

Assessment of the Town and Gown Relationship Amongst the University of West Georgia and  
Carrollton, Georgia

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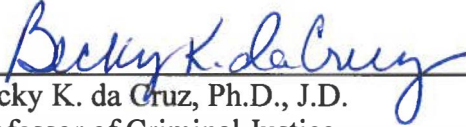
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## Abstract

This study investigates the research question of which typology of the town-gown relationship articulated by Gavazzi et al. (2014) best describes the University of West Georgia (UWG) and the City of Carrollton, Georgia. This research was shaped by two theoretical models, stakeholder theory and social capital theory. This research used a two-stage research design, with interviews of the university president and city manager in stage one followed by surveys of faculty/staff, students, university administrators, city administrators, and nonprofit leaders in stage two. Key findings are that top level administrators view the relationship more favorable than faculty, staff, and students. The university president and the city manager agree on almost all aspects of the relationship. Significant differences occurred between local government leaders, students, and faculty/staff regarding the overall relationship. Collaboration showed significant difference between local government administrators, students, and university administrators. When evaluating the relationship over time, significant differences were evident between local government administrators, students, faculty/staff, and university administrators. Students and university administrators had significant differences regarding the value of UWG's contribution. All role groups had significant differences regarding engagement activities. In addition, all role groups had statistical differences regarding acknowledgement and support, except local nonprofit leaders. An analysis of a scaled measure of the overall relationship revealed differences for local government administrators and faculty/staff. Regression analysis highlighted the importance of UWG's acknowledgment of community contributions along with years in role. The relationship between UWG and Carrollton is best described as a traditional typology. This study recommends that regional comprehensive universities should formalize points of connection with the community and recognize community contributions more formally as well.

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Significance of Town and Gown Relationships .....	1
History of Town and Gown Relationships .....	2
Modern Town and Gown Relationships.....	4
Contribution to the Field .....	5
Chapter 2: Literature Review .....	8
Carnegie Foundation Classifications .....	8
Gaps in the Literature .....	11
Theoretical Foundations .....	13
Challenges in Town-Gown Partnerships .....	18
Empirical Studies on Town-Gown Engagement .....	19
Best Practices of Town-Gown Relations.....	20
Future Directions in the Literature .....	21
Bright Spots in The Current Literature.....	22
<i>Harmonious (Higher Effort, Higher Comfort)</i> .....	23
<i>Traditional (Lower Effort, Higher Comfort)</i> .....	23
<i>Conflicted (Higher Effort, Lower Comfort)</i> .....	23
<i>Devitalized (Lower Effort, Lower Comfort)</i> .....	23
Curriculum-Based Approach.....	25
Service Learning .....	25
University Presidents and City Managers .....	26
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	29

Research Design.....	29
Target Population .....	30
Ethical Considerations.....	30
Research Question Importance.....	31
<i>Ten Commandments Interview for President and City Manager</i> .....	31
<i>Survey of Community &amp; University Groups</i> .....	32
Survey Demographics .....	35
Chapter 4: Results and Findings.....	42
First Stage Analysis: Ten Commandments Interviews .....	42
Priority of the Town-Gown Relationship .....	42
Time and Effort in Building the Relationship .....	43
Honoring Campus and Community Partners .....	44
Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Outcomes .....	44
Key Points of Connection .....	45
Role of Alumni.....	45
Faculty as the Face of the Community.....	46
Evolution of the Relationship.....	46
Constant Assessment and Future Outlook .....	47
Interview Conclusion .....	49
Second Stage Analysis: Survey Results .....	50
Evaluation of Town-Gown Relationship by Role Group.....	53
Significant Difference of Means .....	57
Regression Analysis .....	61

