

3. STRIVING FOR WHAT? EXPLORING THE PURSUIT OF PRESTIGE

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INTRODUCTION

I-Want-To-Be-University (IWTBU) is a medium-sized public, primarily undergraduate teaching college in an urban setting in the Southeast. The institution started as a normal school for teachers and evolved over time to a more comprehensive curriculum. It recently changed its name from college to university after a wealthy donor made this a criterion for his donation. IWTBU is somewhat selective in its admissions and its efforts to recruit faculty. Significant executive administrative turnover in the last 5–10 years has fostered uncertainty and dialogue about institutional priorities.

Michael Vaughn, Director of Institutional Research, has worked at IWTBU for 30 years and has seen a lot of change. In particular, he has seen public support for higher education decrease and a smaller portion of the institutional budget subsidized by the state, making the institution more dependent on students who can pay full price. Concurrently, Vaughn has seen competition for students increase as for-profit competitors offer prospective IWTBU students degrees they can earn while never leaving their homes. Likewise, parents and student applicants are increasingly interested in how programs are ranked.

IWTBU has always kept on top of what their peers were doing. However, department chairs are now just as concerned when they hear about innovative programs at institutions below them

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in national rankings as they are in what happens among aspirational peers. Most of the faculty hired 30 years ago were ABD and came to IWTBU for a secure teaching position. The most recent faculty hires come with research university Ph.Ds and seem more concerned with research and improving their departments' national reputation. The competitive job market has allowed IWTBU to recruit some very research-oriented faculty, which they "stole" away from more prestigious institutions for larger salaries and/or better packages (e.g. release time, research monies, etc). A new president and provost are working with faculty on a strategic plan that they claim will move IWTBU up in USNWR rankings over the next five years.

While IWTBU is a fictitious institution offered to illustrate the many forces that give rise to striving, it could describe many institutions of higher education. Each year colleges and universities strive to increase their national standing in the academic hierarchy, and the behavior associated with this "striving" has taken many forms. Striving is defined here as the pursuit of prestige within the academic hierarchy. Striving behavior might include campuses amending their admissions process, reward structures, and resource allocation decisions (Aldersley, 1995; Dichev, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2003; Meredith, 2004; Morphew, 2002; Winston, 2000).

In recent years research has examined the nature of such "striving" to frame how it might be studied, and to examine how striving impacts various aspects of institutional functioning, including but not limited to admissions, pricing/cost, and educational quality (Aldersley, 1995; Ehrenberg, 2003; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Meredith, 2004; Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Morphew, 2002; Morphew & Baker, 2004; Sarraf, Hayek, Kandiko, Padgett, & Harris, 2005; Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2006). Additionally, there is emerging attention to how striving influences faculty work-life (Dubrow, Moseley, & Dustin, 2006; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005).

This *Handbook* chapter contributes to this growing area of research by synthesizing recent studies on striving in order to (a) recognize striving institutions (b) better understand the forces influencing striving (c) explore striving behaviors (d) examine possible consequences of institutional striving and (e) identify areas for future research.

It is important to study striving because campuses that engage in striving behavior are often making trade-offs without knowing what they are. Very little research has looked at the consequences of striving

behavior across college and university missions and functions. The popular rhetoric of "moving up in *U.S. News and World Report* (USNWR) rankings" does not include any discussion of the impact of such a move, for example, on faculty work-life, student diversity, or the cost of tuition. The old adage, "the grass is always greener on the other side" applies here. By isolating striving behaviors and associating them with a set of consequences (whether positive, negative or neutral) researchers can provide a clearer view of whether the grass is actually greener on the other side of the fence. Likewise, by studying what Morphew and Baker (2004) refer to as "the organizational behavior that accompanies aspiration (p. 382)" researchers can make the means used to achieve the ends apparent. Thus research on striving behavior in higher education has a direct audience amongst Boards of trustees, college presidents, provosts, deans, and department chairs poised to sign off on strategic plans that promise to move the institution to better rankings. Likewise, state systems of higher education, as well as national accrediting bodies and associations will also benefit from a more complex understanding of how striving impacts less privileged students, and the teaching and service missions of higher education institutions.

Section I explores characteristics of striving institutions and what institutions strive for. Section II examines the forces that compel striving. Section III discusses striving behavior across university operations, and the institutions most likely to strive. Section IV outlines possible consequences of striving behaviors for stakeholders and higher education missions. Section V provides recommendations for further research.

SECTION I: EXPLORING THE NATURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF STRIVING

A WORKING DEFINITION

As mentioned above, striving is broadly defined here as the pursuit of prestige within the academic hierarchy. The concept of striving builds on the previously studied concepts of "vertical extension" (Schultz & Stickler, 1965), "academic drift" (Berdahl, 1985) and "upper drift" (Aldersley, 1995), "academic ratcheting" (Massy & Zemsky, 1994), and institutional isomorphism toward research culture (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Milem, Berger, & Dey, 2000; Morphew, 2002; Riesman, 1956). Additionally, this concept has been called, "institutional

homogenization" or "institutional imitation" (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Jencks & Riesman, 1968; Scott, 1995).

David Riesman (1956) was one of the first to introduce the idea of institutional isomorphism. Riesman (1956) observed, "there is no doubt that colleges and universities in this country model themselves upon each other...All one has to do is read catalogues to realize the extent of this isomorphism (p. 25)." Riesman depicted the higher education system as an "academic procession." Higher education institutions in his portrayal resemble a snake-like entity where the most prestigious institutions in the hierarchy are at the head, followed by a middle group, and then less prestigious schools at the tail of the snake (Riesman, 1956). The most prestigious institutions watch each other closely, while the middle emulate those at the head and those at the tail emulate those in the middle. Each group starts to look more and more like those they emulate and the institutional forms within them become less distinctive (Riesman, 1956). Berdahl (1985) continued this work, describing academic drift as the "tendency of institutions, absent any restraint, to copy the role and mission of the prestige institutions (p. 303)". Massy and Zemsky (1994) furthered work on striving by describing how academic ratcheting occurs within departments that strive. These authors examined how administrative costs increased as faculty loosened teaching and institutional ties and increased disciplinary ties and activities.

More recently, Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2002) categorize three types of higher education institutions in the industry. This taxonomy classifies institutions as prestigious, prestige-seeking, or reputation-building. Prestigious institutions are those at the very top of the academic hierarchy, inherently conservative, that work to maintain their prestige through acquired resources. On the other end of the continuum, reputation-building institutions are most tuition dependent and most responsive to the needs of students as customers. They pursue strategies to meet current and emerging needs as markets shift. In the middle are prestige-seeking institutions that make ongoing investments to seek and enhance prestige. Sometimes these investments are in athletics, other times faculty research, or merit scholarships (Brewer, Gates, & Goldman, 2002). In the discussion of striving in this chapter, it is the prestige-seeking institutions, the ones that are currently engaging in organizational behaviors, entirely, or in large part, to achieve prestige (as defined by external rankings of the institution), that are of interest. Thus striving institutions are those actively engaged in organizational behaviors to fulfill their aspirations of greater

prestige. Faculty or administrators engaging in striving behavior are those who are intentionally using available resources, and making strategic decisions to bring prestige to them, their department, and their institution.

WHAT ARE INSTITUTIONS STRIVING FOR?

To put it succinctly, ratings. Striving institutions want to improve their USNWR college rankings, and related rankings such as those in *Money*, and *Business Week*. Historically, striving institutions have also wanted to move to what institutional leaders consider more prestigious Carnegie classification categories, and be admitted to distinguished groups of institutions. While it can be argued that there has always been a "pecking order" within higher education institutions, the college rankings institutions compete for today came to the national forefront in the 1980s, during a time of declining applicant pools, rising costs, and a national push for assessment and accountability (Eide, Brewer, & Ehrenberg, 1998; Hossler, 2000; Meredith, 2004). The USNWR rankings began in 1983 as a reputational survey of presidents, switching in 1987 to a combination of objective data and reputational survey data (Meredith, 2004). The USNWR ranking process includes seven measures of college quality including, academic reputation, student selectivity, faculty resources, graduation and retention rates, financial resources, alumni giving, and graduation rate performance (Ehrenberg, 2003). *Money Magazine* began publishing *Money Guide: Your Best College Buys Now* in 1990 (McDonough et al., 1998). McDonough et al. (1998) conducted research with USNWR, *Money*, *Newsweek/Kaplan* and *Time/Princeton Review* and estimated that these magazines were generating approximately 15 million dollars per year in sales from college issues.

The Carnegie classification system adopted in 1970 has also served as a "prestige barometer" for higher education institutions because the variables it used to classify institutions (at least in pre-2005 versions) all correlated with prestige, such as amount of federal research dollars and selectivity (Morphew & Baker, 2004). For some time, researchers have reported four-year institutions attempting "upward drift" within their respective categories (e.g. Baccalaureate to Masters, Masters to Comprehensive, Doctoral to Research University), and many with success. For example, the Carnegie foundation reclassification showed, that the number of institutions identified as Research University I increased from 70 in 1987 to 88 in 1994 (Morphew & Baker, 2004).

The use of Carnegie types as a prestige barometer occurred for decades despite the fact that the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching never intended, and repeatedly stated that the Carnegie classification system not be used in this way. In the foreword to the 1987 edition of the Carnegie classification Ernest Boyer observed that "the classification is not intended to establish a hierarchy among higher-learning institutions." Nonetheless, McCormick (2005) observes that while the classification was developed in 1970 to support research on U.S. higher education, "it has been put to many other uses over the years." In 2005 the Carnegie Foundation revised their classification system and released six new all-inclusive schemes, each of which provides a different perspective on institutional characteristics. The new classification schemes provide a more multi-dimensional framework for viewing institutions, encouraging institutions to look elsewhere for a prestige barometer.

This chapter focuses on campuses striving for external ratings and prestige and the organizational behavior associated with those efforts. It is possible for campuses to strive for other things, and to do so simultaneously as they strive for prestige. Likewise, it is possible for campuses to act in ways that bring institutional prestige without intentionally pursuing it. However, the focus of this chapter are campuses that are intentional and purposeful about improving their external ratings and prestige and act in ways to achieve that goal.

DOES PRESTIGE MATTER?

In the minds of the public, "the best colleges are the most selective (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004, p. 53)." An assumption is made by consumers of USNWR rankings and similar rankings that prestige equals quality, and students want the high graduation rates, and earnings that highly ranked, prestigious institutions offer.

A major problem with equating USNWR rankings with quality however, is that such ratings are heavily dependent on the incoming credentials of entering students, rather than measures of what they learn while they are there. For example, Webster's (2001) recent study of USNWR rankings indicate that the average SAT/ACT score of incoming students is the most influential criterion in determining where an institution ranks. Likewise, Kuh and Pascarella (2004) completed a similar examination of the top 50 universities and found that the USNWR rankings could be easily predicted simply by knowing average SAT/ACT scores. It is difficult to make an argument that

an institution is providing a high quality education simply because of the prestige of the group of students who enroll the first day of class. Ehrlich (2006) observes, "the quality of campus resources and of incoming students—factors that dominate most rankings—are some of what should be considered. But no one would choose a hospital based on the health of patients coming into the hospital, and no one should choose a college based primarily on the grades and test scores of incoming students (Ehrlich, 2006, p. 1).

Decades of research by scholars such as Astin (1993), and Pascarella & Terenzini (2005) show that the outcomes of a college education are related to how engaged students are with their colleges, and the academic and social fit between them and their institutions, not institutional prestige (Hossler, 2000). On the other hand, there is research showing that peers influence what students learn in college as much, and sometimes more, than professors (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004). Thus, in some ways students are paying for the privilege of who will sit next to them as well as the quality of the faculty and institutional resources at prestigious institutions. Institutions want to attract prestigious students, in part for the halo effect it provides their institution.

Recently, research has begun to examine the linkages that do and do not exist between USNWR ratings and a quality higher education. Kuh and Pascarella (2004) compared the National Study of Student Learning (NSSL), National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), and used Barron's Selectivity Score to estimate institutional selectivity. These authors concluded that institutional selectivity is a weak indicator of student exposure to good practices in undergraduate education. In fact, the more selective the college, the less frequently students received feedback from their teachers (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004, p. 56). Dichev (2001) found that as little as 10% of the variation in an institution's USNWR scores over time were due to changes in the quality of the institution. Pike (2003) compared the NSSE benchmark scores for 14 AAU public research universities with their USNWR rankings using multivariate statistics. The examination of these results suggested that USNWR rankings and NSSE benchmarks were not related to one another, with the exception of enriching educational activities. Pike (2003) found the students at more selective institutions reported higher levels of engagement in activities that NSSE classifies as educationally enriching.

