosure on the purpose, methods,

and process for protecting all data collected. I upheld and followed the ethical guidelines from the Protecting Human Research Participants online course and the *Belmont Report* to ensure all study elements were conducted ethically. I used pseudonyms to protect the identities of the institutions and participants. I will keep all data on a secured and encrypted hard drive for five years after study completion. I made sure to receive informed consent from all participants before data collection, and no data were collected prior to IRB approval.

Assumptions

I assumed that all study participants would answer the interview questions honestly and in depth. I also assumed that the participants would understand the research questions because of the expert review process. In reviewing the IPEDS enrollment data for each institution, I assumed that the information would support each institution's strategic enrollment management plan. I assumed that the participants would respond to the invitation to participate in the study with urgency in hopes of promptly completing the data collection process. I also assumed that the participants would meet the qualifications for participation (e.g., being an enrollment manager or college recruiter with more than two years of full-time experience in enrollment management or recruitment). Lastly, I assumed that conducting a multiple case study that included private four-year institutions would provide a more generalized understanding of this understudied phenomenon.

Limitations

Many higher education institutions have enrollment management departments that prepare college recruiters to recruit prospective students. There are also enrollment management plans that align with recruiting prospective students from different economic backgrounds. However, not every institution has the same enrollment management procedures and regulations

for student recruitment, which posed a limitation for this study. Other limitations, such as only incorporating private four-year institutions in the United States, not collecting data that included the perspectives of the university presidents, the time of data collection depending on the participants' availability, and the number of participants at each institution, were also a part of this study.

Delimitations

This study was limited because of using data gathered from enrollment managers and college recruiters from only four private four-year universities in the United States. I made this decision because of my knowledge and experience with universities in this area. I addressed the roles of enrollment managers and college recruiters at these universities to gain a better perspective of how their roles play a part in low-income URM student recruitment. Even though other factors play a part in recruiting these students, such as the role of the university president or chief financial officer, their perspectives were not part of this study. Another delimitation was not incorporating low-income URM students' perspectives regarding their recruitment. Although doing so would have benefited this study, I believe that recruitment issues start with the institution, and that was where the focus should be. I felt that many methods would be useful in conducting this study; however, I chose a multiple case study because of the broad perspective this approach could provide among various universities. Other methodologies would not have provided the data in a diversified way and would be less effective in answering this study's research questions. Using video conferencing for the interviews could have been a delimiting factor in that it may have been more difficult to judge the participants' body language versus seeing it in person during the interviews.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 3, I outlined the research design and method, population, sample, instrumentation, qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this study. I used a multiple case study design to explore four private higher education institutions with different strategic enrollment management plans and student populations. The sample in this study consisted of four private four-year universities in the United States. I used multicas e purposive sampling to select each higher education institution and to identify the participants for the study. After receiving full IRB approval, I conducted all data collection procedures. Data collection encompassed three approaches to ensure data triangulation: semistructured interviews with field-tested interviewing protocols, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and public institutional enrollment data provided by IPEDS. Interview data were transcribed, de-identified, and coded by using in vivo coding, which generated themes from the data.

In Chapter 4, I present the findings from the narrative analysis of semistructured interviews, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and review of institutional enrollment data from IPEDS.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings from the narrative analysis of semistructured interviews, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and review of institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. In this chapter, the sample is explained, and the comparative analysis summary for University A, University B, University C, and University D is presented to support this study's research questions. Interview participants were nine enrollment managers and college recruiters from four private four-year universities in the United States. Also discussed in this chapter are the research methodology and themes created based on the participant's interview responses.

Study and Researcher

The focus of this qualitative study was to explore if discriminatory recruitment procedures are used against low-income URM students at four-year private institutions based on enrollment managers' and college recruiters' beliefs, self-efficacy, and behavioral intentions. Semistructured interviews were conducted with five enrollment managers and four college recruiters. The interview participants included individuals with experience in admissions or recruitment at four-year private institutions in the United States. I explored how college choice influences low-income URM students to enroll in college. I also examined the impact enrollment managers and college recruiters have on encouraging this student population to attend college and whether these students are recruited less compared to their more affluent peers.

As the researcher, my interest in this topic stemmed from being a low-income URM student at a predominately African American high school that never received the same recruitment treatment as more affluent schools. This topic interested me more when I became a recruiter for a university and witnessed the same treatment being used at our institution.

Knowing what I have encountered as a low-income URM student and former recruiter, I felt it was my duty to determine if this same injustice was being served across multiple institutions with the same backgrounds. For this study, I was able to put aside my personal opinions and thoughts, which allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives. I examined the different roles of enrollment managers and college recruiters and their influence on this student population to provide insights into how they can be better equipped when encountering these students in the admissions and recruitment process.

Interview Participant Description

To recruit participants for this study, I researched the four-year private institutions by reviewing their websites and student data information from IPEDS. I compared all four schools and decided to further my research by interviewing enrollment managers and college recruiters at these institutions. Participants in this study consisted of five enrollment managers and four college recruiters from these four private universities. I used purposive sampling to select the study participants, which allowed me to compare the participants' work experience to my desired research questions. I initially anticipated that I would collect data from only three private four-year institutions; however, another institution was added later in the study, bringing the total to four. The study participants had a wide range of experience in higher education admissions and recruitment. All participants had the opportunity to work with the low-income URM student population in some regard in their careers and were able to provide great perspectives on how these students are handled in the admissions and recruitment process. Data saturation was reached after nine interviews, and no further interviewees were recruited, which is what was anticipated for this study. Table 3 shows the participant demographics.

Table 3*Participant Demographics*

Participant	Race	Gender
College Recruiter A	White	Male
College Recruiter B	White	Female
College Recruiter C	White	Male
College Recruiter D	White	Male
Enrollment Manager A	White	Male
Enrollment Manager B	White	Male
Enrollment Manager C	White	Female
Enrollment Manager D	Black	Male
Enrollment Manager E	Hispanic	Male

To reduce participant vulnerability in the data collection process, all participants were provided informed consent forms to sign. This form stated that the participants had the right to terminate their participation in the study at any time. Two separate interview protocols (see Appendices C and D) were used to interview enrollment managers and college recruiters. Each interview protocol contained open-ended questions that focused on their work experience at their institution and their knowledge of the low-income URM student population. Some of the questions were probing questions asked after the participants responded to the original question. To ensure confidentiality, each participant's information was de-identified and stored on a secure and encrypted hard drive. As shown in Table 3, I assigned each participant an identifier such as College Recruiter A, B, C, and D and Enrollment Manager A, B, C, D, and E. Given the

demographic information in Table 3, none of the participants were analyzed for their demographic appearance. Other demographic factors were not considered in this study, and no participants withdrew.

Four-Year Private University Sample Descriptions

University A

University A is a Christian-centered university founded in 1906. The university has over 60 undergraduate programs and over 20 graduate-level programs. The founders wanted to build a school grounded in the Christian faith with an affiliation with Churches of Christ. The university's mission is to prepare and educate students for service and leadership through Christianity. University A thrives on providing a Christ-centered community for students who want to grow spiritually as well as intellectually. Since opening in 1906 with 25 students, and after a few name changes, enrollment has continued to rise. With its diverse and academically rigorous community, the university continues to produce qualified students who are strong in their faith and ready to conquer the world. Currently, this university has three campus locations in the same state. Slightly over 3,600 students attend any of these campuses for undergraduate programs.

This university is accredited by its regional association to award certificates, associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. University A offers both traditional face-to-face and fully online programs. Along with its accreditation, this university carries many successes and accolades under its belt. Being highly ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* in categories like student success, learning communities, and innovation makes it a sought-after institution by many prospective students. University A is a predominately White institution because more than half of the total student population is White. The enrollment percentages for URM undergraduate

students are as follows: African American/Black, 9%; Hispanic/Latinx, 17%; Native American/Alaskan Native, 0%; and two or more races, 5%¹. The student–faculty ratio is typically 15:1 to provide students better opportunities to learn in close-knit groups and help them not feel overwhelmed in the classroom. However, this institution can be a bit expensive for students who cannot cover the annual cost of \$27,000 for tuition and fees. Students can receive funds like scholarships, Pell Grants, and loans to cover these costs, but University A continues to compete with other institutions that are more affordable.

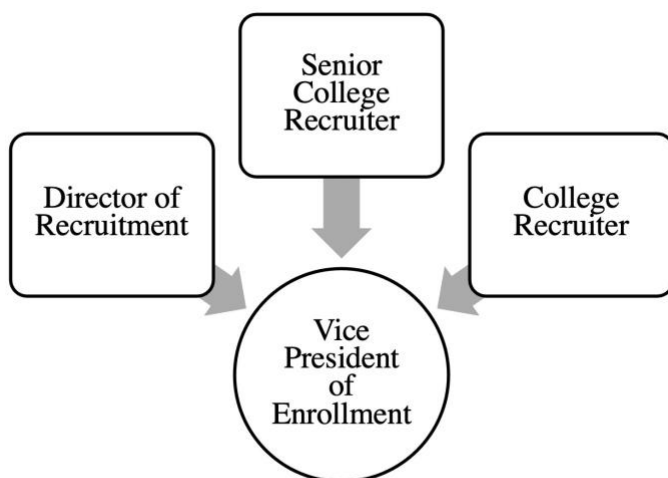
Admissions and recruitment teams are in place to encourage students to enroll at University A, including a group of frontline individuals who handle the groundwork for recruiting students and other individuals who manage enrollment from the executive level who focus more on strategic perspectives in recruitment. This team follows a strategic enrollment management plan to stay on track when recruiting students. Following this plan gives the team members a sense of purpose and drives their efforts in recruiting students. Figure 3 shows the enrollment management structure at this institution, highlighting the admissions and recruitment team positions. All three positions report to the vice president of enrollment, who is the executive lead for the team. This individual also sets the strategic plans for the admissions and recruitment team. Under the vice president of enrollment, the directors of recruitment oversee implementing the strategic recruitment operations and direct college recruiters to execute these plans. The senior college recruiters and college recruiters raise university enrollment by

¹ All IPEDS information is from 2020. It was de-identified for institution and participant anonymity.

following these directions and applying the strategic recruitment plans to their assigned territories.

Figure 3

University A's Organizational Recruitment Structure



University B

University B was established by Methodist ministers. Founded in 1851, the university has over 80 undergraduate programs and over 20 graduate-level programs. The university's mission is to integrate liberal arts and professional education into a superior student-centered learning experience that will equip students for leadership in their career and community long term. University B provides a student success-centered community that fits students with the tools to become employed right out of college. Even though University B is affiliated with the United Methodist Church, religious instruction is not required in the classroom, nor are students required to attend religious events.

With its diverse and challenging curriculum focused on experiential learning, the university continues to be ranked as one of the highest that produces qualified students in their

field. Currently, this university has three campus locations in the same state. Slightly over 3,700 students are enrolled in the university's undergraduate programs across these campuses.

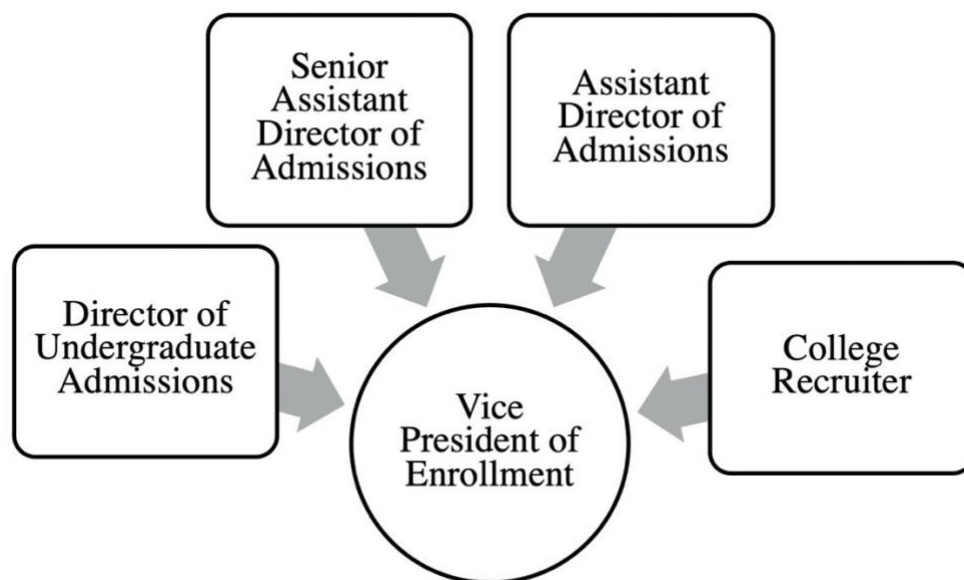
This university is accredited by its regional association to award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. University B offers both traditional face-to-face and fully online programs. Along with its accreditation, this university carries many successes and accolades under its belt. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks it highly for its ethnic diversity, as a best value, and as a top college for veterans, which makes it a sought-after institution by many prospective students. University B is not a predominantly White institution and has a high Asian student enrollment. The enrollment percentages for URM undergraduate students are as follows: African American/Black, 3%; Hispanic/Latinx, 21%; Native American/Alaskan Native, 0%; and two or more races, 6%. The student–faculty ratio is typically 13:1, which provides students better opportunities to learn in close-knit groups and build stronger relationships with faculty and other students. However, this institution is often seen as expensive for students who cannot cover the annual cost of \$33,000 for tuition and fees. Students can receive scholarships, Pell Grants, and loans to cover these costs. However, University B, just like University A, continues to compete with other institutions that are more affordable.