Nature of The Relationship .....	65
Overview of Survey Results.....	73
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	75
Priority of the Town-Gown Relationship.....	75
Time and Effort in Building the Relationship.....	76
Honoring Campus and Community Partners .....	76
Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Outcomes .....	77
Key Points of Connection .....	78
Evolution of the Relationship.....	79
Constant Assessment and Future Outlook .....	79
Synthesis of Key Findings.....	80
Traditional Typology (High Comfort, Low Effort).....	81
Carnegie Designation Implications .....	81
Research Question.....	82
Theoretical Implications.....	82
Practical Implications .....	84
Regional Comprehensive University Implications.....	85
Limitations .....	85
Recommendations .....	86
References .....	87
Appendix A: VSU Institutional Review Board Exemption Report .....	91
Appendix B: Ten Commandments Interview for President and City Manager .....	93
Appendix C: Common Questions for All Surveys.....	96

## List of Tables

Table 1: <i>Carnegie Foundation Documentation Framework</i> .....	10
Table 2: <i>The Ten Commandments of Town &amp; Gown Relationships</i> .....	28
Table 3: <i>President &amp; City Manager Comparison</i> .....	48
Table 4: <i>Mean Evaluation of Town-Gown Relationship by Role</i> .....	56
Table 5: <i>Evaluation of Scaled Relationship by Race</i> .....	61
Table 6: <i>Independent Variables Affecting Scaled Relationship</i> .....	62
Table 7: <i>Independent Variables Affecting Relationship Feeling Over Time</i> .....	63
Table 8: <i>Independent Variables Affecting Respondents Feelings of a Valuable Contribution</i> .....	64
Table 9: <i>Independent Variables Affecting Importance of Maintaining Positive Relationship</i> .....	65

## List of Figures

Figure 1: <i>Town &amp; Gown Typologies Illustrated</i> .....	24
Figure 2: <i>Current Role as Town or Gown</i> .....	36
Figure 3: <i>Gender as Male or Female</i> .....	37
Figure 4: <i>Race as White or Non-White</i> .....	38
Figure 5: <i>Respondent Age by Group</i> .....	39
Figure 6: <i>Degree from UWG</i> .....	40
Figure 7: <i>Role Group</i> .....	41
Figure 8: <i>Rating the Overall Town-Gown Relationship</i> .....	51
Figure 9: <i>Rating Town-Gown Communication</i> .....	52
Figure 10: <i>Rating Town-Gown Collaboration</i> .....	53
Figure 11: <i>Positive Aspects of Town-Gown Relationship</i> .....	66
Figure 12: <i>Positive Aspects of Town-Gown Relationship</i> .....	68
Figure 13: <i>Challenges of Town-Gown Relationship</i> .....	68
Figure 14: <i>Challenges of Town-Gown Relationship (Open Responses)</i> .....	70
Figure 15: <i>Initiatives or Programs to Enhance Town-Gown Relationship (Open Responses)</i> .....	71
Figure 16: <i>Themes from Open Responses</i> .....	73

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## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my father, Mitch Backstrom, who has done more for me than any other person in my life. He did more than he had to and taught me the right way. It is because of who he is, that I am who I am. It is because of him that I could find the inspiration, dedication, and determination to complete this.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

Town and gown relationships exist between every university and their respective cities and towns. For some the relationship is strong and prosperous, while others are strife with contention and less than fruitful. This research will break down the relationship between the University of West Georgia (UWG) and the City of Carrollton, Georgia, based off the perceptions of several constituencies: faculty/staff, students, city officials, university officials, and non-profit members.

This study investigates the following research question: Is the town and gown relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton, Georgia, considered to be harmonious, traditional, conflicted, or devitalized?