While the quality of higher education does not necessarily improve as USNWR rankings improve, there are very real resource pay-offs

associated with climbing academic ladders. There are also losses when institutions fall in rankings. Monks and Ehrenberg (1999) analyzed whether the USNWR college rankings affected admissions outcomes or pricing decisions of schools in the Consortium for Financing Higher Education. Increasing in rank (i.e. 5th to 10th) is considered less favorable, decreasing in rank (i.e. 10th to 5th) is considered advantageous. They found there was a direct relationship between institutions moving up or down in USNWR ratings, yield and selectivity. Institutions improving their rank could accept a smaller percentage of their applicants and increase their selectivity the following year, and institutions whose rankings declined had to admit more students to achieve less selectivity (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999). Monks and Ehrenberg found that a decline in rank from 5th to 10th place coincided with an increase in the institutions' admit rate the following year of almost 2 percentage points. Whereas an improvement in rank from 10th to 6th place was associated with an increase in an average SAT score of 5.5 points. While modest, this research points to the very real pay-off in terms of the academic quality of students associated with improving institutional rankings. A limitation of Monks and Ehrenberg's work was that it was limited to a small number of institutions in the very top tier (16 top national universities, one university ranked between 26th and 50th, and 13 top national liberal arts colleges in the 1998 US News rankings).

Meredith (2004) extended Monks and Ehrenberg's work across a broader range of schools and variables to understand how these ratings impact admissions outcomes across different institutional types, and how racial and socioeconomic demographics, and alumni giving are affected by an institutions' USNWR ranking. A net tuition series was constructed (tuition plus room and board minus average freshman grant) from the 1999 and 2000 Princeton Review. A school improving its ranking from the second to the first quartile increases the percentage of students in the top 10% of their high school class by about 1.5% and decreases their acceptance rate by about 4% (Meredith, 2004, p. 451). Meredith (2004) found that USNWR rankings have a greater effect on admission outcomes at public schools. No significant difference was found in alumni giving among institutions that moved rank one way or another. However, Meredith (2004) speculated that this may have been the result of the dependent variable (log of private gifts, grants and contracts) being too broad. Isolating alumni giving as its own variable in future research may demonstrate a stronger relationship between changes in USNWR rankings and alumni giving.

Thus there is significant research showing that external rankings do matter in terms of the numbers of applicants and the quality of students that an institution can admit. However, research does not suggest that rankings predict the quality of the undergraduate experience. This raises the question of whether parents and students making college choices are aware or care that prestige does not guarantee a quality undergraduate experience. Given the emphasis on career placement in many student and parents minds, it might be argued that parents want prestige and if given multiple choices will always choose the most prestigious college for that reason. However, it can also be argued that higher education has not been adept about documenting what else matters in college choice and student outcomes, and if given this information, prestige would not have as much sway as it does in guiding college decisions.

Regardless, the context of higher education is very different than it was thirty years ago in terms of the quantity and variety of ways there are to pursue prestige. Whereas the early colonial colleges competed largely through athletics for prestige, today colleges compete for prestige through the numbers of national merit scholars they admit each year and Fulbright scholars on their faculty. They compete through state-of-the-art athletic centers and high technology residence halls. They compete for the highest endowments and the greatest percentage of alumni giving.

In summary, institutions strive for prestige as they do other resources. With prestige comes more resources, which help the institution gain more prestige, which brings more resources and on and on. While institutions have sought many types of prestige over time, currently the coin of the realm for many institutions seems to be college rankings and classifications.

IDENTIFYING STRIVING INSTITUTIONS

It is challenging to isolate characteristics of striving across institutions because each institution's striving decisions are inevitably linked to a specific history, market, competitors, institutional identity, and leadership at any given time. Every institutional decision or behavior is influenced by a complex set of internal and external forces. It is therefore difficult to isolate specific behaviors and attribute them solely to the pursuit of prestige. Likewise, "striving" toward greater prestige will look different for a liberal arts college in the fourth tier of USNWR rankings than a public four-year comprehensive institution; different

for a historically black college in the South and a state land-grant in the Midwest. There will be regional differences and ways in which public versus private institutions and institutions that are part of state systems are striving for different levels and kinds of prestige.

Nonetheless, it is useful from the perspective of studying the phenomena of striving institutions to identify characteristics of striving institutional environments that might be used to “diagnose” striving institutional behavior at a particular time. Table 3.1. provides a list of characteristics of striving institutions categorized by different functional areas of colleges and universities. This list was developed from studies on institutions identified as striving, experiencing upward drift, academic ratcheting, or institutional isomorphism toward research culture (Aldersley, 1995; Birnbaum, 1983; Brewer, Gates & Goldman, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2003; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Meredith, 2004; Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Morphew & Baker, 2004; Morphew & Huisman, 2002; Morphew & Jenniskens, 1999; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Winston, 2000).

These characteristics might be used in some objective way to define a set of institutions as “striving” for the purposes of further study, and to compare them to a similar set of institutions that do not have these same characteristics, or do not have them to the same degree.

No one of these characteristics necessarily indicates a striving institutional environment. Nor is the list by any means exhaustive of all possible characteristics. However, a researcher looking to identify an institution as striving might examine whether it has exhibited an overall picture (or significant number) of these characteristics over the previous five years. These indicators might be used in an exploratory sense to develop survey instruments or selection criteria for choosing institutional case studies. They might also be used to develop testable propositions for further research. The indicators might be used to diagnose which campuses seem to have orchestrated a full-fledged campaign to increase prestige, pursuing prestige in multiple ways on multiple fronts, versus campuses that may have just taken a first step on this path (pursuing prestige in admissions for example). Such indicators might help researchers compare striving campuses and begin to understand whether there are patterns in how campuses approach various strategies (e.g. do campuses tend to begin in one area such as admissions and then quickly move on to other areas?)

The next section explores the forces that compel striving behavior.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Striving Environments

Areas of Institutional Operations	Indicators of Striving
Student Recruitment and Admissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution increases selectivity over recent years, including high school rank, SAT & GPA • Increase in use of early decision in admissions
Faculty Recruitment, Roles and Reward Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institution invites more National Merit Scholars and fewer Pell Grant Recipients • Greater attempt to hire “faculty stars” with research emphasis, increase in faculty salaries and in start up research packages • Faculty teaching load decreasing; increase in discretionary time, loosening of institutional ties; increased emphasis on disciplinary ties • Faculty report expectations for research in tenure and promotion have increased • Rise in faculty grants, awards, prestigious fellowships
Curriculum and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift of emphasis and funding away from remedial and developmental programs & towards honors and programs for academically talented students • Institution is adding graduate programs, shift in emphasis from undergraduate to graduate programs • Focus among faculty on making programs more rigorous and on preparing students for graduate school or prestigious career placements
External Relations and Shaping of Institutional Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional actors use language, speeches, websites, and symbols to shape the external image of the institution as more prestigious or “on the move” • Institutional actors also work to shape an internal, institutional narrative about striving and use the language and rhetoric of striving to frame major decisions, goals statements, and directives
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased spending on infrastructure and administrative support • Shift in resources from instruction to administrative support • Investments made in competitive amenities

SECTION II: UNDERSTANDING THE FORCES THAT COMPEL STRIVING

Understanding the forces that compel striving is as complex as understanding all of "how colleges work (Birnbaum, 1988)." This part of the chapter is divided into five sections, presenting different explanatory frameworks for why institutions are compelled to strive. First, historical, economic, ecological and sociological, and political frameworks are described, followed by how the nature of the faculty career and academic culture impacts striving. All of the forces described in this section operate within the environment of higher education, at the institutional level, and at the individual level (O'Meara, Terosky, & Neumann, 2006) to compel institutional striving behavior.

HISTORICAL FORCES

One way of viewing striving behavior is as a natural organizational and historical evolution of higher education institutions, who they have served, where they are located, and their changing aspirations over time (Geiger, 2004). Historians contextualize an institutions' aspirations today in the context of institutional saga, including: historical events locally or nationally, important leaders in the institution's past such as college presidents who had a vision for transforming an institution over time. From the perspective of institutional and national history, major events that have occurred in the nation, such as the G.I. Bill and the expansion of higher education, or the money poured into research universities after Sputnik, have acted as catalysts to individual institutions to expand, to refine missions, and to strive to obtain the resources and prestige of the higher education institutions with the greatest status (Thelin, 2004).

For example, Jencks and Reisman (1968), Finkelstein (1983), and Geiger (1993) have all chronicled the great changes that took place across higher education after World War II and the G.I. Bill. Graduate education became a much greater part of higher education, and specialized knowledge and ties to ones discipline became more desired attributes of "star faculty" at premier institutions. As the federal government poured money into faculty research after Sputnik, a greater value was placed on, "cognitive rationality," and the writing and research of specialists (Geiger, 1997, p. 283). As research universities and comprehensive state colleges expanded, many private liberal arts colleges became more selective. As the faculty labor market has

changed over time, many institutions have been able to take advantage of the opportunity to "recruit for their aspirations rather than the reality of resources" (Finnegan, 1993, p. 652), meaning institutions hiring more research-oriented faculty at primarily teaching institutions. This in turn propelled institutions to aspire to greater prestige based on research university standards.

One such example of striving over time are the American Jesuit Colleges such as Boston College, Georgetown, and Loyola of Baltimore. Goodchild (1997) describes a gradual evolution of Jesuit Colleges over a hundred years from primary teaching institutions to competitive and selective liberal arts colleges with distinguished professional schools. In part, Jesuit Colleges were compelled to become more research-focused and pursue prestige by the events and circumstances of their times. For example, between the 1930s and 1950s many Catholic students graduating from Jesuit baccalaureate colleges wanted to pursue graduate education but found discrimination in gaining admission to non-Catholic professional schools (Goodchild, 1997). Jesuit colleges began creating graduate schools to fulfill this need. Likewise, as the standardization movement swept higher education in the early 1900s, it became imperative for Jesuit Colleges to employ faculty with doctorates in order to obtain accreditation and legitimacy within the system of higher education. However, the Catholic governing bodies wanted Catholic faculty teaching at their colleges, thus making it essential to further develop graduate programs to train faculty and Jesuits to teach in and lead Jesuit Colleges (Goodchild, 1997). In this way, striving to develop a "Jesuit university of high rank," was compelled by a need set in contemporary circumstances (Goodchild, 1997).

Jesuit Colleges very much wanted and needed Association of American Universities (AAU), American Council of Education (ACE), and/or North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools (NCA) approval. When ACE published a list of 63 distinguished or satisfactory graduate programs in 1934, no doctoral programs from any Jesuit institution were on the list. The Jesuit General published an Instruction, asking American Jesuits to develop, "a new direction and a fresh impulse of Ours [and] a systematized attempt to secure for our educational activities that due recognition and rightful standing among other groups of similar rank and grade (Goodchild, 1997, p. 544)." According to Goodchild, Jesuit institutions changed curricula, improved their graduate schools, created doctoral programs and research institutes, and made achieving AAU membership a main goal. While Jesuit universities attempted to maintain their

distinct Catholic identity, they engaged in "Americanization" of their curriculum and identity, in part out of need to serve Catholic students in a way other institutions were not, and in part to become part of the prestige ladder that was being established among universities at that time. Also, while the circumstances of the time and actions of Jesuit Prefects (leaders within the order) were the major players in this story of striving, an important social subtext is the Jesuits role within their larger Catholic organization. Among the many orders of Catholics, (e.g. Franciscan, Sisters of Charity, etc.) the Jesuits have a long history of being both personally and professionally ambitious, and among the elite of Catholic intellectuals. This is an important context for this story because it begs the question of whether the Jesuit colleges might have engaged in striving behavior regardless of their external context, given their leadership, and/or demonstrates the interplay of internal and external forces that can contribute to an institution or group of institutions' striving.