An admissions team encourages students to enroll at University B. The university has frontline individuals who handle the groundwork for recruiting students and other individuals who manage enrollment from the executive level and focus more on strategic perspectives in recruitment. The team follows a strategic enrollment management plan to stay on track when recruiting students. Following this plan gives team members a sense of purpose and drives their efforts in recruiting students. Figure 4 shows the enrollment management structure at University B. All four positions report to the vice president of enrollment, who is the executive lead for the

team. The vice president also sets the strategic plans for the admissions team along with the director of undergraduate admissions. Under the director of undergraduate admissions, the senior assistant and assistant directors of admissions oversee implementing strategic recruitment operations and direct college recruiters to execute these plans. Each recruiter has a designated territory. The recruiters raise enrollment for the university by following their superiors' directions and applying the strategic recruitment plan.

Figure 4

University B's Organizational Recruitment Structure



University C

University C is grounded in the Catholic tradition. Founded in 1932, the university has over 25 undergraduate programs and graduate-level programs. The university's mission is to provide a rigorous education for a diverse student population that fosters an inclusive environment for students to build on their ethical values, integrity, and responsibility in their community. University C provides students with core values that allow them to explore their

Catholic identity, development as a person, and their service in today's society. Religious instruction is required in the classroom, and students are encouraged to attend religious events like chapel. Its diverse curriculum focuses on understanding various belief systems and core values. The university is highly ranked and produces students who have a strong faith base and are capable of changing society. It has one main campus and currently enrolls slightly over 870 students in its undergraduate programs.

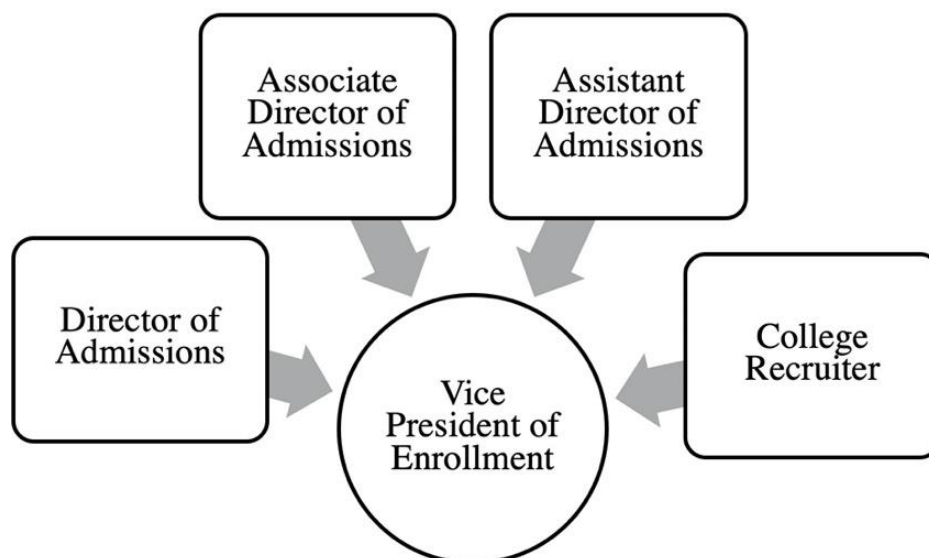
University C is accredited by its regional association to award bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. University C offers both traditional face-to-face and fully online programs. Along with its accreditation, this university carries many successes and accolades under its belt. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks it highly for social mobility and best value, which makes it a sought-after institution by many prospective students. University C is a predominately White institution, with more than half of its student population in this category. The enrollment percentages for URM undergraduate students are as follows: African American/Black, 14%; Hispanic/Latinx, 16%; Native American/Alaskan Native, 0%; and two or more races, 2%. The student–faculty ratio is typically 8:1, which facilitates learning in close-knit groups and building strong relationships with faculty and other students. This institution is an expensive investment for students who cannot cover the annual cost of \$26,000. However, students can receive scholarships, Pell Grants, and loans to cover the cost of tuition. Yet, this university competes with other institutions that are more affordable.

An admissions team encourages students to enroll at University C. The university has frontline individuals who handle the groundwork for recruiting students and other individuals who manage enrollment from the executive level and focus more on strategic perspectives in recruitment. The team follows a strategic enrollment management plan to stay on track when

recruiting students. Following this plan gives team members a sense of purpose and drives their efforts in recruiting students. Figure 5 shows University C's enrollment management structure, highlighting each position on the admissions team. All four positions report to the vice president of enrollment, who is the executive lead for the team. The vice president also sets the strategic recruitment and admissions plans for the admissions team along with the director of admissions. Under the director of admissions, the associate and assistant directors of admissions oversee implementing strategic recruitment operations and direct college recruiters to execute these plans in place. Each recruiter has a designated territory. The recruiters raise enrollment for the university by following their superiors' directions and applying the strategic recruitment plan.

Figure 5

University C's Organizational Recruitment Structure



University D

University D was founded by Baptist ministers in 1821. The university has over 70 undergraduate programs and over 200 graduate-level programs. Its mission is to integrate liberal

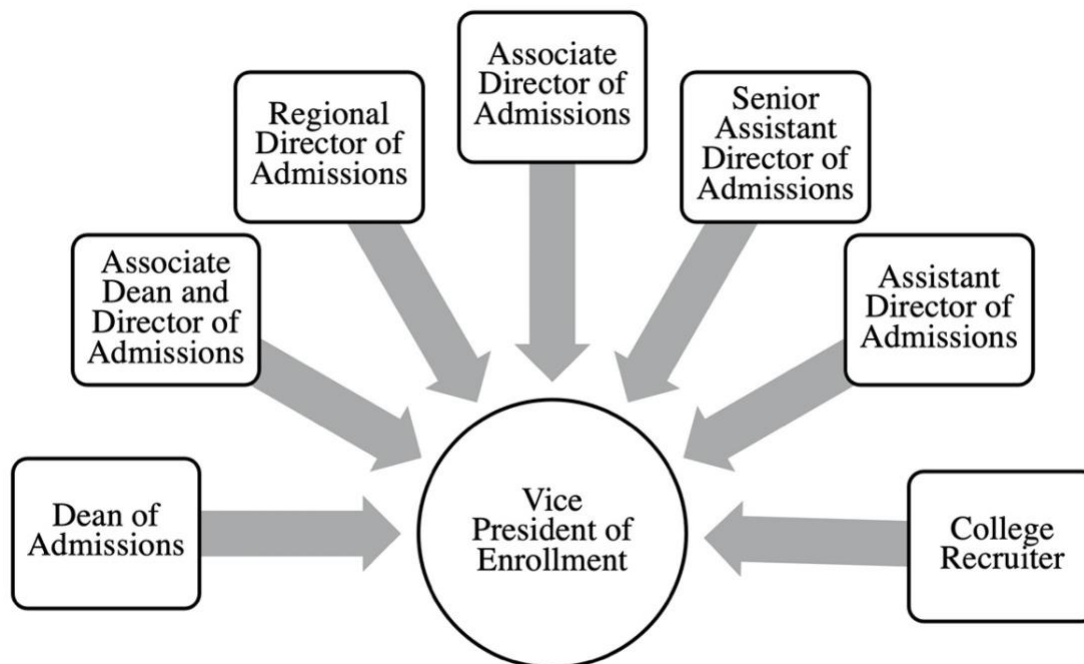
arts and professional education to prepare students to conduct scholarly research that will, in turn, positively impact society. University D provides a student success-centered community that offers students world-class opportunities to form partnerships and execute research initiatives focused on improving the world's progress. Even though Baptist ministers founded University D, the institution has no religious affiliation, which means religious instruction is not required in the classroom, nor are students required to attend religious events. With its broadly ranging curriculum, the university continues to be ranked as one of the highest that produces qualified students in their chosen fields. This university has three campus locations in the same state. Undergraduate student enrollment at the time of this study was slightly over 12,000 students across these campuses.

University D is accredited by its regional association to award certificates, associate's, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. The university offers both traditional face-to-face and fully online programs. With its current accreditation, this university has had many successes and continues to set the bar for private institutions. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks it highly for co-ops, internships, study abroad, and a best national university, making it a sought-after institution by many prospective students.

University D is a predominately White institution, with half of the total student population following into this category. The enrollment percentages for URM undergraduate students are as follows: African American/Black, 7%; Hispanic/Latinx, 10%; Native American/Alaskan Native, 0%; and two or more races, 4%. The student-faculty ratio is typically 13:1, which facilitates learning in small groups and encourages more group discussion and familiarity among students and faculty. This institution is a substantial investment for students who cannot cover the annual cost of \$34,000 for tuition and fees, which can be a huge hurdle to

overcome. Students can receive scholarships, Pell Grants, and loans to cover the costs. Still, University D competes with other institutions that are more affordable.

An admissions team encourages students to enroll at University D. The university has a large group of frontline individuals who handle the groundwork for recruiting students and also individuals who manage enrollment from a more executive level and who focus more on strategic perspectives in recruitment. The recruitment team stays on track when recruiting students by following a strategic enrollment management plan, which gives each team member a sense of purpose and drives their efforts in recruiting students. Figure 6 shows University D's enrollment management structure. All seven positions report to the vice president of enrollment, who is the executive lead for the team. The vice president also sets the strategic plans for the admissions team along with the dean and associate dean of admissions. The regional director, associate director, senior assistant, and assistant director of admissions oversee implementing the strategic recruitment operations and direct the college recruiters to execute these plans. Each recruiter has a designated territory. The recruiters raise enrollment for the university by following their superiors' directions and applying the strategic recruitment plan.

Figure 6*University D's Organizational Recruitment Structure***Presentation of Data and Results**

Nine enrollment managers and college recruiters were interviewed for this multicase qualitative study. Once participants were interviewed, I began the narrative data analysis process, which included reviewing the semistructured interview responses, analyzing the strategic enrollment plan documents, and analyzing institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. Once all data were reviewed and coded, five themes emerged from the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview responses: the enrollment manager career, the college recruiter career, the low-income URM student, the recruiting low-income URM students, and professional development. Each theme successfully answered all four research questions in this study. Next, I explain how they answered these questions, starting with the enrollment managers' responses.

Research Question 1

This study's first research question asked how enrollment managers perceived their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus. The purpose of this question was to further the understanding of how enrollment managers see their careers impacting how low-income URM students enroll in college. This question also helped to see why this career is right for them through the enrollment managers' lens.

The first theme (the enrollment manager career) emerged from five questions on the enrollment manager interview protocol in support of the study's first research question. The theme was titled the enrollment manager career because it produced a wide range of responses about this profession as a whole from all enrollment manager participants. Findings supporting Research Question 1 are as follows.

The first interview question asked why the participants chose to pursue a professional interest or career in enrollment management for higher education. Four codes were generated from responses to this question. All five enrollment managers specified that opportunity, passion, interest, and making a difference in students' lives were significant factors in why they chose this profession. Enrollment Manager A stated that he finds his work very enjoyable. He further explained his perspective of what makes his position not only crucial to the institution but to him as well. He stated,

I always joke here that I don't think I chose to pursue it but that it chose to pursue me.

My first admissions job at my alma mater, I spent a year there. I quickly realized that I did enjoy the relationship building in working with students' families and helping those who might not have the proper guidance to understand everything about the admissions process.

Many seem to feel that their profession chooses them when they least expect it, and when it comes to education, the passion for wanting students to succeed is a common denominator. Enrollment Manager B had a similar experience, but specifically focused on the opportunity presented to him and his background in teaching as a few encouragers that helped him to choose the enrollment manager profession. He stated,

Well, with my knowledge of the institution and the people involved in management, there was a right fit opportunity for me to begin this work. I do have an interest and a passion for the job, so I remain excited about the ability to shape a class and to work with team members to have them grow professionally and develop in this work to present the value and opportunities specific to our prospective students.

Administrators such as enrollment managers in admissions and recruitment have a duty to ensure that students are accepted at every stage of their admissions process. They have the authority to set goals for strategic recruitment practices, and sometimes, as is the case for Enrollment Manager C, the passion for this job is fueled by seeing children in college grow. She mentioned that her eagerness to pursue this profession came from not only her own children's experience at her institution but her passion for the students. She commented,

I have always loved working with students in high school. My kids went to this institution, and I found myself not teaching anymore but still wanting to work with students. An opportunity opened up, which was great because I love the university and love speaking about the university. I honestly don't know if I would work for another university just because this is where my heart is, but this way, I like the idea of helping students achieve their goals.