#### **Significance of Town and Gown Relationships**

Building town and gown relationships with local communities is a key element of achieving the intended mission of regional comprehensive universities. The mission of these universities, no matter their unique academic strong points, is to create access to education for those in the region. Part of their mission is to offer a wide array of academic offerings at the graduate and undergraduate level. More and more we are beginning to see terminal degree offerings being bolstered, but the mission remains to serve the surrounding area with access to higher education and not research-based development of singular fields. Professional school education (e.g., dental, medical, law, and pharmacy schools) is not part of regional

comprehensive universities. Advancing the town and gown relationship with regional partners helps the university be better able to respond to the region and its educational needs as they change. Also, high levels of satisfaction within the town and gown relationship offer easier recruitment and donor development opportunities, along with greater economic growth for all. The mission of the University of West Georgia (UWG) is to enable students, faculty, and staff to realize their full potential through academic engagement, supportive services, professional development, and a caring, student-centered community.

Although the importance of town and gown relationships has been mentioned, it is important to note why this research will be significant to the field in a meaningful way for the UWG and the City of Carrollton, Georgia. Much of the writing and research has been focused on the good, and not so much the bad and the ugly. Many regional comprehensive universities are large enough to be key players in the field of higher education, but not so large that their respective communities have embraced them as a partner. This is true of UWG by perception. Both Carrollton and UWG are big enough to exist without each other but do in fact need each other as well.

### **History of Town and Gown Relationships**

Universities do not exist on an island, although universities have been traditionally set up outside of towns since the Middle Ages, and students traveled to the institution and resided on campus to receive their tutelage (Martin et al., 2005). Originally, students wore hooded gowns to signify their respective institution. These distinguished them from ordinary citizens, as did the fact that the university was governed by its own rules and administrators. This created a dichotomy in which students were held to standards that differed from the citizens. It was in this time that the idea of how universities and their surrounding communities interact began to be

recognized and stewarded to some degree. Thus, the relationship of universities and their communities is known as a town and gown relationship (Martin et al., 2005).

Fast forward hundreds of years and we have universities of all types, sizes, and aims. Some of these universities are completely immersed within the cities they call home, becoming indistinguishable from that city itself except in name alone. Others have created campuses that have been surrounded by their cities but remain a largely intact campus. Furthermore, we have campuses that exist adjacent to cities while remaining on the border of the city or forming the transition to a less urban environment. Regardless of which of these locational setups a university falls within, the 21<sup>st</sup> century American university must interact with the community in a mutually beneficial way for the survival of both the city and the university.

In recent decades, as higher education has become a choice for high school graduates, universities across the nation have seen record enrollment. This is the case for both academic institutions, as well as trade colleges. The job market has moved towards requiring completion of some version of an educational rigor to obtain a job, be it a college diploma or trade certification. Given this influx of students on campus in recent decades, it is not surprising that the town and gown relationship has moved into the spotlight on campuses around the nation. Administration in both the university and their respective town have begun to realize just how much they need each other, for both qualitative and quantitative reasons. Leveraging the resources and assets of both the university and the surrounding communities can help both prosper. It allows economic engines to turn in the community, and that in turn creates a town in which a student wants to go to school. A student's choice of university is no longer just about the university, but the entire package of the school and the community and what it can offer.

## **Modern Town and Gown Relationships**

Previous research in the town and gown realm have largely been case studies in which one institution is studied for a particularly good or bad reason, and not necessarily researched to figure out where they stand overall. As regional comprehensive universities continue to fulfill part of their core mission to their communities, studies such as this will be of increasing importance. Part of the mission of regional comprehensive universities is to serve the needs of the surrounding communities, after all, while providing access to education for the region. Public administrators have begun to understand this relationship as well, and just how important it is. Martin, Smith, and Phillips (2005, p. 2) argue that “A change from government to governance has taken place.” This is to say that government and institutions alike have realized that social problems are far too complex to be fixed from just one side, but require the collective power of public, private, and government entities to solve them with real world impact.