The striving of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) might also be explained from a historical lens. After World War I, accreditation was a main goal of HBCUs, who needed regional and national accreditation in order to survive with the name of "college," and provide gateways for African Americans into professional careers (Anderson, 1997). In particular, between World War I and World War II, HBCUs struggled to develop endowments, upgrade the qualifications and salaries of faculty, and to make course work more rigorous. These were significant struggles since most HBCUs had been operating as secondary schools, providing critical remedial work that prepared students for college level instruction (Anderson, 1997). For example, in 1915 only 33 black private institutions were assessed to be teaching at the college level— 79% of the enrollment in black institutions were engaged in pre-college work (Anderson, 1997). In the 1910s when national and regional accrediting agencies such as the Middle States Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools were formed to differentiate between "colleges" and "high schools" there was significant pressure on black colleges to become more like white colleges and universities. In order to be rated as a college by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools there were decrees that institutions have an endowment of at least \$200,000, have standardized and more rigorous admissions standards and at least six departments (Anderson, 1997). Thus efforts taken in the area of admissions, faculty recruitment, and fundraising, which might be classified as striving

behavior today, were a direct response to these events and were key to the very survival of these institutions.

The changing missions of normal schools between the 1890s and 1920s provides a third example of striving in a historical context. In 1890, normal schools, which began as academies and evolved as teacher-training colleges, were widespread with at least 37 states having one or more normal schools (Ogren, 1997). Ogren writes of the unique quality of these institutions early in their histories. Quite unique for the time period, men and women seemed to co-exist as intellectual equals under the tutelage of male and female teachers in the early normal schools. However, as the purpose of these institutions changed to include Bachelor degrees in areas outside teacher education, gender equality lessened. For example, in the Wisconsin normal school system new departments and elective courses encouraged gender differentiation in curriculum, literary societies, and social life during the 1910s and 1920s (Ogren, 1997). As the prestige of these institutions increased and they transformed to multiple purposes gender equality eroded by the late 1920s. As the professions students were being prepared for became more gender specific, those considered women's programs assumed a lesser stature on campus. These normal schools appropriately transformed to meet the more complex needs of their region, but as they did the distinct co-education they provided was lost.

Another example of considering striving in a historical context involves Astin and Lee's (1972) study of 494 "invisible colleges" or small private liberal arts colleges. The authors, and many others at the time, feared these institutions would become extinct if they did not increase enrollment, focus on their distinct purposes in the market, or receive state support. In 2007 it is clear that the great majority did not disappear but rather engaged in striving behavior in order to survive. Examples include single sex institutions merging with other colleges to become co-ed; many have added professional programs and distance learning programs, and virtually all have engaged in major development efforts to increase endowments. From a rational perspective, these institutions exerted themselves so they could attract more students; however, they also transformed in ways that emulate more prestigious institutions. Looking at this group of institutions historically, one notices that some types of striving behavior were their presidents ways out of extinction, and natural given the of circumstances they faced throughout the last 35 years.

Likewise, Geiger (2004) has written about the aspirations of public land grants and private universities in the 1950s and 1960s. Some of

the ways they strove to model the most prestigious research universities helped them to become better institutions, expanding the numbers of students served, and garnering "world-class" resources for research and instruction they otherwise would never obtain.

Thus from a historical perspective, striving behavior in higher education can be explained through an institutions' organizational saga. Events and circumstances within specific time periods compel decisions and leaders shape institutional aspirations.

An important subtext within the larger story of institutional striving however, are how the faculty who have inhabited these institutions have changed over time. Finkelstein (1993) analyzes some of the changes that have occurred in his seminal piece, *From tutor to specialized scholar*, tracing the very first Harvard tutors and their roles, through the research university professor of today. Finkelstein shows how the identity and aspirations of faculty have changed as higher education missions have expanded and new institutional types have formed. In some cases, changes occur even within a single faculty career, causing a potential disconnect between institutional and faculty aspirations. For example, during the early 21st century, many of the faculty hired in the 1960s and 1970s in state comprehensives have retired and been replaced by research-oriented early-career faculty, many of whom may have preferred research university careers but not found them because of a competitive job market. These faculty help the institution strive toward greater prestige research wise, but may come in conflict with faculty hired in previous decades with more of a teaching and service orientation (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). Finnegan (1993) conducted case study research on hiring cohorts in comprehensive universities over three time periods. Her research found that the more research-oriented the faculty, the greater the pursuit of prestige. Considering current forces impacting faculty and campuses to strive as "generational" can help us understand present behavior (Finnegan, 1993; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996).

ECONOMIC FORCES

A second related and equally important way of explaining why institutions strive relates to the economics of higher education, and the U.S. higher education market in particular (Clotfelter, 1996). A number of economists in higher education, as well as scholars of organizational change have researched the economics behind institutions striving

for USNWR rankings (Brewer, Gates & Goldman, 2001; Clotfelter, 1996; Ehrenberg, 2000; 2003; Meredith, 2004; Morphew & Baker, 2004; Webster, 2001; Winston, 2000). The explanation for institutional striving is as follows. Once an enrollment threshold is met, institutions want to increase student quality. The better the student inputs (i.e. GPA/SAT), the better the peer effects on learning, and the higher likelihood of positive outcomes (retaining students, career placement, student satisfaction and alumni giving) (Winston, 2000). Because there are a limited number of students with the most desirable characteristics (high GPA/SAT, able to pay full tuition price), institutions compete for these students. In this zero-sum game, "a college or university's access to student quality, then, depends on its position relative to other institutions (Winston, 2000, p. 21)." This creates what Winston (2000) calls a "positional arms race in higher education," wherein high-ability students are trying to achieve the best deal (e.g. for students, the lowest price for the highest quality education; for institutions, the highest ability students for the lowest amount of tuition subsidy). Pressure from institutions below an institutions' position in the rankings are more likely to increase competition than pressure from above because institutions below are the ones with the power to chip away at an institutions current level of prestige (Winston, 2000).

Brewer, Gates, and Goldman (2001), economists at the RAND corporation, apply a similar "industry framework" to their study of the issue of "prestige-seeking" among 26 diverse institutional case studies (in an earlier section, their typology of prestigious, prestige-seeking, and reputation-building institutions was described). Brewer, Gates and Goldman's (2001) theory describing how the market works for each of these institutional types is relevant here. The authors begin with the observation that in higher education, like many service industries, the consumer often does not know what they are buying until they have purchased it. Institutions use two different concepts – prestige and reputation – to attract customers. While reputation is achieved by institutions meeting specific consumer demands, prestige is less tangible, but generated through "prestige generators" such as student quality, research, and sports (Brewer, Gates & Goldman, 2001). Both reputation and prestige are competitive concepts as multiple institutions in a region might have strong reputations, and any institution can compete for and achieve prestige. Institutions strategize to attract additional resources to their institution to enhance prestige—while at the same time working to diminish the prestige of their competitors.

And while it does not have to be a zero sum game, if two institutions in a region are competing for students, the one with the stronger reputation is likely to "steal" students from the other.

In a similar vein, the over-supply of prospective faculty within a time period, or within a discipline, increases expectations for entering qualifications because of supply and demand. Likewise, faculty with "super qualifications," or very well credentialed, in disciplines with an undersupply can demand amenities and research support as part of their appointments, which can contribute to striving. As such supply and demand realities enable and in many cases encourage institutional striving. Comprehensive institutions and departments that receive 300 applications for one faculty position in Philosophy, can aspire to the highest research standards because they are in a buyer's market. Yet if the institution is located in a less desirable location geographically, they may receive 30 applications and thus be more likely to show alignment between institutional mission and expectations for faculty recruitment.

Clotfelter (1996) studied trends in institutional costs among departments in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences at three leading research universities (Chicago, Duke, and Harvard) and the contrasting experience of a leading liberal arts college, Carleton, between 1976/1977 and 1999/1992. Clotfelter's analysis suggests increasing costs in higher education are largely based on universities competing in a national market for scholars and high-ability students, increasingly featuring highly paid star-faculty and students with generous aid packages. One example Clotfelter gives of this are making deliberate efforts to increase the quality of the faculty by institutions extending offers to senior faculty at competing institutions, a strategy he describes in several of the institutions in his study.

It is important not to over-simplify the economic forces that are compelling institutions to strive or to suggest that all actions institutions take to improve the entering qualifications of students, or the scholarly reputation of the faculty, are related to striving. For example, an institution badly in need of out-of-state students for economic reasons (i.e. a higher tuition) may actually decrease the selectivity of those students to get them. Seeking out-of-state students in this case may appear to be striving behavior, but in fact have a mostly financial motivation. Likewise, not all campuses that ramp up their development efforts, redesign their residence halls, or invite more Fulbright scholars to campus are doing so for purely economic or striving reasons. Nonetheless, in the economic environment of higher

education, prestige is an intangible resource used to acquire additional resources. This perspective adds another useful way of explaining why campuses strive.

ECOLOGICAL, AND SOCIOLOGICAL FORCES

Two additional perspectives provide an explanation for striving at multiple levels that focus less on dollars and sense and more on the social interaction of institutions and actors. In Birnbaum's (1983) large scale study of change in the institutional diversity of U.S. colleges and universities, he argued that population ecology provides an appropriate explanatory framework for why institutions have not become more diverse during the growth of the U.S. system during the 1960s and 1970s. Within this framework is also an explanation for why institutions strive to emulate more prestigious models. Population ecology theory suggests that institutions that exist in the same environment, responding to the same stimuli, are likely to become more homogeneous over time. As they struggle to survive, institutions of the same type will deal with similar scarce resources, similar supply and demand of faculty and students, and similar government regulation (Birnbaum, 1983). As such, striving can be explained as institutions maximizing their chances for survival by acting in the ways that protect them from extinction.

In contrast, institutional theory, drawn from sociology, posits that an organization's survival is closely tied to self-perceptions of legitimacy (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer, Deal, & Scott, 1981). Organizations in fields like higher education where goals are hard to measure, technology is unclear, and the organization is highly professionalized, are highly susceptible to isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Morphet & Huisman, 2002). DiMaggio and Powell, (1983) found that institutions are compelled by *coercive*, *mimetic* and *normative* forces to emulate the most prestigious institutions in a group. Morphet and Huisman (2002) further explained DiMaggio and Powell's theory when they wrote:

Coercive isomorphism occurs when institutions respond to regulatory controls by organizations upon which they are dependent. Mimetic forces include institutions engaging in modeling the most prestigious organizations because they lack clear goals and technologies that suggest a more distinctive path. Professional networks and the communication that occurs in "invisible colleges" facilitates normative pressures toward homogenization (Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 496).

Morphew (2005) wanted to compare ecological and institutional theory as explanatory frameworks for the degree of change over time in institutional type. He examined changes in institutional behavior in higher education using IPEDS institutional characteristics and enrollment datasets from the years 1972–1973 and 2002–2003 to identify the growth in specific college and university types and declines in other types, repeating a strategy used by Birnbaum (1983). Morphew found that there was zero or negative growth in the general institutional diversity of U.S. higher education system as measured in these two snapshot years. However, Morphew (2005) suggests that the work of new institutional sociologists, such as Oliver (1991) may provide a better explanation for his findings than population ecology or previous explanations of institutional diversity. Oliver (1991) offers a conceptualization of institutional theory that is consistent with what previous institutionalists have referred to as “buffering.” This conceptualization is useful for framing how and why institutions of the same type may differ in the extent to which they pursue prestige. Oliver posits that institutions try to find a balance between external pressures regarding how they think they should be, and their institutional core. Oliver (1991) explains that organizations compromise, “as a tactical response to institutional processes (p. 153).” For example, an institution striving to become a more prestigious liberal arts college might require more research from faculty, but may also try to protect teaching as a primary mission. More organizational balancing will occur in environments dominated by highly professional actors. That is, faculty will have more to say in how and where the institution pursues prestige in institutions where faculty involvement in governance and power is strong.