Some enrollment managers are encouraged to pursue these positions by mentors or former supervisors. Having a mentor to guide one's career is a great way to learn the role and also equip oneself with the skills needed to succeed in this role with the help of someone who has the knowledge and experience. Enrollment Manager D described how his mentor helped him get prepared for this role.

I was looking for a job before graduation, and I had a mentor that worked at the university I attended. He recommended the position that was open in the undergraduate admissions office and thought it would be a good fit for me. So, I applied and was successful in my candidacy, and I stayed ever since. I liked the work, and so I decided to apply for grad school while working in this position. I finished grad school, and I still liked the profession. I thought it was important work to do, and it gave me security as far as a career but also the flexibility to move around a bit.

Enrollment Manager E emphasized that his background as a minority student in college fueled his interest in pursuing this profession. It was the opportunity of experiencing college life and being able to relate to students that encouraged him to consider working in higher education. It is fairly typical for students who graduate from an institution to pursue a career path at the institution. When students fall in love with their campuses, they see the opportunity to be a part of the bigger picture by embracing new students and telling them all of the wonderful things about the university. For Enrollment Manager E, he realized he could play a part in seeing students succeed through his efforts before he chose this role. He said,

For me, being a minority student, it was essential that I always felt like I needed to be a leader for other students of color, particularly in higher education. You don't see that very often, so I wanted to make a difference. My personality also really gets along well

with college-aged students. I think it's very important to help high school and college-aged students through this process, so I decided to go this route.

The second interview question asked participants if they felt the roles of enrollment managers and college recruiters were clearly defined at their institutions. Two codes were generated from responses to this question. Four participants specified that their role is clearly defined at their institution and that job descriptions and duties align with the university's goals. However, Enrollment Manager A's views conflicted with those of the other participants and stated,

Our roles are loosely defined than what has been at other institutions that I've worked. I think you start to run into those with smaller schools. Sometimes the students get passed around maybe a little bit more than they would be at a larger school where you have that one person that's dedicated to them. So, in that regard, I would say you know we have our territories and such, but we don't necessarily lead by territory. I might have somebody from my territory that ends up going to, or you know, theoretically speaking, ends up working with another recruiter for most of the process just because of how things get divided. However, I think from a structural standpoint, it is, but when it comes to the sheer working with students, maybe not always.

Sharing job duties across multiple positions to meet the demands of students often happens in higher education. As such, it was not surprising to see that the job duties are shared between roles at Enrollment Manager A's institution. However, Enrollment Manager E's institution takes a completely opposite approach, and everyone has their own designated tasks. Enrollment Manager E said,

We have clear roles, and expectations are outlined for each recruiter. Everyone has their assigned territory, and what they are required to do as far as monthly goals as well as far as managers, we have our expectations and areas that we manage.

The third interview question asked the participants to describe the relationships between enrollment managers and college recruiters at their institutions and if they were positive relationships. Three codes were generated from participant responses to this question. All five enrollment managers specified that open communication, positivity, and collaboration described their relationships in their departments. Enrollment Manager A expressed his views on how he handles his relationships with recruiters by not practicing micromanagement. He said,

For me, you know, communication is key. I always try to make sure that everybody is on the same page. I'm not a micromanager, so I'll check in biweekly or something around that timeframe. I just make sure that everything is going according to plan, but I won't stay with my head over somebody's shoulder to make sure that they're doing their job.

Enrollment Manager B's response to this question was intriguing because he expressed a more in-depth understanding of how positive relationships thrive in his department. He shared, I pride myself on being accessible and a keen listener; I will admit that it is easier said than done, but I find myself well in tune with others. I push myself to stay connected and keep a constant relationship and openness to those who are geographically farther away. We have two remote college recruiters who are located outside of the area. So, I work harder to have the same rapport with them as others who are on campus. Because of the pandemic, I have intensified my amount of communication, and I have also started conducting three meetings a week. I focus on the ability to transmit information and gain feedback to be an open listener who supports them.

Enrollment Manager B's efforts in building relationships with employees in and outside of the office have become challenging because of the coronavirus pandemic. The steps he would typically take to engage with employees would be different if there were more face-to-face contact on an everyday basis. Other enrollment managers mentioned some of the same challenges caused by the pandemic's effects on their workplaces. However, the enrollment managers who had less contact with employees before the epidemic saw only a slight change in their efforts to communicate and engage with employees.

The fourth interview question asked participants how they thought their roles as enrollment managers played a part in increasing enrollment of low-income URM students. Three codes were generated from the responses to this question. All five enrollment managers specified that being a strategist, mentor, and advocate described their role in increasing enrollment in this student population. Responses to this interview question helped answer Research Question 1 as they showed that the study participants see their positions impacting how their institutions develop recruitment strategies for this student population. Enrollment Manager A stated that in his role, he is more of the strategist.

It's working with strategic initiatives and basing my decisions around strategy and data research. It's identifying those populations who have struggled previously for one reason or another. There are schools we'll see plenty of applications from, but we might not enroll a single one of those students. So, my part is trying to figure out what is preventing them from enrolling. So, I'm a lot more on the research data gathering side to provide the necessary information to the people working with those programs to increase enrollment for that population hopefully.

Strategically recruiting students was the main answer for all enrollment managers. Having a clear and strategic plan in recruitment is what helps the department thrive in obtaining the desired students and also to show where there may be a need for improvement in the future. Enrollment Manager B supported this finding in his description of how he views his role. He said,

I do think as a strategic partner, I support and help guide them as a mentor and, as a supervisor, to recruiters to set them up for success. The institution has some history in certain populations and limited experience in other populations. So, to try and change the course of history in a new direction for a certain population would be difficult. However, we have prepared recruiters to promote authentically what we do as an institution.

Enrollment Manager B sees himself as a mentor not only to students but also to the college recruiters as he prepares to go out and speak with prospective students about their institution. Enrollment Manager C had a slightly different way of explaining how her role plays a part in this enrollment increase. She said,

I think it comes down to setting goals. It also goes back to the strategy piece and looking for a new way or unturned rock of sorts. We've sometimes fallen flat on our faces when trying something new and say, okay, we won't ever do that again. Sometimes we try it and say, okay, this hasn't worked this time, but it has potential for us to build on, so it's just a strategy while also maintaining the status quo. It's an ever-evolving process because right now, we're recruiting Gen Z students who behave entirely differently, and so what works for them is not necessarily what worked five years ago. So, you have to start thinking outside of the box.

Each enrollment manager seemed to note that strategic planning and setting goals are important tactics to use in any institution. Enrollment Manager D made an important point in identifying the importance of being an advocate not only for students but also for individuals in his department. He explained how his role also fosters building relationships with these students by stating,

I have to be an advocate in my role. Most of what I do is look at data and making plans for how we get the class, what methods we use to recruit and evaluate applications, and how we secure them once they have been distributed. So, I feel like my responsibility is to make sure everyone is represented in the applicant pool. It's important to consider we be specific about this population and bringing them into PWIs [predominantly White institutions], understanding that you're going to have these experiences where you're the only student of color in your class. Our responsibility in recruiting is to be honest with them about what this experience looks like, how to navigate the campus, and eliminate any unnecessary obstacles for them.

Being an advocate for students who are not able to go through the recruitment and admissions process by themselves is crucial to these students' success. Enrollment Manager D spoke about being honest with low-income URM students when it comes to being accepted into a predominantly White institution. His perspective of being a mentor and expressing the truth about what students will endure on campus leaves less room for confusion for what these students should expect on campus. It is straightforward of him to tell students about all of the great things his institution has to offer while also not forgetting the actual experiences they will encounter being a low-income URM student, especially at predominantly White institutions. Lastly, Enrollment Manager E's perspective of how his role plays a part speaks to this same

experience of being a low-income URM first-generation student who attended a predominantly White institution. He said,

I think my role plays a part in that coming from a low SES family and being a first-generation student as well; I can understand what students are going through in the process. I empathize with families during that time, but then also, I think being a first-generation student allows me to think of things and ideas of recruiting like-minded students. I didn't have a long line of family that went to my institution at all. I was the first one, so I think for me, I bring a different perspective.

Research Question 2

The second research question focused on how college recruiters perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus. This question was asked to further the understanding of how college recruiters view their careers as impacting how low-income URM students enroll in college. This question also helped to see why this career is right for these participants through their own lenses. Theme 2—the college recruiter career—emerged from five questions on the college recruiter interview protocol. Responses to these questions helped to answer the study's first research question. The second theme was titled the college recruiter career because it produced a wide range of responses about this profession from each college recruiter participant. The findings supporting Research Question 2 are as follows.

The first interview question asked participants why they chose to pursue a professional interest or career in higher education recruitment. Four codes were generated from responses to this question. All four college recruiters specified that helping students, passion, leading students, and making an impact on student's lives were significant factors in why they chose this

profession. College Recruiter A expressed how his college experience was the glue that tied him to this profession. He said,

I absolutely loved my college experience, and so I want to help lead students to the location that did that for me. I want to help students be the best they can be. I think higher education is a start to help them find who they are and will help them develop their careers and their families.

College Recruiter B has had similar experiences when it comes to recruiting students, which motivated her to stay in recruitment. She stated,

I think there are a lot of rewards personally for me being involved in recruitment. In the college process, students go through questioning, their families, the financial process, and have their lives changed. It's very rewarding, but it's also a lot of work. I think I didn't know how much work it actually was until it was my responsibility to take that student from the beginning to the end of that journey. In August, we're standing there when they're moving into the dorm and answering questions and comforting parents. I just didn't realize how much work being an actual recruiter was, but I've gotten to experience the process of talking to parents and families. So, I think just a passion for really helping people that's what has drawn me to this.

Hearing College Recruiter B's experience was eye-opening. She mentioned that it is a profession that requires a lot of work because of the effort needed to keep students and their families on track. Having someone to help guide students and their families during the admissions or financial aid processes can be very useful, especially for low-income URM students who might also be first-generation students. College Recruiter C's experience was

slightly different in that he did not solely want to be in recruitment at first but found himself in a great career. He said,

For me, it was kind of an interesting situation. My primary career goals have not always been in education. I actually come from a health care background, and before coming to the university, I was actually with a public health company and unfortunately lost my job. My wife is a grad of this institution, and when I saw that they had an opening, I said to myself, I know the people, I trust the people, and I would love to work there. I've been in this role for a few years now, and I realize more and more how much I really enjoy it. Having been in a place myself where I didn't quite know what my next step was. It's important to me to be able to help other people with what their next move is going to be.

Lastly, College Recruiter D's experience with recruitment was similar in how he thrives when working with younger generations and seeing them through their college journeys. He said, One big thing that I love about it is getting to work with students and working with a younger generation. When I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I worked with both international and U.S. high school students. So, I'm passionate about working with youth and excited to hear about ideas and see what gets them excited.

All of the recruiters explained their experiences in recruitment, and it seems that working with students brings the best out of them. It was great to hear that this profession can be a challenging one but that it is truly rewarding in the end.

The second interview question asked whether the enrollment manager and college recruiter roles are clearly defined at the recruiters' institutions. Two codes were generated from responses to this question. Four participants specified that their role is clearly defined at their institution and that job responsibilities and expectations are aligned with the university's goals.

College Recruiter B expressed how, in her department, meeting targets as a regional or campus-based recruiter can differ. Still, they all have learned to work well with recruitment goals and the expectations from their enrollment managers. She said,

I think that we've had a lot of changes just in the way that our roles are aligned. Even among recruiters, there is some variation in specific responsibilities. So, for example, I am a regional recruiter, which means that I'm not based on campus, and I live in a territory where I recruit students. I have a partner who recruits the same territory, but he is based on campus, and we have students divided alphabetically. So, you know I talk to his students, and he talks to my students; we're responsible for the territory. There is a difference in the definition for someone regional versus someone who is campus-based. Between the campus-based recruiters and recruiters who live in the region, we're doing a lot of things that are different from what they're doing and vice versa. However, in the end, having mutual respect continues to be a group effort.

College Recruiter B expressed how change can be a daunting task to get used to, but when meeting the demands of students, institutions have to use every resource they have. College Recruiter D's response to this question also reflected some experiences similar to the other recruiters. However, he noted that since the roles are clearly defined, he is also able to meet with others in different departments whose roles are also very clearly defined for concerns or questions he may have regarding students. He stated,

Yes, I think that each title and each person have a pretty specific job function that they focus on. I know I can go to them for that particular thing. A good example would be our data analysis and entry group team. I can go directly over there and talk to them about any transcripts or GPAs in why a student would tell me one thing whenever I'm looking

at something else. So, I'm talking to them about that, and I see a very pretty good definition of job titles and functions.