In the past, universities were viewed by practitioners as pretentious silos of knowledge that had little practical value to practitioners. Similarly, universities believed practitioners move with too much haste and act on impulse, forgoing rational decisions that work. Peretomode (2020) highlights that in many universities, top management and intellectuals often isolate themselves from the practical problems of the real world. This detachment, termed Ivory Tower Syndrome, is attributed to hierarchical disconnects and intellectual isolation within university governance structures. McKenzie and King (2016) discuss the complexities new universities face in establishing their identities and relationships with local communities. Their study of the University of Ontario Institute of Technology reveals that despite efforts to integrate, perceptions of being an ivory tower persist, partly due to historical elitism in academia and the challenges of differentiating from neighboring institutions. These studies all suggest that transformational

leadership and social connectedness are essential strategies to bridge this gap and foster better community engagement.

Town and gown relationships are crucial to the success of institutions and their respective communities. Although research and program analysis exist in this field, it is a fairly new field of research in relative terms, which has deficiencies in which this study can build some foundational analysis to move the field forward. Although town and gown relationships are understood well by singular individuals or universities, it is the aim of this research to provide a clear picture of the state of the relationship between UWG and Carrollton. The complex relationship that exists in modern town and gown relationships dictates that solutions, or the health of the relationship, involve both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the issue, as does most research of substance in the social sciences. This research will determine which factors key stakeholders in Carrollton and UWG believe contribute to a prosperous town and gown relationship, and where that relationship stands with respect to published typologies.

### **Contribution to the Field**

This research moves the field forward by examining and displaying how the relationship is classified with respect to the four given typologies of town and gown relationships. This research will highlight the attributes that are significant to those in the field in a way that produces information that can help decision makers navigate town and gown decisions with better clarity and ultimate success. This can help perhaps one day lead to a deliverable that could be replicated to other regional comprehensive town and gown relationships. What attributes signal the strength of a town and gown relationship for a given institution, according to both university and town administration? Moreover, what is the state of the town and gown relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton? The goal is to be able to show within a

range where that relationship lies, and some of the specific levels that an institution can look to reach that will be indicative of a healthy relationship. Furthermore, no codified theory of the town and gown relationship exists for specific institutional types, and this study would seek to begin the foundational pieces of building such a theory, particularly for regional comprehensives in the southern United States. However, this research study and its outcomes will help regional comprehensive universities beyond UWG better understand their current town and gown relationship, as well as what specific actions, programs, or attributes are needed to be undertaken to reach the desired level of that relationship.

Many relevant theories and methodologies exist in the town and gown relationship field. This is due to the unique nature of public administration and its needs to solve problems are very intricate. This usually involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches to address the issues. This research focuses on two main theories to underpin the research. First, stakeholder theory posits that a firm should consider all stakeholders involved and not just shareholders. This is discussed in detail later. The second theoretical underpinning of this research is social capital theory, which posits that social networks and relationships are capital like any other form of capital and can be leveraged for outcomes just the same as well. Other relevant theories and methodologies are discussed later in the subsequent chapters, however, these two, along with both survey and interview methodologies are used in this research.

Now that a clear understanding of the historical and modern significance of town and gown relationships exists, the following roadmap is provided for this study. Chapter Two will review the literature to date that exists on this subject, and what it may tell us, and perhaps where some of the literature may fall short in application. Holes within the literature regarding regional comprehensive universities will solidify the need for this study.

Subsequently, Chapter Three will discuss how this research is designed, what the survey instruments entail, and how it will fill the need for information pertaining to Carrollton and UWG through the methods of specialized research. The methodology consists of a two-stage process in which the university president and city manager are interviewed in stage one, and the constituent groups are surveyed in stage two.

Chapter Four will discuss the findings of the research in terms of how each stakeholder group responded. Chapter Four will help draw a clearer picture of which results are significant and will likely hold true for the stakeholder populations at large. Chapter Five will discuss which one of the four categories of relationship types this university and community relationship falls within. Also, Chapter Five will add meaning to the research results by tying that data to past theory and conclusions on what it means for that theory and the relationship itself. The results will tie back to relevant literature. Chapter Five will conclude with a discussion of the limitation of this study and how it can inform and recommend future research and policies. Often, research answers some questions while producing others, and it is important to note that recognizing these new questions advances the field as much as answering research questions.