POLITICAL FORCES

Another force impacting institutional striving is politics. From a political perspective, prestige is simply another scarce resource, a source of organizational and personal power, to be achieved among a group of higher education institutions (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Institutions are compelled to strive in order to obtain more of this resource, which allows them the ability to do the things they want to do (e.g. recruit better students and faculty; have greater autonomy from state control). Institutional leaders bargain and negotiate, even sometimes misrepresent facts and figures, to gain advantage in national rankings systems and distribution of federal research dollars, and to become

members of prestigious groups. At the federal level, interest groups and lobbyists, higher education associations, and politicians have created legislation and regulations defining “quality” in postsecondary policy arenas that have real consequences for how resources are distributed (Pusser, 2004). Lobbyists have pushed for federal funding in research and subsidies that have fueled the prestige movement (Pusser, 2004). Likewise, the new Commission on the Future of Higher Education (Parker & O'Donnell, 2006) is an excellent example of how politics can influence public policy in ways that promote striving. There have been discussions within this group of national standards tests for college graduates, and an increase in publicly available information on the quality of higher education. While the rhetoric suggests higher education change from a “system based on reputation to one based on performance,” (Commission Report, 2006, p. 10), inevitably different interest groups will lobby for what types of performance will and will not count. Because of varied political agendas, the Commission may very well set up new and more costly ways for institutions to strive.

Birnbaum (1988) created the fictitious Regional State University as a way of describing the internal politics inherent in organizational functioning. This case also provides context for how politics influences striving behavior on multiple levels. Birnbaum observes that as an organization, Regional State University is a “super-coalition of sub-coalitions” (p. 132), meaning that units and departments within the university each have diverse interests, yet are interdependent with each other for power to obtain their desired outcomes. One of the ways that units within Regional State University obtain power on campus is by bringing prestige to the institution through external guilds, external research dollars, and other resources such as accomplished graduates and alumni. Likewise, within a larger system of higher education, regional state leaders will have more power in negotiating for resources if both the tangible and intangible (prestige) resources they bring to the state system are plentiful. Because decision-making is not necessarily rational, but dependent on arguments made by coalitions and the use of power, decisions can be made without clear goals (Birnbaum, 1988).

This last point is underscored in Morphew's (2000) case study research on strategic planning. Strategic planning in higher education often claims to be rational and objective but can be subjectively interpreted and selectively applied (Morphew, 2000; Slaughter & Silva, 1985). Morphew's research found that institutional strategic planning can accelerate an already biased system of resource allocation, a system

where the "rich" get richer and the "poor" departments do not get the resources they need to compete. Often departments with the most valuable resources going into strategic planning are the ones who receive the greatest rewards in any redistribution of resources. Given that prestige is a valuable resource, it is clear why departments and units on campus would strive to obtain as much prestige as possible so that it might be used in any campus negotiations for more resources. Slaughter and Silva (1985) and Morphew's (2000) research suggests that activities introduced by campus presidents and provosts as strategic planning and retrenchment are often a front for activities designed to promote the prestige of the institution by rewarding those units who provide the most prestige already.

Recent scholarship on the rise of academic capitalism further demonstrates how actors at federal, state, institutional, and even department levels jockey for prestige as a scarce resource. Slaughter and Leslie (1997) used resource dependency theory to explain the rise of entrepreneurialism among campus units and universities. According to these authors, resource dependence theory suggests that "organizations deprived of critical revenues will seek new resources (p. 113)." Through case studies, and interviews with faculty and administrators involved in entrepreneurial projects, and their colleagues, the authors observed that personal prestige was enhanced by successful revenue generation and that universities also maximized prestige through entrepreneurial projects. Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) extended this research by exploring:

An ascendant tendency and orientation of colleges and universities to engage in market behaviors in the pursuit of revenues that involve developing new organizational infrastructures, fostering new professions and structures of professional employment and forming new intersectoral networks that affect the very identity of higher education institutions and their relations with faculty/staff and students (p. 33).

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) proposed that administrators are provided real incentives to encourage their units to act in ways that bring institutional prestige. Often then, striving may result from policies within universities that incentivise competition and activities that will result in prestige. In summary, political forces impact the pursuit of prestige in the academic hierarchy. Prestige is desired as a source of power and resource that can facilitate institutions' achieving their goals.

THE NATURE OF ACADEMIC REWARD SYSTEMS AND FACULTY CAREERS

There is a significant body of research on academic norms, values, and reward systems that provides an explanatory framework for faculty and departmental striving across disciplines and institutional types (Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). This literature suggests there are powerful extrinsic rewards associated with faculty striving toward a more research-oriented career. For example, Fairweather's (1993) research on faculty salaries found that across institutional type, faculty salaries are based primarily on research productivity. The more research faculty engage in, and the less teaching, the higher the salary. This norm creates a powerful incentive to emphasize research over teaching, especially in striving institutions. Because national ranking systems depend more heavily on the scholarly reputation of faculty than teaching, there are strong incentives for faculty, their departments, and institutions to emphasize research over teaching. Likewise, professional norms and pressures toward specialization encourage faculty to become more cosmopolitan than local in their careers (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Jencks & Reisman, 1968; Morphew, 2002; Morphew & Huisman, 2002).

Blackburn and Lawrence's (1995) comprehensive framework for faculty motivation and behavior posits the interaction between self knowledge and social knowledge causes faculty to act in one way or another. Using this theory, faculty are compelled to strive for prestige based on a complex interaction of their own graduate school experience and an institutional reward system that is increasingly sending messages that it wants publications, external grants, and awards from them. The greater the professionalization of the faculty, (i.e. the more they look outside their own institutions for norms, trends, and direction for teaching and scholarly work) (Morphew & Huisman, 2002) the more likely the institution as a whole will engage in striving behavior (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Morphew & Huisman, 2002).

Whether a striving institution attracts striving faculty, or new cohorts of striving faculty engender a striving institution are interesting questions. Clearly they influence each other in complex ways and are cyclical. Likewise, department context and department chair behavior will influence a faculty member's inclination toward striving behavior. For example, department chairs communicate expectations

for promotion and tenure to pre-tenure candidates, they interpret institutional messages from deans and provosts to faculty, negotiate course loads, and determine how scarce department resources are divided. Faculty have reported in many studies that department chairs influence decisions they make about how to prioritize their time, and thus are important players in understanding whether, and if so, why faculty engage in striving behavior.

Department chairs, deans, and provosts are also administrators, who themselves engage in striving behavior, and propel institutions to try to move up in USNWR ratings. There are isomorphic pressures on individual college presidents and/or provosts regarding what constitutes a good leader that acts as a force compelling striving (McCormick, 2005). When being a good leader is defined as (a) increasing selectivity (b) raising faculty salaries and resources (c) scaling USNWR ratings, and (d) bringing in external dollars, administrators in these roles are bound to respond accordingly. Research is needed to explore the pressures executive leaders feel to show trustees, donors, alumni, faculty, and students they are moving the institution to a "better" position. Likewise, the resources used in the pursuit of striving behavior need to be better defined.

In considering the academic norms that compel striving, it is important not to make faculty or administrators sound like victims of a system out of their control. In fact, many faculty and administrators actively engage in striving behavior, not because it is imposed on them, or expected of them, but because they desire the benefits prestige offers for them personally, for their department, and university.

It is also important to consider the American context of professional work and the cultural drive for externally defined success (Reich, 2002). Americans in law, health care, and many other professions with significant education and training are notoriously driven and higher education is well-known to attract individuals with high standards and expectations for success. These forces combine to bring a likely group of "striving personalities" to "striving institutions."

In summary, it is possible to understand the forces that compel striving from many perspectives, not the least of which are historical, economic, ecological, sociological, political, and embedded in the constructs of academic careers. Table 3.2 provides a summary of these perspectives and what they offer us in understanding this complex phenomena. The next section revisits IWTBU and then explores specific types of striving behaviors.

Table 3.2: Perspectives on Forces that Compel Striving

Perspectives from...	View Striving as...
History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A natural organizational evolution for institutions • Embedded in the context of institutional saga • Influenced by contemporary local, regional, and national events and conditions • The work of visionary leaders • A result of available resources and societal constraints at that point in time
Economics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The result of supply and demand, and competition in the higher education market • An effort to obtain an intangible resource that will be exchanged for tangible resources
Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving institutions of similar types within an environment responding to the same set of scarce resources, supply and demand of students, and government regulation. Institutions become more or less similar over time as the environment chooses organizations that will survive
Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driven by isomorphic pressures to obtain legitimacy; specifically, coercive, mimetic, and normative forces • A balance for organizations between external pressures and their institutional core
Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The result of institutions seeking out sources of power that will allow them to achieve desired goals • A process of bargaining and negotiating to gain advantage in an arena where prestige is a valuable resource
Nature of Faculty Careers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impacted by academic reward systems, professional norms, and the nature of disciplinary careers • Part of a system that values disciplinary ties and activities more than institutional commitments.

SECTION III: THE PROCESS OF STRIVING: WHAT HAPPENS

A new IWTBU president is talking a great deal about aspirational peers. IWTBU has always emphasized their teaching and learning environment in marketing the institution and promised a reasonable student to faculty ratio. Historically the institution was also very proud of the increased access and opportunity it provided to students who might not otherwise have attended college. However this has been changing as both the admissions process and faculty talk more about getting more "quality

students." Faculty teaching load is 6 courses per year but faculty are pushing for it to be shifted to 5 courses, given the addition of recent masters programs and increasing institutional expectations for scholarship.

The Director of Admissions is a close friend of Michael Vaughn, Director of Institutional Research, and feels the competition for students with high SAT scores and pressure on his office to increase yield has intensified greatly in the past 5 years. The social world in which IWTBU is recruiting seems to be more consumer-oriented than ever before, and millennial students seem more interested in the gym and technology in the residence halls than what they will be learning or from whom. This year he spent on one four-color brochure what he had in his entire budget 10 years ago—but the President keeps providing more funding, so he looks for new marketing opportunities each year. This year IWTBU offered significantly more national merit scholarships than ever before, and made significant investments in updating their website. It seems to be paying off in a more selective student body.

This section builds from the previous one, exploring specific organizational behavior of institutions striving toward greater prestige. While institutions seek prestige in a variety of venues, this section focuses on five areas where researchers and commentators have observed "prestige-seeking" behavior: student admissions and recruitment, faculty recruitment, roles, and reward systems, curriculum and programs, resource allocation, and the shaping of external image and institutional identity. Directly following these subsections, institutions most likely to engage in striving behavior are described.

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS

Institutions gain prestige when the "quality" or qualifications of their incoming students improve, and this is often achieved by increasing student selectivity. Striving toward greater student selectivity means improving student acceptance and yield rates. One striving behavior in this category is to actively solicit applications from lesser qualified students to make the admissions process more selective (Ehrenberg, 2003). Another strategy is to reject well-qualified applicants that the institution believes will attend ivy league institutions, relegating them to a waiting list (Ehrenberg, 2003).

Yet another strategy is to ramp up the marketing of the institution, through multi-colored brochures and DVDs, website programs,

and recruitment efforts. This strategy is aimed at both increasing the number of applications and attracting more students with high GPA/SATs. Winston (2000) points out that part of making the institution more desirable, however, has to do with the "competitive amenities" (such as new athletic centers, residence halls, new programs and expanded student services, enhanced technology in classrooms), that institutions are willing to invest in as part of the "positional arms race." These amenities will be discussed more in the resource allocation section, but a point made here is that striving institutions are likely to market these amenities aggressively to improve acceptance and yield rates.

Another well-documented strategy for improving acceptance rate and yield with clear economic advantages to institutions is to admit more students through early decision. In early decision students are given a short window (usually between December and January) to accept, decline, or defer admission to the regular process. If they accept, they must remove their applications from other institutions (Avery, Fairbanks, & Zeckhauser, 2001; Ehrenberg, 2003).

Early decision has benefits for both institutions and students—institutions get students for whom they were their first choice thus lowering admit rates and increasing yield (Avery, Fairbanks, & Zeckhauser, 2000; Ehrenberg, 2003). This helps institutions improve their student selectivity. Students for whom the institution was their first choice are given an advantage in the process and find out they were accepted early in the admissions cycle. Machung (1998) quotes Joe Allen, a Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid in 1998, regarding how early admissions benefits institutions: "If you can get 40 to 50 percent of your class by December, statistically your "yields"—the ratio of the number of students who matriculate to the number admitted—are much higher. A typical selective liberal arts college may have a yield of about 30%. If the college admits half of its class through early decision, half through regular admission, its yield could jump to 60 percent" (p. 12). While Machung (1998) goes on to point out that yield is actually only one part of the student recruitment score for USNWR, she notes the perception that early decision makes big differences in this regard, as well as the economic benefits, make it an established organizational behavior associated with the pursuit of prestige.