The third interview question asked participants to describe the relationships between enrollment managers and college recruiters at their institution and if they thought the relationships were positive. Three codes were generated from responses to this question. All four college recruiters specified that openness, family culture, and positivity described their relationships in their departments. College Recruiter A excitedly expressed that the relationships in his department were very significant. He said,

Yes, absolutely. I'll just give you an example for me, but my director lives in a suburb far from campus, so when we actually go to campus for visit days or whenever we have to meet up, we ride together. So, we know each other more, and we're friends, you know, we're not just coworkers. It took a while to get to that point, but I mean, we have a stable relationship. We can speak honestly with each other. For example, she got her MBA, and she helped me on different corners of actually getting my education for my masters. She had my job before, so she always helps me with my job and just speaks to me as a person and friend, not just my boss. So, a very good relationship.

College Recruiter C had similar views of the relationships with enrollment managers in this department and stated,

For the most part, yes, I would say that the relationships are ultimately positive. It's kind of almost a mentor type of relationship a lot of the times, a lot of good spirits and joking around. It's like a big family almost, but they do a really good job of helping us to see where we are and where we can grow. They teach us, and it's a fun experience; it's a unique dynamic.

The fourth interview question asked participants their thoughts on how their roles as recruiters played a part in increasing the low-income URM student population. Three codes were generated from responses to this question. All of the college recruiters specified that being a relationship builder, providing guidance, and being the first point of contact described their roles in increasing low-income URM student enrollment. College Recruiter A's experience in how he believes his role plays a part in increasing enrollment for this student population is one that relates to other recruiters from other institutions. He commented,

I would say probably about 75% of our students know that they're going to go here. I would also say there are about 25% where I can have a very strong impact. I do think I play a huge role as far as being known to find scholarships, community contacts, and information. Most importantly, having that relationship with students, I think it is super important. So again, I would say about 25% of the students that we have this incoming fall would probably be from me playing a role in their lives in helping them find scholarships and just forming a relationship.

College Recruiter B's response to this question reflected a slightly different view as she feels recruiters are the first point of contact for many students interested in her institution. She stated,

We're the ones that are out there getting the message out about our school. My job is to interface with as many students as I possibly can. When a student fills out an inquiry form, for example, on our website or starts an application or completes an application, I'm immediately in contact with that student. So, I'm not looking at anything in particular about them. My goal is just to get to know them. If they have applied to our university, they must have an interest, but I'm also out there talking to students who've never heard

of it and want some of the things that we offer. So, I think just being in as many places as I can, and if the school invites me to come that may be in a lower-income demographic, I don't draw the line.

That College Recruiter B does not draw the line when it comes to visiting a school that may have a large population of low-income URM students is admirable as it shows that she sees no difference in students' backgrounds. College Recruiter C has some similar knowledge and experiences as the other recruiters and stated that approaching students with an open mind has helped him to make a significant impact on students' lives. He said,

Well, I think it's important for someone in my role never to make assumptions and always to approach students with an open mind. What I do is from my first conversation with that student is make the impression that I can talk to them about their goals. I also think it's important for students to have a strong understanding of the resources and how I can help them not only start school but to finish school.

Being in the students' corners when they need assistance and not leaving their side when the recruitment process is over has shown to be extremely useful in recruiting and was reflected in the participants' views of how they are one of the essential pieces that tie a prospective student to their institution. Lastly, College Recruiter D expressed his view of how he plays a part in the enrollment increase and how it is vital to not only recruit students but to retain them so they will be alumni who will give back in the future. He said,

I think there are two different things. One is focusing on a relationship and building the rapport for the university and on behalf of the university with each student. There's the customer service side of let's get you connected with this person, or I can answer that for you. Then also it goes back to the rapport as you view these students moving along in

their decision-making cycle ultimately on behalf of the university. We want to see them enrolled successfully, graduating, and eventually being wealthy alumni that give back. You know you want to see the full cycle. And so, it starts with us within that first year and then it just moves on from there.

Research Question 3

Exploring how both enrollment managers and college recruiters view their role in increasing enrollment for the low-income URM student population opens the door for understanding what effective recruitment tactics work in recruiting these students. The third research question for this study asked which effective strategies enrollment managers use to prepare recruiters for recruiting the low-income URM student population. This question's purpose was to further the understanding of how enrollment managers prepare their recruiters to recruit low-income URM students. This question also facilitated identifying any leadership approaches that the study participants feel can help recruiters when engaging and recruiting these students. The third theme, professional development, emerged from responses to four questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. The theme was titled professional development because it produced a wide range of responses about the professional development methods used in preparing college recruiters to recruit low-income URM students. Findings supporting Research Question 3 are as follows.

The first interview question asked study participants to describe where the institution's enrollment and diversity goals originate from and their role in that process. Seven of the nine participants specified that senior-level management, individuals holding the positions of institution president and vice president, were responsible for setting diversity goals. The other two participants stated that they were not sure where the diversity goals originate at their

institution. Seven of the nine participants expressed that their role in the process of developing diversity goals was nonexistent. However, two participants felt that even though their position was not directly involved in developing these goals, in the end, their role was to support these diversity goals by being the frontline people who build relationships with students from all racial backgrounds. They believe their roles are responsible for increasing diversity among the students they recruit for the institution.

The second interview question asked participants to identify practical leadership approaches that would help college recruiters recruit low-income URM students. Two codes were generated from responses to this question. All participants specified that using servant and authentic leadership was effective in increasing enrollment for the low-income URM student population. Enrollment Manager A stated,

The service leadership does resonate with me. When I was an orientation leader, we were always told to have a servant's mentality regardless of the situation. When going through my admissions career, that's what I tried to exhibit always as well. I think when it comes down to low-income students; often, you do have to meet them where they are; it's not something where you have to wait on them to come to you. Sometimes it is you going out of your way and making sure that you get with them to provide whatever it is they need and answering a question that they have even if it is inconvenient. So, I think those are very effective strategies for any institution or any recruiter working with those students.

Enrollment Manager E had a different perspective when it came to using authentic leadership as a practical approach when recruiting these students and stated,

I believe figuring out what is it the student needs from us to be successful and putting yourself in the mind of your student helps to explore how you can best serve them.

Asking simple questions in an authentic manner of what I can do to help with this college process, what is it that you need, and what are the factors you are considering? From a practical standpoint helps you to put yourself in that mindset while being authentic and intentional.

College Recruiter B supported the enrollment managers' views when it came to using servant leadership in her role to recruit this student population. She commented,

I think seeing myself as a messenger in a way to bring the idea to students that first you can go to college; second, we want you to think about us as a university; and third, how we could be a fit for you. My leadership style is more of that servant leader and looking at myself like that when I'm talking to students and parents. If they go through the admissions process and have questions, I try to lead them so that they're asking the right questions. I help them figure out what is important to them, where they are headed, and their thought process. I think that's where I see myself as a leader with students as just helping to walk them through and encourage them to ask those questions along the way so that they get to the right spot.

College Recruiter D had similar views when it came to using servant leadership in his role in recruiting this student population. He said,

I think the universal servant leader is always going to be the number one thing to influence people positively. It's being empathetic and listening to a student and understanding this is going to be a big hurdle for them. So, I think servant leadership is the best way to approach students, and it's a willingness and humbleness to adapt to whatever it might be. So, if a student needs a lot of help, it is important to be humble enough to step into that role and get them through college.

The third interview question asked what influence or assistance participants receive from enrollment managers to low-income URM students. Two codes were generated from responses to this question. Half of the college recruiters specified that they received much preparation from training and shadowing in hopes of increasing low-income URM student enrollment. The other half felt that more could be done to help them recruit this student population. College Recruiter A stated,

We can always be better. We can always do better. I feel like with my director, she has definitely prepared me. There are still things I can learn and get better at, and I continue to get better every day. But I definitely feel like my boss has prepared me.

College Recruiter B provided an in-depth response on how enrollment managers partner with recruiters to help prepare them and said,

[They are] very supportive as far as helping us plan in territory events, and on-campus, we have a lot of support. During these times, they come along with a lot of virtual events for us to push students to go to as a resource for them to be able to see a little bit more about who we are since they can't visit campus right now. I think that we partner together well, and they listen to our input about things we think we need to do in the territory. We also have a lot of marketing support and communications support. So, I feel like they do a great job and partner well together.

College Recruiter C had conflicting views when it came to how enrollment managers prepare them to recruit low-income URM students and commented,

I don't think that we have traditionally done enough to be able to target these students. I feel, really and truly, there's more that we can do as a university and as an online branch to be able to dive into that. However, we do have a very diverse population that works for

the institution. A lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds, and I think that having diversity in our admissions office has been a big help for us over the years. It's a slow process sometimes in finding ways to be able to work within our bounds as a university, but I think we are taking strides to move forward.

College Recruiter D supported the same notion as College Recruiter C that he has not been as prepared to recruit this student population. He said,

I don't know if we break down, I guess students in how we would want to engage with them and talk to them in a conversation. It's just kind of a one-size-fits-all, and each recruiter adapts. Professional development here is awesome. However, how I learned my job was by watching my partner, who also recruited the territory. I would do a lot of things with him, and then we would do meetings or specific training for financial aid, and we would sit down and do those as an entire team.

The fourth interview question asked participants how they see their role in preparing recruiters to recruit low-income URM students. All enrollment managers specified seeing their role as an encourager and mentor when preparing college recruiters in recruiting this population. Enrollment Manager A expressed that in his position, he sets the example of being a great representation of the institution for recruiters to follow and that he provides excellent feedback for recruiters to help students find the right fit for their institution. He stated,

It's all about finding the right students or the right fit for our institution. Whatever it takes within reason and within legal aspects to get these students here, we bend over backward to do that. There are times where you are with a family or parent that may be a drag to deal with because they're pushy or ask too many questions. They can be a bit of a helicopter parent, or you can encounter a student who just won't take no for an answer.

We still have to be just as good to that student and that family as we do for the student that we've met with one time. It's continuing to be as good of a representative of the institution as you possibly can to work with these students. And so, I like all of my recruiters to have that kind of mentality where they're willing to work no matter the situation and willing to do what needs to be done.

Enrollment Manager C expressed that her role in providing workshops and training is key to making sure college recruiters are prepared to recruit this student population by stating,

We're working on that we had a big turnover, and so it's a continuing process. It used to be kind of 'oh, here's the job, go.' That was not effective, so we've been working more on training where recruiters spend almost a week learning the nuts and bolts and then work alongside a mentor for a couple of weeks. After that, we'll observe their performance, and it's worked well. With every season, we do three heavy days of training as a refresher, and then we have mock financial aid meetings where we do a lot of shadowing. I also can watch recruiters closely through their CRM [customer relationship management] interactions. We have everyone work hard as a team to support one another because we have to have a support system and very clear communication.

Enrollment Manager E's elaborated on his role in preparing his recruiters and how recruiters should take the initiative to think outside of the box and be creative. His response also aligned with Enrollment Manager A's and C's thoughts when he said,

My role is helping them figure out how they can be creative in their recruiting process. For me, every year, I was successful in attaining my enrollment goals, and I think a big reason for that was I saw what the standard procedures were for all students and how to recruit. I thought to myself, how could I elevate this, how can I make it work for the

populations that I'm recruiting, what are some things that I can try that have not been done before. My biggest asset is empowering recruiters to think this is how it's done and understanding that foundation and principle while exploring how you can elevate that and make it your own.

Research Question 4

This study's fourth research question focused on the differential impact in recruiting low-income URM students versus their counterparts. The purpose of asking this question was to understand if low-income URM students are discriminated against in recruitment tactics versus their more affluent peers. This question also explored if enrollment managers and college recruiters at private four-year institutions are choosing to recruit more affluent students because of their beliefs about low-income URM students. For this question, two themes were developed that helped to see how the enrollment managers and college recruiters view this student population. These two themes also provided a wide range of information that explained how each participant's thoughts, beliefs, and experiences with this student population affect their recruitment efforts and intentions. Theme 4, the low-income URM student, emerged from two questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. This theme was titled the low-income URM student because it produced a wide range of responses about each participant's experience working with this student population. Findings supporting Research Question 4 are as follows.

The first interview question asked participants to describe their knowledge or experience in working with low-income URM students. Four of the five enrollment managers specified that they gained experience in working with this student population in their previous positions. Some of these positions were in teaching and in other higher education positions like advising. One of

the enrollment managers stated that their only experience in working with this student population is in their current role. For the college recruiter participants, only one of the four had previous experience in working with this student population as a teacher. The other three stated that their experience with this population comes from working in their current roles. However, since they have been in their current positions, they have had the opportunity to learn what it means to be a low-income URM student and the obstacles they face when it comes to beginning the college admissions process.

The second interview question asked about the factors that encourage this student population to go to college. Five codes were generated from responses to this question. All nine participants specified that society's norms, parents, student's motivation, cost, and recruiters are the main five factors that encourage these students to go to college. Enrollment Manager A's views about how the student motivates themselves to go to college aligned with most of the participants' and stated,

You know they're ready to make a better life for themselves. They know what it was like growing up in a poor household where they had to worry about their next meal. So, for those students, we're certainly trying to provide support and opportunities for them, but you know, sometimes it's tough to try to get out of their current situation and do something better.