What are the economic benefits to institutions? Early decision applicants are more likely to be from upper or middle-income families and thus require less institutional grant aid than other applicants (Ehrenberg, 2000; 2003). Thus, increasing the number of early decision students helps

to "dampen the growth rate of financial aid budgets (Ehrenberg, 2003, p. 154)." As such, early decision improves an institution's chances of getting full tuition price from students, but it also makes these colleges much less affordable and often unreachable for students from low-income or middle-income families who cannot commit to an institution without knowing what financial aid it can provide (Ehrenberg, 2000; 2003; Machung, 1998). Ironically, the more successful an institution is in striving, the less competitive they become with need-based aid. A less favorable ranking one year has been found to influence institutions providing more generous grant aid the next, whereas higher-ranked institutions do not have to offer deep discounts to attract students with high entrance qualifications (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999).

Perhaps one of the more unfortunate aspects of prestige-seeking behavior in admissions is the rhetoric about increasing student "quality" that often accompanies such behavior. Shaw and LeChasseur (2005) documented some of the changing student demographics of Temple University as it was striving, which will be discussed in a subsequent section. The point relevant to this discussion was that student characteristics were changing from more local to more regional and national, and from a higher to a smaller percentage of minority students. As this was happening, Temple's president said in the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, (6/5/05), "To make it a truly great institution... means pushing the administration, pushing the faculty and yes, looking for better students (Shaw & LeChasseur, 2005)." This type of comment is made often by college presidents as a simple way of representing a desire to improve the GPA/SATs of entering students. However, the rhetoric of "better," "high ability," "higher quality" and "super students," as the student body becomes less diverse and the university less committed to students in their own backyard, seems to cast a dim light on the students who have previously attended the institution. It also creates a somewhat limited definition of excellence. It can be argued that this type of rhetoric reinforces a stereotype that students with average or low GPA/SAT are somehow less able, and less likely to succeed. This judgment is made by a narrow set of criteria, which research has shown do not fully measure potential for academe or for a successful life.

In summary, striving behavior in prestige-seeking institutions involves specific actions to increase student selectivity through improving acceptance rate and yield, and these efforts rarely come cheap—though they can have a significant financial benefit if they are successful.

FACULTY RECRUITMENT, ROLES, AND REWARDS

Institutions seeking greater prestige will actively recruit more research-oriented faculty, even in institutions with a primary teaching emphasis. A big part of this effort will involve increasing faculty salaries and start-up funds for research, especially to recruit, or "steal" star faculty from other more prestigious institutions. Because faculty salaries are a significant proportion of the faculty resources criterion for USNWR rankings, institutions have a significant incentive to increase faculty salaries, outside of market conditions or any internal desire to do so (Ehrenberg, 2003). Ehrenberg provides an example of this behavior at a small liberal arts college located in a Middle Atlantic State that explored ways to improve its USNWR rankings. The institution was ranked Tier 4 (the bottom quartile) of national liberal arts colleges. Because of the significant weight of faculty salaries in the ranking formula, an early draft of the strategic planning document called for raising faculty salaries (p. 149). Likewise, Clotfelter's (1996) book, *Buying the Best*, demonstrates the lengths to which the most prestigious institutions will go to lure star faculty away from their competitors.

A second, often faculty-driven striving strategy is raising promotion and tenure requirements. Research on striving institutions suggests that institutions look to aspirational peers for norms for faculty work in order to raise expectations for tenure (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Ward & Wolf Wendel, 2003; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005). Finnegan and Gamson (1996) point out that, "when institutional mission is not used to define the criteria and standards within faculty personnel policies, faculty are encouraged to apply the professional standards by which they were socialized, that is the culture of research (p. 172)." Likewise, research suggests that values held by faculty on personnel committees such as, "the best scholarship brings the most prestige to our positions," "climbing the academic ladder is who we are," and "we want our institution to be like other institutions" will likely influence the evaluation of faculty work in striving institutions (O'Meara, 2002, p. 67). Likewise, Finnegan and Gamson (1996) studied comprehensive universities trying to adopt "research cultures." They found that the "cultural schema" of research culture was reinforced as key resources such as faculty hiring processes and promotion and tenure systems were employed to support it. Thus whether intentional or not, institutions pursuing prestige will often "up-the-ante" in terms of what is expected by faculty in research and external funding for promotion and tenure.

The scarcity of faculty jobs, especially tenure-track jobs, in many disciplines contributes to an institutions' behavior in raising expectations and standards for faculty work. The over-supply of applicants with research training and research emphasis who cannot find positions in research universities but want to work in academe facilitates institutions and departments building research cultures in places that were previously more focused on teaching and service.

A third striving behavior in faculty roles and rewards relates to faculty workload and work-life experiences. Massy and Zemsky (1994) studied four private liberal arts colleges and two private research universities drawn from a list of selective institutions in their exploration of the "academic ratchet." They found that as each institution pursued prestige, faculty and administrators decreased course load in exchange for greater faculty discretionary time, which was used for research and scholarship, consulting and professional activities, and specialized teaching at the graduate level. Thus striving institutions will decrease faculty teaching load to "free-up" time for activities more likely to bring the institution prestige.

CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMS

Over the last two decades many institutions strove to move from one Carnegie classification to another that they perceived to be more prestigious (Aldersley, 1995; Ehrenberg, 2003; Morphew, 2002; Morphew & Baker, 2004). One institutional behavior associated with such aspirations in masters institutions and some liberal arts colleges was adding more graduate level programs, and a shift of resources from undergraduate education to graduate programs (Aldersley, 1995; Morphew & Jenniskens, 1999). For example, Aldersley (1995) examined institutions that had shifted in Carnegie classification and identified "upward drift" or a tendency for institutions to introduce higher-level programs because they were "beguiled by the promise of prestige associated with doctoral education (p. 56)." Likewise, several other studies have shown this pattern of (especially masters, comprehensive, and liberal arts institutions) establishing new masters and/or doctoral programs in order to gain prestige and move "up" in rankings (Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Morphew & Huisman, 2002; Morphew & Jenniskens, 1999).

However, there are a number of other ways curriculum and programs might be impacted by striving. Many institutions create additional honors programs and prestigious sounding learning communities

in order to attract a more academically accomplished student. Some institutions within state systems have been forced to commence their remedial and developmental work by state legislatures that want those institutions to be associated with higher quality students and prestige. Other institutions have removed developmental and remedial programs out of an institutional desire to look more like their aspirational peers that do not have them. In addition, retrenchment activities, wherein less prestigious programs are cut and resources redirected toward higher ranked ones are included in this category. Thus, institutions will often look critically at the curriculum and programs they offer, and what they need to offer to increase their prestige and act accordingly.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Economists who study higher education have found that prestige-seeking seems to increase spending on infrastructure and administrative support (Alpert, 1985; Clotfelter, 1996; Morphew & Baker, 2004). In addition, striving seems to shift resources from instruction to administrative support. One of USNWR ratings is a weighted average educational expenditure per student. For example, Alpert's (1985) research found that as universities become more dependent on external funds, including research, alumni, and donor support, their internal expenditure patterns change to emphasize obtaining more of that support. The institution begins to deemphasize areas (such as teaching or outreach), that are important to their mission, but unlikely to produce additional revenues (Alpert, 1985). This is relevant because large campaigns to attract additional donor support, increase endowments and encourage faculty to bring in external funds are established strategies of university striving. Likewise, Massy and Zemsky's (1994) concept of an "administrative lattice" provides an explanatory framework for how administrative cost increases as institutions strive. As faculty move away from teaching and service and towards specialized research and seeking external funding, additional funding is needed to support these efforts. Clotfelter's (1996) research underscores this point that especially for universities attempting to move toward Research University I status, significant investments in the way of infrastructure, and administrative staff are required to obtain research funding. Once obtained additional costs are needed to maintain and facilitate that research funding. Inevitably, these costs

must come from somewhere, and may divert funds previously spent on instruction and outreach.

A number of economists and scholars of organizational change have begun to look more closely at the increased cost of striving, especially for the top positions in Research University I status (Ehrenberg, 2000; Zemsky, 1990). The trend clearly points toward more spending on nonacademic support rather than increased spending on academic related service (Morphew & Baker, 2004). Using data from IPEDS, Morphew and Baker (2004) compared institutions that would soon become Research University I's (or rising RUIs) to Research II institutions for trade-offs in spending among instruction, research, and administration between 1976 and 1996 when the rising RUI institutions were striving toward RU 1 status. These authors found that the rising RUI group experienced significant changes in their spending patterns as they were striving toward their aspiration of becoming a RUI. They exhibited increased proportionate spending on institutional support and research.

Further research is needed to replicate these findings with more precise classification of institutional expenditures than the IPEDS survey data could provide, and with a larger sample of institutions. Nonetheless, this research was consistent with previous studies, such as Bowen's (1980) research showing that the most affluent institutions spend proportionately greater amounts on institutional support than their less prestigious peers (Morphew & Baker, 2004). Thus it makes sense that as institutions try to emulate and act like their aspirational peers expenditure patterns follow suit.

In addition to a shift in resource allocation to support research and external funding, striving campuses are more likely to invest heavily in admissions, recruitment and tuition discounting for students with higher GPA/SATs than they would otherwise be able to recruit. While these behaviors in and of themselves are not a concern if resources are not scarce, research suggests that money is being shifted proportionately away from instruction and outreach activities in the pursuit of prestige (Ehrenberg, 2003; Morphew & Baker, 2004). Given that it takes significant investment in order to see even small improvement in USNWR ratings, it isn't clear these spending behaviors or "investments" always pay-off. In addition, educational researchers have pointed to how these same institutions might use some of the same resources used on glossy brochures and donor relations on improving the quality of the student undergraduate experience (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL IDENTITY

It was mentioned earlier that higher education institutions, unlike many other for-profit organizations, have unclear goals, processes, and products. Because higher education institutions depend on external perception of their legitimacy and quality to survive, it is no surprise that campuses that are actively striving will engage in significant external relations and marketing to change and/or to improve their image. The campaign to reshape the external image of a college or university may include something as major as a name-change or smaller like a complete revision of a website and marketing materials. Morphew (2002) found that in the decade following 1990, more than 120 public and private four-year colleges changed their names and became universities, at least in part, to gain prestige. It is also not uncommon to find campuses posting their USNWR and related college rankings on the front pages of their websites and other marketing materials. Regardless of the specific strategy, this type of organizational behavior will be carefully orchestrated to portray a more prestigious image through new language used to describe the institution, new images, lists of recent faculty and student accomplishments and recent donor gifts. Sometimes colleges will use the history of their buildings, traditions or organizational saga to appeal to applicants who associate prestige with tradition and longevity.

Internally, there is also a role striving college leaders play in managing a collective institutional identity. College presidents, provosts, deans and department chairs will often strategically inject a common sense of the college as striving through speeches, memoranda, and the framing of major decisions and resource allocation. This sense of institutional direction trickles down into departments and becomes a way those units frame their work. In other words, actors in striving institutions try to create a zeitgeist of striving that permeates institutional consciousness. Massy and Zemsky (1994) observed that in their case studies the concepts of academic ratcheting had permeated the vernacular of faculty cultures.

O'Meara and Bloomgarden (2006) conducted a single case study of a self-identified striving institution in the Northeast. The institution was in the second tier of liberal arts colleges trying to compete with the most highly ranked institutions such as Amherst, Williams and Swarthmore. Through qualitative interviews with 29 faculty the authors found that a narrative had formed among the faculty concerning

where the institution had been and where it was going prestige-wise. By narrative, the authors refer to common language and a common ongoing story (Birnbaum, 2000; Postman, 1995). The narrative, or story faculty told each other about their institution was one of "upward mobility" and progress and in part about how far the institution had come. Faculty at "Wayne College" were very conscious the institution was striving and explained it as part of the institutional saga of constant improvement. Participants used this narrative as a lens through which they viewed their work-life, the reward system, and institutional decisions. Postman (1995) writes about narratives in education as compelling stories of purpose and continuity that provide participants with meaning. At Wayne College, narrative served a purpose, connecting faculty to a common goal or vision. Therefore, in striving institutions institutional actors intentionally work to improve/change external image and try to facilitate an institutional identity among members that will work towards striving goals.

THE DYNAMIC INTERACTION OF STRIVING BEHAVIORS

Like human behavior, which is influenced by a complex and dynamic set of factors, each of the examples of organizational behavior above, is in constant interaction with and influenced by other factors. For example, in *The Organization of Academic Work*, Blau (1994) provides evidence that talented faculty will attract talented students. Likewise, Volkwein and Sweitzer's (2006) research found that talented faculty and students interact producing instructional and scholarly outcomes that combine to shape institutional attractiveness and prestige. Webster (2001) found pervasive "multicollinearity" among USNWR rankings wherein changes in the value of one or more rankings is related to and influenced by changes in one or more of the other rankings. Likewise, Meredith (2004) found that "changes in an admissions outcomes affect a school's USNWR rankings which in turn affects the admission outcome (p. 449)." Thus there is an ongoing cycle of inputs that lead to outcomes that lead to inputs in the striving game. A USNWR ranking this year is used by an institution to attract high ability students next year. The qualifications of those entering students next year improve the USNWR ranking the following year and make more well-sought after faculty want to work at the institution.

However, it is also important to note, that institutions competing in the "positional arms race" are not playing on an even playing field. Volkwein and Sweitzer (2005) analyzed the variables that are

most strongly associated with institutional prestige and reputation, drawing on data from USNWR, the Institute for Scientific Information's Web of Knowledge, IPEDS, AAUP and four college guidebooks. They found that the "older, larger, and wealthier institutions have an edge in competition for faculty and students and prestige" (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006, p. 11). Institutional age, control, size and resources serve as foundations for faculty and student recruitment (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2006). Non-church related colleges (those with no religious affiliation) receive higher prestige ratings and larger liberal arts colleges enjoy more robust reputations than their smaller counterparts (Volkwein & Sweitzer, 2005). As such, striving behaviors from each of the five areas will be in constant interaction with each other, compelling forces and consequences, and they will have differing levels of success, based on some circumstances out of their control.

MOST LIKELY PLAYERS IN THE POSITIONAL ARMS RACE

As mentioned previously, striving behavior will differ across institutional types. However, given the current competitive nature of higher education, it is unlikely any four-year colleges are immune. Rather there are conditions that surround institutions that make them more or less vulnerable to striving behavior at given times in their histories. Institutions with these conditions have been found prevalent in the literature on striving. For example, using Brewer, Gates and Goldman's (2002) typology of institutions as reputation building, prestige-seeking, or prestigious, there are 3 institutional types that have been found most prevalent as prestige-seeking in the literature. They are: comprehensive institutions striving to become doctoral campuses; second tier liberal arts colleges striving to enter the top tier; and universities that have previously been classified just under the top research university status. Using this same typology, community colleges and institutions that serve a local, regional, and/or small niche market (e.g. evangelical, military, tribal institution) are more likely to be reputation building in their orientation and less responsive to USNWR and other national rankings. In this section these three institutional types of "most likely strivers" are discussed. Next, the conditions within these groups that make them vulnerable to striving, and/or conditions that could be present elsewhere, are highlighted.

Sandwiched between community colleges and research universities, liberal arts institutions in the middle of the USNWR rankings are among the most likely of institutions to pursue prestige (Massy &

Zemsky, 1994; Morphew, 2002; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003). Liberal arts colleges are especially susceptible to striving behavior because of their small size. Schultz & Stickler, (1965) found that smaller colleges and universities were more likely to undergo academic drift than were larger colleges and universities (p. 235). Small institutions have been found to be more vulnerable to market trends, more in need of the resources greater prestige promises, and more easily moved in a new direction when leadership changes than larger institutions (McPherson & Schapiro, 1999; Zemsky, Wegner, & Massy, 2005). Selective liberal arts colleges compete for a small number of highly qualified students able to pay full tuition price, and for external funds (Ehrenberg, 2003; Winston, 2000). Furthermore, most liberal arts college faculty attended research institutions and were socialized toward research university standards and culture. Liberal arts college faculty must manage expectations about service and teaching while looking outward to disciplinary associations and research university departments for direction for their careers (Clark, 1987; Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Ruscio, 1987; Ward & Wolf Wendel, 2003). Morphew (2002) studied colleges that became universities and found that less selective institutions are significantly more likely to transform themselves from a college to a more comprehensive university mission than are the most selective institutions. Thus, liberal arts colleges in the middle of the academic hierarchy are likely players in the "positional arms race" (Winston, 2000).

Another group of institutions with as much to gain from striving behavior are public comprehensive institutions. Both Finnegan (1993) and Wolf Wendel and Ward (2005) observe that this group in the "middle of the institutional hierarchy" (Clark, 1987) is under-studied but includes campuses that were formerly liberal arts colleges, teacher colleges, and/or has land-grant status and have always offered undergraduate and masters degrees. Morphew and Huisman, (2002) found that non-flagship universities were more likely than flagship universities to add duplicative degree programs, overall and at the graduate degree level (p. 501). Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) refer to faculty life at striving comprehensives as, "between a rock and a hard place," because the local traditions of teaching and service conflict with institutional aspirations related to more faculty publications and external grant funding. In addition, generational conflicts have emerged among faculty in comprehensive institutions as the job market has brought many research-oriented faculty to campuses with faculty who over

the last 3 decades have emphasized teaching and service (Dubrow, Moseley, & Dustin, 2006; Finnegan, 1993; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005). Thus, research has begun to identify the striving comprehensive institution as an important institutional type for future study.

Finally, a number of studies have found striving behavior among research universities (Geiger, 2004; Massy & Zemsky, 1994; Meredith, 2004; Morphew & Huisman, 2002; Morphew & Baker, 2004; Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2005). In many state systems there is the one major, often flagship, research university and then "close seconds," or other state universities that compete with the flagship for resources and prestige. Geiger (2004) has looked at striving in state research universities historically and chronicled how organizational aspirations over time were fulfilled. Morphew and Baker (2004) studied the expenditure patterns of institutions that had recently moved into Research I status and how their administrative costs changed during that time. Sweitzer and Volkwein (2005) explored the advantages some research universities have in terms of age, size, and governance in terms of competing for prestige. Regardless, it seems clear that those universities closest to the ideal norm of a prestigious research university can see the financial and other benefits of moving from the second tier to a top tier and this vision compels institutions to "reach for the brass ring" (Ehrenberg, 2003).

In summary, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive universities, and research universities are the institutions where most researchers have examined striving behavior and found it prevalent. Yet no institutional type is immune to striving. Rather, institutions that face a certain set of conditions and circumstances seem most vulnerable for or likely to strive. This review of research on striving institutions suggests that institutions that strive are often:

- Institutions just below the prestigious group threshold. In other words they can see the brass ring, it is close and is reachable.
- Institutions trying to recruit outside their local area for students (i.e. not working to establish a local reputation as much as a regional, national, or international one).
- Institutions that are recently vulnerable to market trends; and are searching for additional revenue that can not be provided by tuition.
- Institutions small enough or cohesive enough that they are easily swayed by changes in administrative leadership.
- Institutions where the market has brought an over-supply of research-oriented faculty to a campus.

SECTION IV: CONSEQUENCES/IMPLICATIONS OF STRIVING

As Michael Vaughn thinks back nostalgically on where the institution was 30 years ago, he remembers many "ordinary students" that his institution helped become successful professionals. These same students would not have been admitted today. And he wonders, whose students are they now? He sees that the regional students who come to IWTBU today get a better education than in previous years, at least in terms of some of the rigor of the academic programs, and the prestige of the faculty. Likewise, they have a more academically talented set of peers to interact with, although more homogeneous economically. His faculty friends on campus tell him that there are many more resources for research than there were in the past, and salaries are more on par with peer institutions than ever before. Yet Michael also knows that some of his faculty colleagues feel left out of IWTBU's aspirations, and that there isn't as much community in their departments as in previous years. More faculty are traveling during the semester. Michael doesn't think students find mentors as easily. However, it is hard to ignore IWTBU's USNWR ratings, which are clearly improving. Michael Vaughn is proud in fact, of all that this old state teachers college has accomplished. Who knew it could come so far? Yet what they are trying to become (other than highly ranked) is not completely clear.

This section reviews research findings and theoretical literature on the known and potential consequences of organizational behavior associated with striving. The section is divided into subsections by implications for higher education stakeholders (i.e. for students, for faculty), and for higher education missions and society (i.e. for teaching and service missions, equity, and innovation in higher education).

Before exploring these areas, however, several important caveats are required. First, the effects of specific organizational behaviors aimed at striving are difficult, if not impossible to isolate. A specific striving behavior (such as recruiting students with higher entrance qualifications), will interact with a whole variety of other factors (striving related or not) to produce an outcome. This outcome, while influenced by the striving behavior, will also be related to other forces/factors at play in the institution. Second, striving behaviors will have decidedly different outcomes across institutional types, as they will interact with the size, age, culture, and existing prestige of the organization. Third, as organizational cultures are in constant flux, there are permeable boundaries between forces influencing striving, a striving behavior,

and a consequence of striving behavior; and the three will constantly influence each other. Each of these realities, and the problem of identifying striving institutions, makes research on the consequences of striving challenging. Nonetheless, researchers have begun to identify these environments and found some outcomes that can be traced in part, to striving behavior. This is an emerging area of study and the findings have not been replicated in sufficient research to consider them definitive. Thus, additional research is needed to identify striving behaviors and trace related outcomes in convincing ways.

A fourth and final caveat is that many of the consequences described in this section might be considered negative and inadvertently suggest a bias against striving. However, striving behavior is not inherently bad, but rather an organizational behavior like any other with its own set of consequences. As the stories of striving by Jesuit Colleges, HBCUs, and normal schools from the history section suggest, many institutions owe the impressive nature of their current facilities, faculty, and in some cases, very survival to striving behavior. Likewise, where would the current state of scientific knowledge and inquiry be if our most respected scientific institutions, such as MIT and Johns Hopkins not aspired to greatness in the sciences in the early 1900s? Thus the intent here is not to demonize institutional striving for prestige and/or "world-class" status. Striving to be the best (albeit as evaluated by external ratings) has made many American institutions the envy of the world. However, if there are some negative, and in some cases unintended consequences of striving for prestige, it is important for institutions to better understand the trade-offs they are making. In some areas, this knowledge might help institutions mitigate unintended consequences.

Research and theoretical literature associating striving behaviors with consequences is reviewed below. In each section areas for future research are identified.

FOR STUDENTS

Very little research has been done on the impact of "striving institutional behavior," on student learning, satisfaction, and engagement. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, research has explored the relationship between institutional quality (as measured by USNWR and related rating systems) and student engagement using National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) benchmarks and found that there is little to no relationship between institutional selectivity and student

engagement (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004; Pike, G. R. 2003; Sarraf et al., 2005). Studies have not actually identified institutions while they were at a highpoint of organizational striving behavior, and studied the impact on student culture, learning, or satisfaction during that peak striving period. This is an important area for future research.

As such, most consequences of striving organizational behavior for students must be extrapolated from related research. For example, in the case of liberal arts colleges moving from a primary emphasis on undergraduate teaching to a mission or culture that is more research-focused (as is the case in many of the most prestigious institutions), raises obvious concerns for student interactions with faculty outside of class, faculty commitment to undergraduate teaching, and the use of full-time faculty to teach courses. Institutions with faculty that prioritize research have been shown to be weaker in student orientation (Astin, 1993; Astin & Chang, 1995; Wawrzynski, 2004). For example, Wawrzynski (2004) found that institutions where faculty spend more time on research have a lower percentage of seniors reporting student-faculty interactions and students involved in active-learning. This is of concern because while Astin & Chang (1995) found that the most prestigious liberal arts colleges seem to find a balance between student orientation and faculty research, most colleges and universities are somewhere in the middle of the prestige hierarchy. Time that faculty shift to research and grant funding will have to come from somewhere in order to maintain a student focus.

On the other hand, academic challenge is a major benchmark of student engagement (Kuh & Pascarella, 2004). For example, faculty in one self-identified striving institution, were very concerned with increasing the rigor of their academic programs, and challenging students (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006). Sarraf et al. (2005) examination of USNWR ratings variables and NSSE benchmarks showed that the level of academic challenge positively related to academic reputation peer scores. In other words, institutions with greater faculty resources (such as smaller class size, where students interact in small groups) are more likely to be able to challenge students academically (Sarraf et al., 2005). Thus from one perspective, striving institutions are actively seeking and obtaining resources to enrich their educational environment. What is unclear is what happens to teaching, collaborative learning, and out of class faculty-student contact during the time the institution is pursuing prestige. Also, do institutions striving for USNWR rankings use additional resources they attract through prestige for instruction or are those resources reinvested in administrative

activities, such as recruitment, alumni relations, and seeking external funding, as Morphey and Baker's (2004) research suggests?