Finding the motivation to get outside of their comfort zone has been one reason these students have trouble in taking the next step toward college. Enrollment Manager C's views reflect the influence of societal norms by stating,

That's a hard question, we kind of veered where in the past college was only for the wealthy or the very intelligent. Then we veered where college was accessible for

everyone, which was great. However, then we kind of veered too far where it was like everyone should go to college. I honestly don't believe that everyone should go to college because we have people, for example, my son, who was not successful at college, and that probably shouldn't have been the route he took. I do think, however, college is a pathway to achieving dreams and goals. Not only do students get the education to get that job or career that they've always wanted, I think students learn social skills in college that they aren't necessarily achieving or gaining in high school. I think they gain independence where your kind of ready to be an adult but not prepared to be an adult, and I feel college is that perfect environment to learn how to adult.

Enrollment Manager D had a slightly different view but also backed Enrollment Manager C's views of how society and social media has played a significant role in encouraging these students to seek the college route. He said,

I feel that students are more aware of the idea of going to college, especially this population now, whether they are getting the encouragement from their support system or school setting. I think they see, especially with the involvement of social media, college campuses, student life, and what society says the next step is for them, whether it's the right one or not. I think that's part of our job in the profession is being at places where they can access information and have that conversation and maybe after having a conversation gauge if they are excited about college or not.

Enrollment Manager E elaborated on his views regarding what encourages this student population to attend college, and he mentioned that costs and finances also play a significant part in these students' decisions. "I would say the biggest factors are going to be a place of fit,

finances, so scholarship, grants, and then obviously academics if their major is there, and these are often major selling points.”

Having a sense of community on campus has been a topic of discussion among many students. For low-income URM students in particular, it seems that these students flock to institutions where they see others who come from the same background and who look like them. Cost, also one of the factors that Enrollment Manager E mentioned, can either encourage or deter these students from applying to an institution. It has been noted that more expensive institutions that rarely give aid to students who cannot afford it are not as desirable to low-income URM students. The reason is that these students face significant obstacles in obtaining money for college because they often live in poverty. College Recruiter A’s views aligned with those of the enrollment managers. He stated,

Well, in our society, they’re told that they have to have a college degree to be successful, and I think that’s not correct. I believe that colleges aren’t for everybody. However, I think our society tells us that college is for everybody. So, initially, it’s what they hear from everybody else. Also, the biggest part is the influence of parents and what the parents want them to do, and I think that has the largest impact from just my experience.

College Recruiter A brought up an important point about how students are influenced by their parents. Some parents with lower SES levels did not attend college but feel it is the best option for their children. Listening to their parents and families also affects if these students choose to stay close to home or move far away while they are in college. College Recruiter B, on the other hand, felt that high school programs and her efforts to be present for these programs have a significant influence on these students enrolling in college. She said,

Well, there are lots of different programs in high schools that are working hard to encourage these students, like AVID [Advancement Via Individual Determination] programs. Most of the schools also provide time during the school day for colleges to come in and visit with interested students. They provide college fairs opportunities, and some of them are big district-wide fairs. Others, where it's just the school itself, will provide a fair opportunity for students as well. I try to be at all of those events as much as possible and talk to any student who wants to speak to me.

Being present as a college recruiter at high schools and college fairs is a responsibility that college recruiters handle across many institutions. This participation is what helps students learn more about the institution and what they can encounter on campus. Visits also open the door for families to hear the information along with the students and better understand the admissions process, which is important based on some participants' comments that parents and families have a significant impact on their student's college decisions. College Recruiter D supported the same views as College Recruiter A and also spoke about how not receiving support for going to college from parents or families can deter students from attending by stating,

I think that the family and definitely working with parents is key to getting them into college. However, I think it can also be a double-edged sword for a lot of URM students that don't have that support to encourage them.

Theme 5, recruiting low-income URM students, emerged from seven questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. This theme was titled recruiting low-income URM students because it produced a wide range of responses about how these students are recruited at all four private four-year institutions compared to their counterparts. Findings supporting Research Question 4 are as follows.

The first interview question asked participants how low-income URM students are recruited at their institutions. Each participant listed various ways of how these students are recruited, and five codes were generated from their responses. All participants indicated that high school visits, college fairs, summer programs, community or church visits, and one-on-one meetups are how low-income URM students are recruited at their institutions. Enrollment Manager A indicated that these students are recruited in various ways but that recruiters are often assigned a territory that they manage. He commented,

So right now, we have a dedicated recruiter that goes around to all of the schools in the area, and we break them up by the geo market. We have nights where we will go and do panels and outreach at these schools as well.

Enrollment Manager B supported some of the same views as Enrollment Manager A; however, he further explained how having community partnerships has helped his institution to meet these students where they are and get them excited about attending. He said,

Our recruitment processes at this time are focused on geography and territory. So, the recruiters are deployed geographically, with each of them gaining knowledge of the student population and the nuanced ways that they can communicate with them. Going back to the specificities of our very local region, we understand how to position opportunities for those students. So, we have a successful and important program that affords a level of scholarship to local students and an opportunity for a learning community that is well supported. We're partnering with the city with an awards program because we want to make sure we understand where the resources and community outputs are for students who identify as low-income URM. It's not as much about the

realities of targeting as it is just understanding demographics within a person's geographic territory.

The college recruiters have some views similar to the enrollment managers when it comes to using various outlets to recruit these students. College Recruiter A mentioned that his interactions are sometimes on a more intimate level when meeting with students and their families. He replied,

Not only do I go to their schools, but students who are involved and want to enroll here, I'll meet them at a Starbucks. I talked to the parents then I may take them out to eat at a Chili's or something just to help answer questions and let them know what the institution is all about. Sometimes I've been offered to go to their house, and I've had people cook for me, which is awesome and very welcoming.

College Recruiter C spoke about using various outlets to recruit these students and how creating a space where a visit is more personalized and one-on-one with the student has worked in his role. He said,

We do several things. We focus on students as they request information, and we follow through with them. I would say that for us, how we target those students is when we have those initial conversations with them—understanding their background, where they are financially, where they are with their career, and where they are on their educational journey. We are very involved with the students, and we have marketing teams that get involved with how we target and identify our audiences and where we're spending our time in recruiting students. So, for us, it's kind of a broad approach, but once we have that conversation with someone, we try to make it as personal one-on-one and individualized as picking them.

The second interview question asked participants to identify some of the initiatives that their universities use in hopes of recruiting low-income URM students. Five codes were generated from responses to this question. Eight participants specified that scholarships, special programming, and campus renovations are some of the ways their universities take the lead in providing better experiences for these students in hopes of increasing their enrollment. However, Enrollment Manager A stated that no current initiatives were in place at his institution. Enrollment Manager B spoke about how campus renovations at her institution have been a great talking point when recruiting these students because it allows them to have a better college living experience. She stated,

So, we are completely renovating our dorms because we realized that the living space had become a big issue. After all, students don't want that traditional cube community bathroom kind of feel; they want it to feel more like home. From the admissions standpoint, students will research a college more online before they reach out to anyone, and we have realized that our website is horrible. The site is clunky and has a lot of pages, and it's hard to navigate pages that don't work, so we are completely revamping our website. We kind of got pushed into this a little faster than what we wanted, but it's working out well. We also started doing virtual visits where a student can check out the school before they come to school. However, we always push them to come to campus because our style is different, and they don't know that until they walk on the campus.

Enrollment Manager E spoke about how scholarships are used as an initiative to attract and recruit these students while also having organizations that support them when they are on campus by stating,

The biggest broad effort is that all students get an automatic scholarship if they are accepted into the university. So that's our biggest initiative, and we want to give all students that opportunity to make college affordable but also have other small initiatives to target smaller populations. We have a specific endowment that is for students from particular areas where I recruited when I was a recruiter, and it was to help students from those areas to give them a chance to go here. With the understanding that the cost of private education is probably going to be more expensive than a public one, this would hopefully offset that cost. We also have the office of multicultural affairs where it does benefit students from any type of ethnicity, background, [or] color. We want to help students have a safe place where they can still be connected to their background and culture while also growing in their faith and education.

College Recruiter B had a slightly different view and expressed that having regional recruiters in certain areas is a considerable initiative by the university.

One of those things like being regionally located, I can take advantage of being in lots of places that it would be hard for me to travel in if I was based on campus. When I'm in my territory, I'm able to do more presentations, and that's a huge piece of our move toward having regional recruiters so I can meet a student for coffee. I can do things that I couldn't do if I had to travel 200 miles every time. If a school contacts me and says we're going to have two or three universities at this event we'd like for you to come, I can jump in my car and go across town and be there. If I had to travel 200 miles, I could not make it, so that's something that we've done over the last few years.

College Recruiter D also mentioned that partnerships with community-based organizations have been a great initiative in recruiting low-income URM students. He said,

I've spoken at a couple of lower-income Hispanic community outreaches with third party nonprofits that contacted our university. Since I was a missionary and bilingual, I would help present and talk to families about the importance of college. And so, there is a relationship between our institution, churches, and nonprofits that allows us to share relevant information. We also have a couple of programs that are financially benefiting students of lower-income. We have a bridge program. We have a program with a small group of students that have been identified as lower-income or multiethnic that recognizes these student's voices, and it's a unique program. Unfortunately, not every student gets into that program, so it's up to us to build that relationship with them well enough to recommend they would be successful in this program.

The third interview question asked how the institution's recruitment strategies for low-income URM students differ from those directed toward their more affluent peers and if participants felt the recruitment strategies are more strategic. Most participants stated that there is no difference in how these student populations are recruited. Others said there is a difference. A few participants also mentioned that these strategies do become more strategic when looking at recruiting this student population because recruiters have to meet these students where they are at times. Enrollment Manager A stated,

Absolutely, for a student from the affluent neighborhood whose family owns a yacht and parents have multiple degrees, they grew up with the expectation if you don't go to college, you're kind of looked down upon. We don't necessarily have to provide that same support to that population. Some of our lower-income and minority students are located in a pretty poor and rough area throughout the state. I think we have to be more

creative with how we work and interact with these students and the services that we provide as opposed to your more traditional student.

Enrollment Manager B spoke to how this process works at his institution and how financial aid is what can sometimes differentiate how recruiters work with these students by replying,

For over 90%, they don't because we see that the message is relatively the same. The fact that over 90% of students have a form of financial aid and the average financial aid award is \$25,000 to \$28,000; it resonates, I think, with both audiences equally. So, from a messaging approach, it goes back to how we want to segment the conversation. Our team, in the form of elements related to financial aid packages, can see where the need is to have the right conversation and to help families be supported when they need to have a more in-depth discussion about financial aid. I think a part of the experience for our recruitment is to be aware of the distinctions of the student's personal history and background and also their family. If they are affluent or if they are low income, we need to treat each family as a special entity. I think at the end of the day, it's not about a broad set of institutional life goals and targets. It is how we want to make the work personal and remain committed to an understanding that if there's a student who identifies themselves as low-income URM, we're aware of it. We support them differently than maybe their affluent colleagues.

Enrollment Manager C mentioned that in her position, she does not handle the strategic recruitment piece when it comes to preparing a plan to recruit these students. She commented, I wouldn't say they differ terribly; probably our lowest low-income area is heavily Hispanic populated. Most of the students are either not going to college or are going to

community college, and they don't leave home or go far from home because they typically have very close-knit families. In this case, we do offer a specific scholarship for that territory, and that's to help offset the cost of coming to our institution, and that's our main recruitment piece. On a higher level, the recruitment strategies are more strategic, but I just don't know that I can answer that on my level that it is more strategic.

To follow up, Enrollment Manager D stated a similar view when it comes to recruiting these student populations and how the strategies do not differ at his institution.

They don't. It's interesting when you frame this question; I don't think they differ.

Everybody has the same access to the same program. So, when we travel, we're traveling across the country, really across the globe. I think that's our responsibility to make sure that we are recruiting or making sure our recruiters have the opportunity to talk to all students.

Enrollment Manager E expressed how the recruitment strategies differ at his institution by recruiters being more intentional with the low-income URM student population and said,

I think our recruiting strategies differ in the fact that we are a little more intentional and hands-on with the recruitment and college transition process with those low-SES minority students. They don't have the resources to know how to do FAFSA or the difference between grant money and student loans, so we are a little more hands-on in that process. We walk them through to applying to moving them into their freshman dorm.

From the college recruiter's perspective, the responses were similar to the enrollment managers, and they helped to understand how they see these strategies not differing. College Recruiter A stated,

We have three tiers of schools. We have about 10 schools where we get the most students, and these schools are predominately private. Then we have a second tier, which are public schools in better parts of the areas. We recruit through these tiers not because of the income level but from where students are graduating. I mean, we do have a third tier, which is everybody else, but we are required to hit every school in our area. Some schools are visited more than others, but I do hit a lot of the lower-income and socioeconomic status schools as well.