Thus, further research is needed to see whether institutions that are actively pursuing prestige are also improving levels of academic challenge or other NSSE student engagement benchmarks. In addition, additional research should explore whether funding invested in faculty salaries and research during a striving period have direct and concrete benefits to students, such that they experience more enhanced opportunities for undergraduate research, more current or engaging teaching, or other benefits of being associated with accomplished faculty and research resources. Researchers should correlate striving institutions and non-striving peer institutions national survey data (such as from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, the National Survey of Student Engagement, the College Student Survey, the College Results Instrument, HERI survey, and the NSOPF faculty survey) to isolate as much as possible how striving organizational behavior and faculty striving behavior are influencing students. Empirical research might be conducted that examines institutions student survey data during the five years before a major shift in rankings to assess any differences in student satisfaction with their environment or learning. Likewise, case study and qualitative research following campus climate for students during periods of striving are needed to better understand the impact of striving on students.

There is research that associates striving behavior in student recruitment and admissions with negative outcomes for low-income students (Meredith, 2004; Shaw & LeChasseur, 2005). Meredith (2004) found that at schools ranked in the top 25 of U.S. News and World Report, the amount of Pell grants increases as a school drops in the rankings—or decreased as rank improved. Likewise, early decision may decrease the number of low-income or middle-class applicants a college offers admission. Nationally, there has been a move away from need-based financial aid to merit-based financial aid, and while there are many reasons for this, merit-based aid improves an institution's chances in USNWR, while need-based aid does not. Thus for campuses pursuing prestige through admissions, the trade-off of need-based aid for merit-based aid is a likely one (Meredith, 2004).

Finally, a great deal of research has been done over the last decade to examine graduate education and how it might be reformed (Austin & McDaniels, in press). A sub-theme of such studies are that graduate education suffers when a department or its faculty are more focused on external rankings or their own career ascent than creating supportive

cultures for learning. Thus, it is important for future research to explore the impact of a department's striving behavior on the graduate student experience.

In summary, there are negative consequences for some students associated with striving behavior (e.g. use of merit-based aid over need-based aid). Further research is needed to understand the impact of institutional and faculty striving on undergraduate and graduate student learning, satisfaction, and engagement.

FOR FACULTY

In considering the impact of striving on faculty work-life, careers, and productivity it is important to recall that faculty are among the institutional actors most engaged in striving behavior. This makes sense, as research and theoretical literature suggests that the institutional or individual pursuit of prestige can have positive impacts on faculty careers. It will, however, have differential effects based on career stage and rank, faculty demographics (gender, race/ethnicity, age), discipline, and institutional type. Given the perks that tend to come with research-oriented careers and prestigious institutions, benefits associated with faculty salary, teaching load, resources for research, time for disciplinary activities, and the entering quality of students may follow several years of institutional striving (Sweitzer & Volkwein, 2005). Achievement, recognition, and advancement would seem to be staples of striving environments, at least for those successful in research, and they impact faculty job satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000). Likewise, the preparation of students has an impact on faculty job satisfaction. Many faculty prefer working with academically talented students (Hagedorn, 2000). In a striving environment, student quality could easily improve each year.

On the other hand, emerging research suggests faculty may also experience increased competition in their work-place, pressure to excel in multiple venues simultaneously, a more complex reward system, and a less humane environment for balance of work and family when working at a striving institution (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005). Highly competitive and individualistic work environments (like those in many of the most prestigious research universities) are known to be less friendly to balancing work and family (Ward & Wolf Wendel, 2003; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005), less supportive of women and minority advancement and more likely to have tenure/promotion failures and retention problems (Rice,

Sorcinelli & Austin, 2000; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Faculty in striving institutions have reported increasing and often unreasonable expectations for promotion and tenure (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005).

Likewise, studies have shown that when faculty are asked to change work habits and focus because of a new organizational focus, (such as upping the ante for research publications and grants) dissatisfaction often follows (Finnegan & Gamson, 1996; Henderson & Kane, 1991; Morphew, 2002; Wolf Wendel & Ward, 2005). There can be many reasons for this. In Dubrow, Moseley and Dustin's (2006) fictitious case of "mission creep university," a composite of the authors experiences at several institutions, a junior faculty member became stressed and dissatisfied because resources for research and teaching load did not match the new reward system and institutional aspirations. Whereas a senior faculty member who had spent years building academic programs there felt he was being left behind in terms of institutional direction and saw no hope for promotion (Dubrow, Moseley, & Dustin, 2006). In situations where faculty feel forced to "strive" toward a research university model or risk not being promoted and/or tenured, where faculty feel administrators are forcing them in new directions they do not want to pursue, the potential benefits of a striving environment are less likely to be enjoyed.

Also, Gumpert's (1993) case studies of retrenchment decisions at two public universities illustrate the potential confusion "new institutional aspirations" can create for faculty who were hired during a time when resources were awarded based on undergraduate teaching and regional service, but find themselves years later in a world where academic units without "grant-seeking orientation and aspiration to be premier research university," (p. 31) are easily abandoned or less advantaged.

Wolf-Wendel and Ward (2005) found in their study of "striving comprehensives" that the "upward mobility the campus desires is often at the expense of faculty" (p. 8). Those on the tenure track and those with young children found it particularly difficult to balance the aspirations of their institutions with the needs of their families (Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2005). Wolf-Wendel & Ward (2005) found that the pressures associated with striving made faculty feel they had to excel simultaneously in their local roles (teaching, advising, governance) and cosmopolitan roles (research productivity, connection to disciplinary colleagues on other campuses). These authors found that mixed messages and a lack of the resources needed to support the

institution's aspirations created ambiguity for faculty about where they should be spending the majority of their time and energy. This is especially evident in public state institutions wherein research expectations increase, but teaching loads stay high as state legislators mandate a certain number of hours in the classroom.

As in the fictitious "mission creep university" example mentioned above, the increased emphasis on research may also make promotion to full professor more difficult. In O'Meara and Bloomgarden's (2006) study of one striving liberal arts college, this phenomenon occurred for some associate professors, described by one faculty member as "casualties on the road." Some would-be full professors did not have the skills required in the new economy of promotion. Likewise, the normal ambiguity of the pre-tenure years intensified as the institution went through an identity crisis (O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006). Shaw & LeChasseur (2005) provide evidence of one other potential effect of striving. These authors found that over the time period of 2000 to 2004 while Temple University self-identified as striving, faculty became increasingly part-time, with minority faculty even more so, and fewer faculty were hired on the tenure track (Shaw & LeChasseur, 2005). This seems to be counter-intuitive, as tenure is associated with prestige. However, Shaw and LeChasseur (2005) also found that a greater percentage of first year students were taking courses with adjuncts, and this may be the result of shifting funding from instruction to prestige-seeking activities (Morphew & Baker, 2004), as well as the overall national trend toward new appointments off the tenure track (Finkelstein & Schuster, 2006).

New research building on these studies of faculty work-life in striving environments needs to be conducted. This new research would examine how faculty make meaning of their striving environments, how they participate in them or actively resist them within departments and through shared governance, and what they feel the impact of organizational and individual behaviors associated with striving are for their students. Likewise, research needs to examine women and faculty of color experience of striving environments as these groups report affinity with teaching and outreach roles, likely to be further deemphasized in a striving environment. Given the prevalence of striving in many four-year institutions, this research could have important implications for professional development, in terms of preparing graduate students for mediating these environments, and learning to succeed within them. Of particular concern are how striving environments influence the sense of collegiality and community early-career faculty

say they long for, the balance of work and family, and the ability of faculty to design careers around teaching or engagement scholarship.

FOR TEACHING AND SERVICE MISSIONS

There are many ways to define teaching. Here it is defined broadly as including instruction, mentoring and advising roles, and out-of-class contact between students and faculty. While there are many forms of service, the word is used here to mean professional outreach and institutional citizenship. Only a few research studies have examined the impact of striving organizational behavior on teaching and service missions, with the emphasis on the former. For example, Lachs (1965) study found that as institutions engaged in academic drift they paid less attention to their pre-existing undergraduate programs and these programs may have suffered as a result. Lee and Rhoads (2003) found strong negative relationships between various measures of increased entrepreneurialism in institutions and faculty commitment to teaching. While striving and entrepreneurialism are not synonymous, external funding for research – a major focus of faculty entrepreneurialism – has been associated with Carnegie classification and *USNWR* rankings. Also, O'Meara (2002) found that striving forces within academic departments worked against the positive evaluation of outreach (i.e. service-learning and community-based research) as forms of scholarship for promotion and tenure. Likewise, Milem, Berger and Dey (2000) found that as the amount of time faculty spent on research increased, the amount of time they spent in out-of-class contact with students decreased. This is important because we know from Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) and Astin (1993) that out-of-class contact between faculty and students is critical to student retention, learning, and satisfaction.

Likewise a tie can be made between resource allocation striving strategies and the emphasis placed on undergraduate or graduate education. Morphew observes (2000) "when discipline-based sources of support (e.g. external research grants) have priority graduate programs are emphasized. Conversely, an increased emphasis on institutional support (e.g. tuition) will prioritize teaching and other undergraduate functions (p 260)." If an institution shifts resources away from undergraduate education, teaching and learning could suffer.

We can also extrapolate consequences of the pursuit of prestige on teaching and service delivery through Astin and Chang's (1995) study of selective liberal arts colleges that claim to have the best of

both worlds, (i.e. strong teaching cultures along with a strong research orientation). While the authors did ultimately identify a group of "high-high" institutions to study which had success in both areas, a major finding of their research was that there is a strong negative association between an institution's degree of emphasis on research and the priority it assigns to teaching and student development. Not one institution in the top 10 percent in research orientation was also among the top 10% in student orientation. They found that, "virtually no institutions with very strong research orientations are even above average in student orientation (p. 46)."

We need new research to isolate the impact of striving organizational behaviors on measures of teaching and service productivity. This research would be closely linked in the teaching category to the research on student learning, satisfaction, and engagement mentioned above, wherein national survey data might be used to compare learning and engagement measures at striving and non-striving institutions. Likewise, as has been done in some cases, NSOPF, IPEDS, and HERI faculty survey data might be used to find trends among faculty in institutions that were striving, trends such as faculty reporting an increase or decrease in superficial assessments of teaching, amount of time faculty spent on student contact hours, course preparation, faculty student-interactions, committee work, and professional service activities.

A second layer of inquiry would involve interviews with faculty committed to teaching and professional outreach and administrators charged with supporting these missions (e.g. Directors of Centers for Teaching, Directors of Outreach, staff involved in learning communities, honors programs, and curriculum development) to assess whether they saw a marked difference in the institutional resources and commitment to teaching and service goals during a striving period. Likewise, case study research could be done to compare groups of non-striving peer institutions with striving institutions regarding faculty involvement in shared governance, and faculty and student involvement in learning communities.

This type of research is fraught with challenges. For example, is an observed decrease in faculty participation in shared governance a result of organizational striving behaviors, or a decrease in tenure-track as opposed to adjunct appointments, and how are they related? Do community partners who have worked with an institution over time feel that it has become harder to engage faculty in service-learning or community-based research projects and why? Some of

this can be teased out by individual interviews with faculty, who might be able to assign institutional incentives or disincentives to specific activities or aspirations with their behavior. However, actors in an environment are not always completely aware of all of the forces impacting their decisions, and thus research is needed on multiple levels of the institution to assess the impact of striving on teaching and service missions. Information on trade-offs related to teaching and service missions will be particularly relevant for institutions in the middle of national ranking systems, institutions that may have less to gain from pursuing prestige and more to gain from behaviors that build on the foundation of distinctive teaching and service.

As part of these efforts, we need to look at research and theoretical models from other disciplines to frame striving, as well as research that has examined the pursuit of prestige in other types of non-profit settings like health-care institutions, and schools. What did other institutions leave behind in terms of balance of work and family, a customer orientation, or other goals, as they pursued prestige?