College Recruiter B expressed that because of the size of her institution there tends to be a blanket recruitment strategy used for all students. She said,

You know, in higher-income areas there is not a lot of difference as far as ours because we're so much smaller than a lot of other universities. Because we have our style of recruiting, we are very personal about recruiting. We are available in all the schools in my area, and some of them are mostly minority. If it's not, I'm there, and I'm talking to them and telling them what our university offers if they are interested, and I connect with them on the phone. I walk with them through any of their financial aid questions. I want to make sure they get to visit the campus, so I'm doing it for all of my students. I wouldn't say I do it any differently from one place to the other.

College Recruiter C's view is that as a higher education professional, there is no room to assume that all students know how the admissions and recruitment process works and stated,

It's not much of a difference. When we have that initial conversation with students, we just can't assume that they know how student loans work or how tutoring or connecting with professors will work in this type of modality. I think as a recruiter taking that step back to make sure we offer all possibilities to students, even if it's something that they

may not qualify for, it is our job to make sure they know what is available within our scope.

Both the enrollment managers and the college recruiters expressed the importance of being intentional with students when recruiting both student populations. College Recruiter D backed this notion by saying,

Yes, for sure. I think it's a lot more strategic. It's understanding where our student financial services can get students additional aid. Not only that, I think outside of financial aid, there is more intentional communication from the recruiter to get the student further along in the process. I think that's a pretty general statement that could be applied.

The fourth interview question asked, based on the current recruitment strategies in place, would the participants like to see any changes. And, if so, what would they like to see? All nine participants specified that they would like changes to occur with recruitment strategies. A few changes mentioned were reducing admissions barriers, lowering tuition, providing more financial opportunities for students, better resources, and hiring professionals with the same low-income URM background to be able to better relate to these students. Enrollment Manager B stated,

I feel like the institution is still building support mechanisms in some ways. It's only recently that we increased the academic support around our Asian Pacific Islander population. It is only recently that we had a fully functioning physical veterans center. I think with some practical use in partnerships with some well-chosen community-based organizations and having someone be a functional deployable person in everyone's territory, we can start to move the needle.

Enrollment Manager D spoke to how giving more money to students can have an impact on how they recruit. He also suggested that more student engagement and responsiveness could also impact recruiting. He said,

More money. More money to give out scholarships, merit awards. It's relatively easy on our side once you get data to be able to make students aware of the various opportunities. If I have a student that is interested in my institution, I don't know about them unless they fill out an inquiry card. What I like to see on the other hand, and this is a tall ask, but I'd like to see the students be a little bit more responsible and responsive. That's hard to ask of 13- to 18-year-olds who sometimes don't have a concept of understanding the importance of responding to an email. Responding to that email could mean the difference between the institution, offering you an opportunity to fly out at all expenses paid to see the campus for a weekend. At my institution, we email a lot, and I know it's a pain, but there's not a better way when you talk about the volume of applications. Were always outnumbered no matter what office you're in, so how do you get to these places and be everything to everyone. We have to leverage technology where we're not being too intrusive but allowing the student to want to learn and engage more.

Enrollment Manager E's view was that hiring a recruiter who can be more accessible to the low-income URM student population and who also has the same background would be a good change. It is often speculated that because recruiters do not come from the same origin as their audience, they have a hard time relating and encouraging those students to attend. Enrollment Manager E's thoughts supported this speculation and stated, "I think some changes I would like to see is potentially a recruiter actually living in the territory of those lower-SES

populations. I think having someone readily available that can focus specifically on that area would be beneficial.”

College Recruiter C stated that the admissions barriers that restrict some students to attend are what should change in the future. He said,

There are a lot of things that we could do to broaden our reach. Unfortunately, I think we’ve kind of limited ourselves partially. We have certain restrictions on online bachelor’s programs where students have to be four years out of high school before they can qualify for online bachelor’s programs. Now obviously, that’s not necessarily going to be the case for other students, so there’s a whole gap of students that would like to come, but we can’t necessarily serve them because we’ve got this requirement. So, I think the change should be to reduce the barriers of entry and making it something a little bit more accessible. I would love to see more scholarship money become available for students and have more programs to offer.

College Recruiter D’s views backed the other participants’ opinions that giving more money to students to attend their institution would be a significant and effective change. He also recommended implementing a referral program that incentivizes students who refer others to enroll at his institution. He stated,

I’m sure you get this a lot, but I want to see more aid given to students. Also incentivizing a student who knows for sure that they’re going to be attending who could get others to attend here as well. Giving them a scholarship for influencing others from their same communities, church, or school could be a beneficial change.

The fifth interview question asked participants to identify the greatest challenges in recruiting low-income URM students and why. Two codes were generated from responses to this

question. All nine participants specified that the cost or financial burden and lack of community on campus are the greatest challenges in recruiting low-income URM students. Enrollment Manager A expressed that finances have been a major obstacle in recruiting these students and said,

I think finances, and it's kind of a double-edged sword because if a student wants to live on campus, we are in the \$50,000 range. Their merit scholarship package is going to ultimately come down to some combination of grades and test scores. It's no secret that there are a lot of statistics that show low-income, first-gen, minority students test worse than other students, so they already have that working against them. A lot of times, they come from backgrounds where maybe they had to get a job to help support the family. They weren't able to dedicate a lot of time to their studies as some of their other counterparts, which hinders them from getting merit awards to cover the cost.

Enrollment Manager B mentioned that cost is an obstacle, but most importantly, having a sense of community on campus is also a challenge when recruiting these students on his campus. He stated,

Those who identify as Black African Americans don't see themselves here, and our percentage among our faculty and staff is low. So, to move the needle from being a small population with a perception of not having a sense of community here to all of a sudden having one requires a significant amount of investments in a lot of different ways. I think there's comfort around a profile related to our populations only coming from affluent populations, but over time, a more in-depth study realized that wasn't the case. We need to not overpromise and be really authentic in providing wraparound services in hopes of moving the needle.

Enrollment Manager C expressed that private education being expensive hinders a lot of these students from starting a private education and pushes them to attend schools where education is affordable. She stated,

Cost, just the cost, I think there is an unrealistic expectation of what college will cost for students. Everyone thinks they are going to get a free ride, which really does not exist unless you are the cream of the crop athlete or national merit. The stigma of the cost of a private university could end up being as inexpensive as a public school, but there is this stigma of the cost, and that's the hardest hurdle to get over. I hear from everyone, 'I love and want to go to your university, but we just can't afford it.'

College Recruiter A supported the narrative that cost is one of the biggest challenges, especially when tuition is increased and said,

Money. All universities are increasing their tuition every year, and our institution has done that for the past four years. It's not that much of an increase, but they're still increasing it, and being a private school, it's very difficult to get lower socioeconomic students. However, we do get some of them because they receive a very high merit scholarship, and they are national finalists.

College Recruiter D stated some of the same challenges with the price and the competition of public institutions being much more expensive. He said,

I think one of the biggest things is the price. Speaking with students about how can you afford college? How do you justify if you can't make up the difference? How do you justify going? [These] are usually the questions that demonstrate price being a challenge.

The last question had two parts. The first asked if participants had identified any recruitment strategies that have been proven to be effective in recruiting these students. All nine

participants specified that high school visits, student life panels, on-campus programs, and college visits are the recruitment strategies that have been proven effective in recruiting this student population. Enrollment Manager A stated that engaging students earlier in the college admissions process has been an effective recruitment strategy at his institution. He commented,

You've got to find a way to get to these students from the ground floor. Then work with them to build that profile over their four years in high school. Once they get to their junior and senior year, it's more or less too late. Students applying early are looking at a six-semester GPA, which would include everything up to their junior year. If they've had two bad years, there is no time for correction. So, I think working with these students from freshman–sophomore year and continuing to engage and advise them throughout their high school experience has been successful over time.

Enrollment Manager B found that developing relationships with community-based organizations have been proven to be effective and said, “I do believe that relationships with certain community-based organizations showed real promise. They show promise because there's enthusiasm on both the institution and the organizational partner side to achieve the engagement and bring students to the table.” Enrollment Manager C mentioned that having visit days on campus where students get to meet with them and can also meet with other departments and organizations on campus has been effective. She said,

On big visit days, we have showcases, whether it's breakout sessions or booths to where students can talk to someone. We do have student life panels where the students can speak to their different experiences, but I would love to include them more. Our faculty are great about their organizations, and they'll come and do presentations as well.

College Recruiter B mentioned that high school visits are a vital part of recruiting these students and said,

One of the most important is just being in schools and scheduling the time to visit a school. The students will be notified that we're coming. So, they can sign up and come to the college and career center to meet with us. That's a really good way to connect with students who might be interested in our university because they're already at school. They don't have to have additional transportation to come, and it doesn't cost them anything. They can come and connect with us, and then we're able to stay connected with them, answer questions, and invite them to things that we might be doing.

College Recruiter C mentioned that working with the community colleges and also giving faculty and currently enrolled students the opportunity to meet with prospective students are strategies that have been proven to be effective. He commented,

Well, one of the things I thought was effective for us is striking partnerships with local community colleges and using those community colleges as pathways or bridges to the programs we offer. One of the other things that is really liked that we do is we have some different community engagement events. One of the things we did for that was have a luncheon over a weekend where we got together a couple of professors and current students to talk about the university experience.

The second part of this question focused on how the strategy's effectiveness is measured and if there is an evaluation process. All nine participants specified that using a customer relationship management (CRM) system, pre- and postvisit surveys, inquiry cards, and comparing previous event data was how they measured effectiveness. Enrollment Manager A's way of evaluating the progress of engaging students earlier in the college admissions process is

handled by collecting information for the institution's CRM system: "[They] know we'll keep track of all of that kind of information by logging all of those interactions. As soon as the student has a file in our CRM, and we can track that all the way through."

Using surveys supports Enrollment Manager C's way of evaluating the progress of visit days on campus where students get to meet with their department and organizations. Enrollment Manager C stated,

After every event, we send out surveys, and we get feedback from the student's likes and dislikes, and we have that immediate response. Also, another example [is] it comes down to looking at we've done a college fair for three years, and we got a ton of inquiries, but it never leads to a student visiting the campus. I may get 100 inquiry cards; however, it's not worth the time, money, or effort to return.

College Recruiter B evaluates the progress of high school visits is by using a database to track every visit and said, "We track all of our visits. We give students information on there. We have a database that we use that helps us to keep track of all of our visits to the schools." College Recruiter C uses a coding system to evaluate the progress of working with the community colleges and giving faculty and currently enrolled students the opportunity to meet with prospective students. He said,

So, one of the ways that we do it we use a coding system. For example, prospective students from the luncheon would have a code attached to their contact. We'd be able to check records to see of the 50 students who attended X number applied, started the application, and started classes. Being able to kind of identify where the students are and which ways we're engaging students are the most effective.

Strategic Enrollment Management Plans

The participants all noted strategic recruitment strategies for low-income URM students during their interviews. In Chapter 2, a comparison of strategic enrollment management (SEM) versus enrollment management showed that SEM had been the most used model across various institutions. Bontrager (2008) defined SEM as “a coordinated set of concepts and processes that enables fulfillment of institutional mission and students educational goals” (p. 18).

For the present study, I compared each institution’s enrollment practices with its strategic enrollment plan. All institutions had updated strategic enrollment plans for recruiting students that included overall institutional goals. University A’s plan focuses on its methods for increasing undergraduate enrollment. The plan also details the various opportunities that will be offered to students who are seeking admission to this institution. This plan is also grounded in the vision of where institutional leaders see Christian education growing over the years.

University B’s plan focuses on broadening diversity among its incoming students. To enlarge diversity, the institution is looking to increase its outreach to underrepresented populations. It also focuses on attracting more students from underrepresented populations by developing a better network of support and expanding the opportunities given to students. This plan has eight core strategies to not only increase enrollment of low-income URM students but also to offer an equal recruitment process for all students. University C’s plan focuses on achieving target enrollment levels with diverse student populations that will help the institution sustain its strength and stability. University C’s plan supports this notion in stating that the university intends to incorporate more opportunities for students to receive grant money and better student services on campus, which will make the university more competitive. These initiatives also puts the institution in a position to maintain its stability. This institution’s goals

for recruiting a specific student population are supported by the admissions and recruitment professionals who are employed there.

University D's plan focuses on increasing enrollment by providing more distance learning opportunities to students who are not able to attend classes on campus. This plan also incorporates the intention of making tuition more affordable by increasing the university's revenue opportunities. One of the factors in this plan also expresses the concern of increasing enrollment for underrepresented groups, which will allow a more diverse student body. It is also essential that the university supports these students on campus by providing a sense of community among faculty, staff, and other students. For all four institutions, I was able to download SEM plans from their website that supported the participants' views on the institution's enrollment goals and the actions in place to meet these goals.