FOR EQUITY

Equity and social mobility have always been important goals of the American higher education system (Bowen, 1977). As our American population becomes ever more diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and income, it is critical that our higher education system reflect that diversity, creating opportunities for first generation and low-income students to experience college. In 2005, Clara Lovett, former president of the now defunct American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), warned that the "quest by institutions for places at the top of higher education's prestige pyramid"... keeps higher education from meeting external demands for better outcomes for students at lower costs, and increased access for students of all backgrounds (B20). She warned that striving institutions lose their, "ability to serve as agents of social and economic mobility (p. B20)."

One illustration of Lovett's point relates to the striving behavior of increasing admittance of National Merit Scholars. Ehrenberg, Zhang, and Levin (2006) studied whether an increase in the number of recipients of National Merit scholarships (NMS's) at an institution is associated with a decline in the numbers of students from lower and lower middle income families attending the institution. While holding other factors constant, they measured the number of National Merit

scholars by the number of Pell Grant recipients attending the institution. They found:

Other factors held constant, including the total full-time undergraduate and first year enrollment levels, offering more institutionally funded NMS awards is associated with fewer Pell grant recipients attending the institution and the magnitude of the reduction is roughly four fewer Pell grant recipients for each 10 additional institutional NMS recipients enrolled at the institution (p. 205).

The authors noted the magnitude of the displacement effect is largest at institutions in the sample that enroll the greatest number of NMS students and occurs primarily in institutions whose enrollment is growing.

It is also possible to imagine a scenario wherein striving resulted in a campus becoming more diverse than it ever had been. For example, as a campus in a predominantly white area becomes more selective and offers more merit scholarships, they may attract more academically talented diverse students. In this case, the campus would be more diverse as a result of striving. However, it is likely that the socio-economic background of the students would become more homogeneous.

A similar example of shifts in who is being served by striving institutions is offered by Shaw and LeChasseur's (2005)'s study of Temple University, a self-identified striving institution. In Temple's case, striving seems to be one factor of many that has resulted in a whiter student body (Shaw & LeChasseur, 2005). Between 1998 and 2004 there was a jump of at least 60 points from 1998 to 2004 in SAT, and 6 points in high school class rank from 1998–2004. In 1996 the student population was 30% black and 49% white, and by 2004–2005 it was 17% black, and 61% white. The student body also changed to be less local/regional—from 17% other states in 1995–1996 to 27% other states in 2004–2005 (Shaw & LeChasseur, 2005, pp. 1–2). A corresponding policy shift was for Temple to spend less money on remediation for incoming students.

Both of these studies suggest further research is needed to explore how the college choice options of low-income and students of color may be impacted by institutions in their regions engaging in striving behavior. For example, do these activities make it less likely low-income students can afford to attend four year institutions? Does striving negatively impact equity in college access and choice? On the

other hand, as colleges and universities compete for students they may offer programs that increase choice and create opportunities that have never existed before for some students. Research that tracks the same demographic, financial aid, and income-related data collected by Shaw and LeChasseur (2005) and Ehrenberg, Zhang & Levin (2006) needs to be collected so that researchers can see if there are specific patterns related to equity in striving colleges.

FOR INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The diversity of the American higher education system is the envy of the world. Institutional diversity ensures more learning options for students, a greater diversity of student outcomes, and a diverse system more able to make changes needed by society (Birnbaum, 1983; Stadtman, 1980). However, when striving campuses attempt to mimic the qualities of the most prestigious research universities or liberal arts colleges, they may become less distinctive, and in fact decrease institutional diversity that promotes efficiency, productivity, and quality for students and society (Birnbaum, 1983). Brewer, Gates and Goldman (2001) found through a study of 26 diverse institutional case studies that prestige seekers do not “build prestige in the student market by being innovative or by identifying and meeting new types of student demands. Rather, they build prestige by essentially mimicking the institutions that already have prestige (Brewer, Gates, & Goldman, & p. 66).” This is of concern because there are a number of institutions that have significant traditions and distinctive qualities that might be abandoned in the pursuit of prestige. Such is the case with women's colleges, HBCU's, and many Catholic colleges that are encouraged to loosen their ties with what has made them distinctive in the past in order to compete with colleges like Amherst, Williams, Harvard, and Yale. There are however, mitigating forces against some institutions being able to completely change their identity to mimic others. One such example, are state institutions trying to mimic the land-grant university. One study of institutional isomorphism concluded that at least among public institutions, “centralized governance structures may play a significant role in promoting institutional diversity in some cases (Morphew & Huisman, 2002, p. 494).” Nonetheless, additional research is needed to see whether institutional diversity, and the options and choices the system offers students decrease when groups of institutions move to emulate more prestigious models.

Related closely to such research are individual units within striving institutions (e.g. academic departments and administrative units) and whether they feel constrained in their actions or allowed to innovate as their institution is striving.

In summary, research and literature suggest many possible consequences of striving behavior for students, faculty, teaching and service missions, equity, and innovation in higher education. Table 3.3 provides a summary of potential areas researchers might examine for consequences of striving.

Table 3.3: Areas to examine for Consequences of Striving Behavior

Consequences for	Areas to Examine
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student learning, satisfaction and engagement • Faculty-student out-of-class contact • Educationally enriching activities • Campus climate
Faculty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries, teaching load, resources for research • Satisfaction overall and with quality of students • Time devoted to disciplinary as opposed to institutional activities • Work-life climate; balance of work and family • Promotion and tenure standards and impact on faculty careers
Teaching and Service Missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional emphasis on undergraduate teaching and commitment to student success • Valuing of professional outreach and institutional citizenship; participation in institutional governance
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Race and income of student body; regional versus national student body; available resources for underrepresented students; outreach and bridge programs, developmental classes, etc.
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The degree to which units within striving colleges feel they are able to innovate. • Whether distinct institutional types lose any of their distinctiveness while mimicking prestigious models • Mitigating factors that cause like institutions not to pursue prestige

SECTION V: CRITICAL AREAS FOR NEW RESEARCH ON STRIVING

There is a variety of extant research on striving behavior that should be replicated. This section attempts to move that discussion forward by making recommendations for identifying "striving institutions." Also, it suggests new ways of framing research questions and designs on striving behavior and its consequences.

IDENTIFYING STRIVING INSTITUTIONS

There is great variety in how researchers have identified institutions as striving. In many cases where quantitative methods were employed, the institution was assumed to have been striving (or engaged in academic drift) if it had moved in USNWR rankings or Carnegie classification within a five year period. Given what is known about the complexity of striving behavior, it is worth asking whether this definition is both too broad and too narrow for several reasons. First, given the inconsistency from year to year in USNWR rankings and recent changes in the Carnegie classification system, it is possible that some institutions might find themselves with a better ranking or in a new category without having engaged in significant striving behavior to get there. Second, it is unlikely two institutions are engaging in striving behavior to the same degree if the first institution moves slightly in USNWR rankings over a 10 year period and the second makes a major shift over a 3–5 year period. Some campuses have to "strive" for many years to see changes in their rankings and the significance of the shift will relate to where they started. Third, identifying institutions in this way only allows for retrospective research, and identifies institutions as having been engaged in striving only when they have achieved their aspirations. In fact, institutions could strive and not achieve their goals; abandoning them at some point, without ever having been identified as striving.

In contrast, many qualitative studies (i.e. interviews and case studies) have identified institutions as striving from the perspectives of subgroups like faculty and/or administrators. While this is important for reasons that have been mentioned, this way of identifying institutions does not reveal the extent to which an institution is striving, and by itself is highly subjective.

Further complicating identification of striving institutions is the issue of institutional type. Consequences and trade-offs of striving will

likely differ by institutional type. For example, a second tier liberal arts college that was already selective in admissions may not lose much in diversity while they strive. Whereas a striving state university that has a history of providing upward mobility to students in a region will inevitably decrease this service if they keep enrollment the same and admit more academically talented students from out of state. Given the diversity of academic worlds (Clark, 1987), striving needs to be contextualized within the context of specific institutional groups and what striving means within that group.

Each of these observations suggests a multi-layered approach to identifying striving institutions. Institutions might first be identified using shifts in USNWR rankings, then evaluated against the characteristics of striving environments suggested in Table 3.1. A researcher might identify a small group of institutions within one institutional type, and investigate further the ones with the "highest scores" on a checklist of these characteristics. Then an audit might be taken of faculty and administrators regarding institutional identity and narrative. Several studies of striving environments agree (Brewer, Gates & Goldman, 2002; O'Meara & Bloomgarden, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2003) that it is not achieving prestige as much as the "pursuit of it" that shapes faculty work-life and institutional culture in a striving institution. An audit should be done to assess if the institutional members themselves (faculty, administrators, undergraduate and graduate students) see the institution as striving, and believe that this goal is influencing their experience, institutional direction, and behavior. This could be done through screening phone calls to the Provosts Office, and pilot interviews or focus groups with faculty and students. Interviews and other qualitative methodologies are well-suited for identifying and understanding institutional self-image, and whether an institutional narrative regarding striving is influencing major stakeholders. In large universities an exploratory survey of faculty and administrators in a range of disciplines could also serve this task of assessing whether institutional actors view their institution in the middle of a transition toward greater prestige. By taking a multi-layered approach to identifying institutions as striving, researchers might be better able to compare studies and find patterns across institutional cases.

STUDYING STRIVING IN NEW CONTEXTS

One of the biggest challenges of designing research on striving is naming specific striving behaviors and where in an institution they occur. Research that isolates specific "spaces" or contexts within a

college or university where striving behavior is occurring and measures that behavior, must be continued. Morphew and Baker's (2004) examination of expenditure patterns among striving institutions, Meredith's (2004) examination of USNWR rankings and admissions outcomes, and Morphew and Huisman's (2002) examination of program change, are all models that should be replicated in new functional areas. One area that might be isolated and explored in greater detail are internal and external communications regarding external image and internal management of institutional identity. Discourse analysis and document analysis could be conducted of both formal and informal documents that in some way represent the institution during a period of striving. During this time, who issues messages about institutional image and direction? For whom are the messages intended, and what are the explicit and implicit messages and assumptions therein? How do these messages influence how faculty, administrators, and students talk and think about their institution?

In the area of faculty work-life, researchers might take a department approach and examine faculty publications, external funding, and release-time assignments offered to faculty, and how these differ by departments with higher or lower national rankings over time. A second example might be assessing institutional expenditures on remediation programs for incoming students over a five year period and assessing whether money shifts from such programs to honors programs or academic enrichment programs for "talented students" during a period of striving.

While it is crucial to isolate specific places where striving occurs within institutions, it is also important to contextualize them in time, which means examining all of the myriad environmental social, economic, historical, and political forces operating within a specific time period to compel striving in any one institution or group of institutions. Historical research has the advantage of being able to look with hindsight at a complex array of forces, behaviors, and consequences at play in any given institution, or group of institutions as they pursued prestige. Historical research that examines striving within the context of women's colleges or faith-based institutions would help illuminate how the organizational saga of specific institutional types is connected to striving. Finnegan's (1993) examination of hiring cohorts over time in comprehensive universities provides an example of an examination of striving set within specific institutions and market conditions that might be replicated. Also, what campuses are striving for and what they are doing to get there changes somewhat each year,

as the recent changes in higher education away from early decision to early action demonstrate. Campuses have been forced to become more entrepreneurial since the September 11th attacks, and some campuses have pursued the resources that prestige promises to make up for shortfalls in endowment funds and decreases in state-funding. Thus archival research, and in-depth portraits of campuses that have transformed themselves over time may provide a more complex understanding of how forces compelling striving, and striving behaviors interact to produce various outcomes over short or long periods of time.

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CONCLUSION

While I-Want-To-Be-University (IWTBU) is fictitiously located in the Southeast, in fact it could be anywhere. This chapter outlined strategies for identifying IWTBUs to further study the pursuit of prestige within them. Forces compelling striving, striving behavior, and potential consequences of striving were examined. Areas for further research were identified.

Research on striving will complement the efforts of researchers that are trying to show that USNWR rankings are not indicators of the quality of a higher education degree. Just as campus constituents deserve to have better information to distinguish between colleges than USNWR rankings provide, they also deserve to know what is at stake when a campus adopts the goal of becoming research extensive by 2010 or joining the top quartile of liberal arts colleges by 2015. What will the campus be like from now until then? What benefits will the pursuit of prestige bring to institutions? At what cost? There is no doubt that the pursuit of prestige will change a campus. Research on striving will help campuses uncover how, and whether the process of striving is likely to make the institution better, or just different.

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