Institutional Enrollment Data From IPEDS

Institutional enrollment data were included in this study to provide a broader perspective regarding the size of the low-income URM student population on each campus. The IPEDS is a system of interrelated surveys conducted annually by the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The IPEDS gathers information from every college, university, and technical and vocational institution that participates in the federal student financial aid programs" (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d., para. 1). Using demographic data on student populations allowed me to accurately show how these students continue to be underrepresented at these institutions. Even though one of the universities institutions is not considered a predominantly White institution, the percentages for these students remain very low compared to their White and Asian counterparts.

The IPEDS was also used to show each institution's annual costs and undergraduate student population. This public information strengthened the understanding that at larger institutions, low-income URM students face obstacles like affording a private education and finding a sense of belonging on campus. None of the institutions had students in the Native American/Alaskan Native category, which leads to the issue of these students not being represented on campus and whether they are receiving the same recruitment efforts as their peers. Having this public information available helps to support research, including the present study, on ways to help recruit and support underrepresented populations on college campuses.

Chapter Summary

Interview data were transcribed, de-identified, and coded by using in vivo coding, which generated themes from the data. In Chapter 4, I presented these themes and findings from the narrative analysis of semistructured interviews, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and review of institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. I also provided a comparative analysis summary for four private four-year U.S. universities that were the focus of this study. In Chapter 5, I discuss the findings as they relate to extant literature and also discuss university recruitment department structures, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this study, I explored the factors that affect low-income URM student college choice and the beliefs or perceptions enrollment managers and recruiters have about this population that may affect their recruitment efforts and intentions. My purpose was to determine if low-income URM students are discriminated against by recruitment practices based on enrollment managers' and college recruiters' misconceptions and stereotypes of this population. I conducted a qualitative multiple case study that focused on four four-year private institutions in the United States. Data were collected through nine semistructured interviews from participants in enrollment manager and college recruiter roles, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and institutional enrollment data from IPEDS.

Through narrative analysis of the interview data, five themes were developed: the enrollment manager career, the college recruiter career, the low-income URM student, recruiting low-income URM students, and professional development. Study limitations included only incorporating private four-year institutions in the United States in the study sample and not collecting data that included the university presidents' perspectives. In this chapter, I discuss the findings in relationship to past literature, university recruitment department structures, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

Discussion of Results

To explore if low-income URM students are discriminated against by recruitment procedures versus their more affluent peers, I looked at each institution in this study very carefully. The study findings showed that there are similarities across the four institutions. In this section, I discuss these results in a comparative analysis format to answer this study's four research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question was, How do enrollment managers perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus? This question implies that enrollment managers view their careers as having an impact on increasing enrollment of low-income URM students. Theme 1, the enrollment manager career, emerged from participant responses to five questions on the enrollment manager interview protocol.

Enrollment managers from all four institutions perceived their roles as a mentor, leader, and supporter in developing strategies to increase the enrollment of low-income URM students. All enrollment managers mentioned that opportunity pushed them to pursue this career further, and they understand their job as essential to increasing enrollment. The enrollment managers' passion for seeing students succeed, no matter their background, was a shared feeling across campuses. Another trend among the enrollment managers at these institutions was using data to track how effective their strategies are and what approaches produce the highest results.

The study participants also mentioned that the relationships between enrollment managers and college recruiters are very positive and open, which was seen across all four institutions. These enrollment managers also perceived their role as a connection where senior-level management and recruiters meet to discuss recruitment efforts for increasing a specific student population. The present study was grounded in two theories: Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) three-phase model of college choice and Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA). However, TRA would be the best fit for interpreting these results. Theory of reasoned action presumes that

People make rational choices when they decide whether to engage in a specific behavior and that behavior is driven by behavioral intentions. Behavioral intention is determined

by the attitude toward the behavior and the subjective norms associated with the behavior. (Karnowski et al., 2018, p. 92)

In light of this theory, the fact that the enrollment managers viewed their role as mentors, leaders, and supporters of developing strategies to increase the enrollment of the low-income URM students speaks to their having good intentions in recruiting these students.

When enrollment managers were asked what made them pursue their careers, they all mentioned having a passion for student success. Having the attitude that they want students to succeed also influenced their intentions for developing recruiting strategies that help increase enrollment for this student population. Given the literature regarding TRA, these results were expected. As the researcher, I expected that the enrollment managers would feel that their role played a significant part in enrolling low-income URM students. I also expected the enrollment managers to agree with the statistics and discussion from various studies on low-income URM students that they are academically challenged and see the cost of private education as a barrier that could deter them from enrolling (Declercq & Verboven, 2015; Jury et al., 2017). It is safe to say that the enrollment manager role at these four institutions is a rewarding one that challenges these individuals to meet the student demands. Enrollment managers at these institutions have a sincere dedication to meeting the enrollment goals they help develop for this student population.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 was, How do college recruiters perceive their role in increasing enrollment for low-income URM students on their campus? This question implied that college recruiters view their careers as playing an important part in increasing low-income URM student enrollment at their institutions. Theme 2, the college recruiter career, emerged from five questions on the college recruiter interview protocol similar to the enrollment manager protocol.

College recruiters from all four institutions perceived their roles as guides, relationship builders, and encouragers when executing recruitment strategies to increase enrollment of low-income URM students. All college recruiters mentioned that wanting to help students is what pushed them to pursue this career, and they understand their job as essential in doing the groundwork for increasing enrollment. The college recruiters' passions for making an impact on students' lives, no matter their background, was shared across campuses.

Another trend among the college recruiters at all four institutions was the importance of having a family-like culture in their departments. It was mentioned many times that the relationships with their enrollment managers are very positive and open, and they feel comfortable enough to be themselves. They said that their enrollment managers' expectations are always transparent, and they set clear goals for increasing enrollment. All college recruiters mentioned that they are the first point of contact when it comes to speaking with these students. They also expressed the need for any recruiter to be informed enough about their institution to properly guide students through the admissions process.

Again, TRA is the best-fit theory for interpreting these results. Theory of reasoned action assumes that "subjective norms, attitude, and intention work together in predicting behavior" (Karnowski et al., 2018, p. 93). In light of this theory, college recruiters viewing their role as guides, relationship builders, and encouragers when executing recruitment strategies to increase enrollment of low-income URM students demonstrates their belief that this population requires more guidance in the admissions process. This view also speaks to their positive intentions for recruiting these students.

When college recruiters were asked what made them pursue their career, they all mentioned that helping students and seeing the impact they make in students' lives is what drew

them to this profession. Fostering the attitude that they want to feel their work makes a difference in students' lives when they execute recruitment strategies for increasing low-income URM student enrollment is proven to support their positive intentions. Given the literature regarding TRA, these results were expected. I expected that the college recruiters would feel their roles play a significant part in enrolling these students. I also expected the college recruiters to agree with the narrative of low-income URM students being academically challenged, requiring more hands-on guidance in the admissions process, and cost barriers being the reason why enrollment is low for these students at private institutions (Berumen et al., 2015; Flores et al., 2017; Jaquette et al., 2016; Jury et al., 2017). It is safe to say that the college recruiters at these four institutions have encountered some of the same obstacles when it comes to increasing enrollment of low-income URM students. It is also safe to say that these individuals find their career rewarding when they know they are impacting these students' lives.

Research Question 3

The third research question was, What effective strategies do enrollment managers use to prepare recruiters for recruiting the low-income URM student population? This question implies that enrollment managers prepare their college recruiters with the right tools to recruit this student population. This question also implies that there are specific recruitment strategies that recruiters find useful and effective when recruiting low-income URM students. Theme 3, professional development, emerged from four questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. The enrollment managers and college recruiters from all four institutions expressed their views of how they prepare college recruiters and how the college recruiters feel they are prepared in recruiting this student population. In asking these questions, I sought to understand how the participants viewed diversity on their campus. All participants

mentioned that their senior leadership develops diversity goals for their institutions, and they (the participants) carry out those goals. Across all four institutions, enrollment managers noted training, workshops, and shadowing opportunities with peers as some of the ways they prepare the college recruiters to recruit low-income URM students. Training included information about financial aid, the institution as a whole, and how to conduct presentations in front of large groups. When college recruiters were asked a similar question, their answers aligned with the enrollment managers that receiving training, workshop opportunities, and using shadowing helped prepare them to recruit this student population.

Another piece to this question was understanding what practical leadership approaches college recruiters could use to effectively recruit these students. All participants identified that authentic and servant leadership approaches are the most beneficial. Kiersch and Peters (2017) stated that “authentic and servant leadership provide a framework of positive, ethical, trust-based, and pro-social leadership” (p. 149). Authentic leadership encompasses “self-awareness, acting in accordance with values, balanced and unbiased decision-making, and building trust-based relationships” (Kiersch & Peters, 2017, p. 149). Servant leadership means that

The servant-leader is servant first . . . It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then the conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first. (Burch et al., 2015, p. 400)

The participants who work for University A and C, institutions that foster a Christian education, stated that the servant leadership model is embedded in their institutions’ mission and values, so using the servant leadership approach was nothing new to them. Burch et al. (2015) supported the same notion in stating that servant leadership is a viable leadership model for church-related religious leaders.

In light of the leadership approaches mentioned, the participants said that they understood their role as essential to providing top-notch service to all students. Some of the enrollment managers felt that setting the example of being creative and thinking outside of the box has helped them when it comes to teaching recruiters how to do their job. Moving forward, the enrollment managers made sure to embrace their recruiters when they wanted to be creative in recruiting low-income URM students. Given the literature regarding authentic and servant leadership, these results were somewhat expected. I expected that the college recruiters would know about leadership approaches, but there were two who needed some explanation of what I meant by leadership approaches. Once I gave a thorough explanation of leadership approaches, they were able to identify the ones that were the most relevant to their positions. One of the recruiters mentioned that transformational leadership could also be a practical approach to recruiting these students. Using training, shadowing, and leadership approaches like authentic and servant leadership have proven to be effective strategies to prepare these individuals for recruiting low-income URM students.

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 was, What is the differential impact in recruiting low-income URM students versus their counterparts? This question implied that there is a difference in the way low-income URM students are recruited versus their more affluent peers. Two themes were developed to help answer this research question. Theme 4, the low-income URM student, emerged from two questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. All participants spoke to their experiences in working with these students, and each participant had some type of previous or current experience. This experience included teaching or advising this student population in either a secondary or postsecondary setting. Two of the

college recruiters mentioned that they had no prior experience in working with this student population before holding their current positions. All enrollment managers had extensive experience in working with this student population. When the participants were asked about the factors that encourage this student population to go to college, there were many similarities in their answers. The enrollment managers identified the student's motivation, society, and support system as major factors that encourage these students. The college recruiters also found that society and the student's support system were factors and identified their roles as recruiters as another factor in encouraging these students to attend college. The recruiters mentioned that building relationships with these students and being the first point of contact increase students' interest in enrolling.

Theme 5, recruiting low-income URM students, emerged from seven questions on both the enrollment manager and college recruiter interview protocols. The participants spoke to how these students are recruited at their institutions. All participants mentioned that college recruiters are assigned territories in which they are responsible for recruiting students. The enrollment manager's job is to assign these territories, and the recruiters go out and visit schools, have one-on-one meetings with students, and attend events in those territories. Across all four institutions, high school visits, college fairs, and community college visits were the most used tactics in recruiting these students. In response to the question on how recruitment strategies differ for low-income URM students versus their more affluent peers, two of the five enrollment managers stated that the recruitment strategies they develop do not differ. These enrollment managers stated that there is a blanket recruitment strategy for all students at their institutions. The other three enrollment managers stated that there are differences in developing recruiting strategies for this student population. They mentioned that this population requires more guidance on the

admissions process versus their peers, which requires more strategic recruitment plans. The college recruiters' responses to the same question reflected similar views. Three of the four stated that there was no difference in the recruitment strategies for low-income URM students versus their peers. One said there is a difference because this student population requires a more hands-on approach.

In hearing the participants' responses to these questions, I concluded that for some institutions, developing and executing recruitment strategies for low-income URM students could differ depending on many factors. My findings support the results in previous studies that also reflected conflicting views on whether these students are recruited more or less versus their more affluent peers (Bastedo & Bowman, 2017; Fischerová & Půbalová, 2018; Hoxby & Avery, 2013). Given the literature on low-income URM students and college recruitment, the present study's results were not expected. The narrative has been that low-income URM students do not receive the same treatment as their more affluent peers in the admissions process (Cox, 2016; Hakkola, 2019; Jaquette et al., 2016). I expected to see this narrative reflected in the present study's results, and that was not the case. The participants' responses reflected the complete opposite: low-income URM students at their institutions receive more hands-on guidance in the admissions and recruitment process than their more affluent peers. Moving forward in determining if these students are being served an injustice with recruitment practices at four-year private institutions other than the ones included in this study will require additional research. However, for the institutions included in this study, there is no evidence to support that there is an injustice being served to low-income URM students when it comes to recruitment practices.

Organizational Recruitment Structures

In Chapter 4, I presented the findings from the semistructured interviews, and I presented findings from my analysis of each institution's strategic enrollment management plan and IPEDS data. Strategic enrollment management (SEM) is a comprehensive approach that includes the university's programs, practices, and policies. It is expected that when an institution uses the SEM model, institutional leaders incorporate admissions, recruitment, academic advising, financial aid, retention, career services, and so on into their visions and goals for increasing enrollment, retaining students, and graduating students (Hossler & Bontrager, 2014).

Organizational recruitment structures were shown in Chapter 4 to explain each institution's enrollment management office structure. The vice president of enrollment was the senior-level manager at three of the four institutions; the vice provost of enrollment held this position at the fourth institution. Both the vice president of enrollment and vice provost of enrollment typically report to the institution's president and are responsible for implementing SEM plans for their institution. SEM plans require help from departments other than admissions and recruitment, such as financial aid. Vice presidents of enrollment and vice provosts of enrollment often supervise the admissions and recruitment team as well as the financial aid teams, and they do oversee the operations of admissions and financial aid at the universities I studied. I concluded from the participants' responses that their vice presidents hold the teams together to fulfill SEM goals.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was that I did not interview enrollment managers and college recruiters from public four-year higher education institutions. The second limitation was that I did not interview any presidents or vice presidents from either institution to support their

enrollment managers' and college recruiters' views. My original expectation was to have nine participants in this study from three institutions. The plan was to interview one enrollment manager and two college recruiters per institution; however, this plan did not work out. I gathered more information from enrollment managers than college recruiters and gained a new institution, which posed a limitation. The third limitation was that I did not gather data from low-income URM students to learn their perspectives about recruitment practices they experience. The fourth limitation was using a qualitative multiple case study. Other methods could have potentially benefited this study, but I felt this method would garner the best results. Lastly, the fifth limitation was that because of the coronavirus pandemic, I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews, which was the plan before social distancing was required.

To ensure transferability, I ensured that I fully informed readers on the participants, data collection methods, limitations, and the study duration so that they could make their own determinations of whether the study results are relevant to their contexts or settings. I established credibility by having the participants sign informed consent forms and allowing them to refuse to participate during any point of the study. To establish dependability, I provided detailed descriptions of the research design, data collection methods, and findings so that future researchers can repeat my work. To ensure confirmability, for data triangulation, I used field-tested interview protocols, document analysis of strategic enrollment management plans, and institutional enrollment data from IPEDS. Following these steps, I established trustworthiness for this study, and no threats were presented. No participants withdrew from this study. There were no limitations that affected the interpretation of the results.

Implications for Future Research

Further research should be conducted to address the gaps in recruiting low-income URM students. This multiple case study focused on recruitment practices for low-income URM students at four four-year private institutions in the United States. One opportunity for further research is to replicate this study at four-year public institutions in the United States to understand if these students encounter different recruitment practices. This replication can provide insight into how public institution recruitment teams develop strategic enrollment management plans for either this student population individually or for all students. This research may also shed light on whether low-income URM students face the same obstacles when choosing a public education over a private one. The present study showed how recruitment teams at these institutions develop and execute their recruitment strategies. However, what low-income URM students experience once they enroll was not a study focus.

This study only focused on the opinions and views of nine enrollment managers and college recruiters from four-year private institutions. I suggest larger samples in future research to gain a broader understanding of this topic. I also recommend incorporating perspectives from low-income URM students and comparing them with enrollment managers' and college recruiters' views in future studies. Doing so may show if these students' recruitment experiences align with the enrollment managers' and college recruiters' perceptions of these experiences. A second opportunity for further research is to interview enrollment managers and college recruiters at historically Black colleges and universities to see if low-income URM students receive the same or more recruitment efforts at these institutions compared to what private institutions provide. The last suggestion for further research is to replicate this study at community colleges that tend to see more low-income URM students enroll at their institutions.

The problem of practice for this study was understanding the disconnect between the factors that affected low-income URM student college choice and the beliefs enrollment managers and college recruiters had about this student population that affected their recruitment efforts and intentions. To close this gap, perhaps a solution to the problem of practice is assigning college recruiters to specific low-income high schools. Doing this could give students the support they heavily need throughout their higher education journey. This solution would also provide these students with constant contact and a familiar face to connect with regarding their college opportunities. A second solution is integrating programming at universities accessible and appealing to these students that help them step outside of their comfort zone and also assists them in cultivating new relationships (Butler et al., 2018). Lastly, institutions requiring professional development for enrollment managers and college recruiters in the form of diversity and inclusion, leadership, and sensitivity workshops and training should also be considered. Providing these opportunities that highlight the low-income URM student background and the obstacles they face in their college-going process could help prepare these professionals to become the positive leader these students need. With all three solutions being attainable, it will take these professionals' effort and dedication to work harder to treat students equally while getting them through their college journey. Despite any beliefs surrounding the low-income URM student's progress, they deserve a chance to excel, and that chance falls on the institution's hands.

Conclusions

This study addressed a gap in the literature on recruitment practices for low-income URM students at private four-year institutions. This study also addressed a gap in the literature on how enrollment managers' and college recruiters' beliefs about this student population affect

their recruitment intentions. Existing literature reflects conflicting views on how these students are recruited and the parts that the admissions and recruitment teams play in the college choice process. Although research exists on recruitment practices and behavioral intentions, I found new information through this study that will benefit enrollment management teams at higher education institutions. This study showed that recruitment practices for low-income URM students looking to enroll at four-year private institutions do not differ from those directed toward their affluent peers. Enrollment managers and college recruiters in this study did not have negative beliefs or views about these students that affect their intentions in recruiting them. However, the participants said that this student population often requires more assistance with the admissions and financial aid process versus their more affluent peers. Knowing this did not encourage enrollment managers and college recruiters to serve low-income URM students an injustice by not seeking to recruit them for their institutions.

The results showed the opposite in that recruitment teams at these institutions try to be more accessible to low-income URM students because these students do not always have the same resources as their more affluent peers. Some of the study participants noted that students who have the resources and support to navigate the college process on their own are often more affluent. Seeing this on an everyday basis pushes these enrollment managers and college recruiters to advocate more for students who do not have these resources and who are often considered low-income URM students. Prior researchers have noted concerns among some college and university leaders about whether their institutions are placing enough emphasis on socioeconomic diversity and providing more opportunities for lower-income students (Monks, 2018). This study answered this question in that the institutions in this study do place enough emphasis on socioeconomic diversity and provide opportunities for low-income students. I

concluded that for these students to be adequately assisted, it was important for enrollment managers and college recruiters to be intentional in their communication with these students. Being intentional and open was a decisive factor in getting these students through the admissions and recruitment process.

I also concluded that the use of two practical leadership approaches helped the study participants effectively recruit these students. Leading these students through the college enrollment process can be difficult because they can be reluctant to leave their comfort zones. However, based on the participants' comments, using authentic and servant leadership provided the necessary support to cultivate relationships with low-income URM students and increase their enrollment. Engaging this student population requires knowing how to develop relationships based on honesty, trust, and transparency. Authentic leadership demonstrates that leaders with a high level of self-awareness have the power to influence their followers' thinking, motivation, and choices (Zhou et al., 2014). For this study, the enrollment managers and college recruiters had high awareness levels and knew that their influence on this student population would be positive. I concluded that they knew how to engage these students in a way that motivates them to enroll at their institutions based on their relationships grounded in honesty, trust, and transparency.

Further engaging these students requires the mindset of putting students' needs and wants before one's own. This is considered servant leadership. I concluded that the enrollment managers and college recruiters saw themselves as mentors in these students' lives by taking them under their wings and guiding them. Past studies have suggested that implementing quality mentorship through the lens of servant leadership could be a missing link to connecting purpose in recruiting students (Norris et al., 2017). I concluded that when the enrollment managers and

college recruiters encourage students and show them that they have the students' best interests at heart can change students' attitudes about college. Enrollment managers and recruiters thinking of themselves as servants and adapting to students' wants and needs is a leadership style that has been proven to enhance college recruitment efforts. Seeing that enrollment managers and college recruiters are taking the time to understand their circumstances and backgrounds while putting forth effort as stewards can change low-income URM students' perspectives on getting a private education. Approaching this student population with a humble spirit that demonstrates compassion and support and shows that they are not judged by misconceptions can have a positive effect on college choice and enrollment among low-income URM students.

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Appendix A: Permission Approval Emails

Permission approval for use of Figure 1 from *2019 Discounting Report for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions* by Ruffalo Noel Levitz, p. 9.

Hello, Dr. Ogedegbe,

Thank you for contacting us about citing research from our 2019 Discounting Report. We are happy to grant that. The citation for the report should be:

Ruffalo Noel Levitz (2019). *2019 Discounting Report for Four-Year Private and Public Institutions*. Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Permission approval for use of Figure 2: History of Theory of Reasoned Action.

Hi Cassady,

Yes, the content is CC-BY-NC. You are free the use the image as long as it is attributed.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>
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- **Authored by:** Merlin Mathew, King Li, Jennifer Kloosterman, Abbie Albright, Noah Taddesse. **Located at:** <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-buffalo-environmentalhealth/>. **Project:** Models and Mechanisms of Public Health. **License:** CC BY-NC-SA: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike

Appendix B: Institutional Review Board Approval

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885



January, 24, 2020

Cassady Ogedegbe
Department of Graduate & Professional Studies
Abilene Christian University

Dear Cassady,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "The College Recruitment of the Low-Income Underrepresented Minority Student",

(IRB# 20-006) is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Appendix C: Enrollment Manager Interview Protocol

Thanks for your willingness to participate in this interview. By consenting to this interview, you agree to answer the questions honestly but may choose not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. All responses and recordings will be de-identified and kept confidential to protect your identity.

1. Please share with me your position title and an overview of your typical responsibilities in that role, including any major tasks, projects, or initiatives that would help clarify your role.
2. Why did you choose to pursue a professional interest or career in enrollment management for higher education?
3. In your opinion, are the roles of enrollment managers and college recruiters clearly defined at your institution?
4. Describe the relationships between enrollment managers and college recruiters at your institution.
 - a. Would you say it's a positive relationship?
5. Describe your knowledge or experience in working with the low-income URM student population.
6. What factors do you think encourages this student population to go to college?
7. How are low-income URM students recruited at your institution?
8. How do you think your role as an enrollment manager plays a part in increasing enrollment for this student population?
9. What are some of the initiatives that your university is pursuing in hopes of recruiting this population?

10. Describe for me where the enrollment and diversity goals originate from.
 - a. What is your role in that process?
11. At your institution, how do the recruitment strategies for low-income URM students differ from non-URM students in higher-income high schools?
 - a. Are the plans more strategic because of this population's lower enrollment rates?
12. Based on the current recruitment strategies in place, would you like to see any changes?
 - a. If so, what changes would you like to see?
13. In your position, what has been the greatest challenge in recruiting these students and why?
14. Have you identified any recruitment strategies that have been proven to be effective in recruiting these students?
 - a. If so, which strategy and how was the effectiveness of this strategy measured?
 - b. Was there an evaluation process?
15. What are some practical leadership approaches that would help college recruiters to recruit this population and why?
 - a. How do you see your role in preparing recruiters in recruiting low-income URM students?

Appendix D: College Recruiter Interview Protocol

Thanks for your willingness to participate in this interview. By consenting to this interview, you agree to answer the questions honestly but may choose not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. All responses and recordings will be de-identified and kept confidential to protect your identity.

1. Please share with me your position title and an overview of your typical responsibilities in that role, including any major tasks, projects, or initiatives that would help clarify your role.
2. Why did you choose to pursue a professional interest or career in recruitment for higher education?
3. In your opinion, are the roles of enrollment managers and college recruiters clearly defined at your institution?
4. Describe the relationships between enrollment managers and college recruiters at your institution.
 - a. Would you say it's a positive relationship?
5. Describe your knowledge or experience in working with the low-income URM student population.
6. What factors do you think encourages this student population to go to college?
7. How are low-income URM students recruited at your institution?
8. How do you think your role as a recruiter plays a part in increasing enrollment for this student population?
9. What are some of the initiatives that your university is pursuing in hopes of recruiting this population?

10. Describe for me where the enrollment and diversity goals originate from.
 - a. What is your role in that process?
11. At your institution, how do the recruitment strategies for low-income URM students differ from non-URM students in higher-income high schools?
 - a. Are the plans more strategic because of this population's lower enrollment rates?
12. Based on the current recruitment strategies in place, would you like to see any changes?
 - a. If so, what changes would you like to see?
13. In your position, what has been the greatest challenge in recruiting these students and why?
14. Have you identified any recruitment strategies that have been proven to be effective in recruiting these students?
 - a. If so, which strategy and how was the effectiveness of this strategy measured?
 - b. Was there an evaluation process?
15. What are some practical leadership approaches that would help college recruiters to recruit this population and why?
16. What influence or assistance do you receive from enrollment managers to recruit this student population?