## **Chapter 2:**

### **Literature Review**

Town and gown relations have garnered significant attention in public administration literature, given this academic area is uniquely designed to produce graduates that will work within the relationships. There is a symbiotic relationship between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities. This literature review delves into the theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, and other relevant literature of these relationships, highlighting the role of different theories and practices in fostering an effective relationship. The knowledge exchange between universities and communities is essential for problem-solving and policy innovation. The concept of the *engaged university* emphasizes relationships where both academic institutions and local stakeholders create knowledge and solutions for pressing societal issues (Boyer, 1996).

#### **Carnegie Foundation Classifications**

The Carnegie Foundation is the advising body that designates different types of colleges and universities. Research One institutions are among the highest university classification, with state colleges and community colleges being among the lowest classification. This classification has more to do with size and scope of programs than about the caliber of program, meaning that prestigious programs exist at both large research institutions as well as smaller state colleges. Data submitted by institutions to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System is the primary driver for classification of an institution. All institutions submit the same data points to the system, to have all things considered equally. This study will be focusing on UWG and its

relationship with the City of Carrollton. UWG is classified as a regional comprehensive university along with Valdosta State University, Kennesaw State University, and Georgia Southern University. The University of North Georgia has grown in size and scope in recent years and rivals these institutions in offerings as well. However, at the present time it is not designated as a regional comprehensive university. The Carnegie Foundation also has an elective designation that universities can apply for every five years. That designation is a Community Engaged institution. It is a prestigious designation that signifies an institution is attuned to the community and engages them in a mutually beneficial way. Many colleges try for this designation, but not everyone is approved. An institution must prove to the Carnegie Foundation that both the university and the community are intertwined in active participation with one another, and that these things are tracked and assessed in a way that can be shown to be fruitful. Currently, within the state of Georgia, both Kennesaw State University and the University of West Georgia have received this designation. This signals that at least the university has intentions of a healthy relationship with Carrollton and is tracking some metrics regarding this. The application to be designated as a Community Engaged Institution explores the campus and community through the context of allowing the university to answer key questions using examples from the university. The framework for the application is broken into fourteen sections, which are highlighted in Table 1.

UWG chose a decentralized approach beginning in 2015 by which different units kept specific records and reported metrics. The university details how its infrastructure and financial strategies help them lean into community involvement and co-curricular or mutually beneficial projects. The UWG report consisted of 113 pages of metrics, program data, and explanations for

which UWG was ultimately approved for the designation by the Carnegie Foundation in 2020 (Wright et al., 2019). UWG must reapply for the designation in 2026.

**Table 1**

*Carnegie Foundation Documentation Framework*

Section	Documentation
Section 1: Applicant Contact Information	IPEDS congruent data listed for the institution.
Section 2: Campus, Community, and Community Engagement Context	How does the university define community engagement, and how does it define the practice of engagement?
Section 3: Quality of Community Engagement Relationships	The institution must provide specific examples of how academic and administrative units build community partnerships, collective goals, and programs.
Section 4: Academic Community-Campus Partnerships	A comprehensive inventory of the most recent year's collaborative partnerships and programs and the number of constituents involved from both sides.
Section 5: Institutional Identity and Culture	An institutional analysis of how the campus mission and goals align with the community goals, and how the university promotes, achieves, and awards community engagement as a priority.
Section 6: Infrastructure and Finance	An institution must describe how it strategically staffs, budgets, plans, and builds in such a way that the community is acknowledged and partnered with.
Section 7: Institutional Tracking, Monitoring, and Assessment	Institutions must describe and provide details on who and how the partnerships with the community are measured, tracked routinely, and assessed for benchmarked success.
Section 8: Outcomes and Impacts	Building from the previous section, the institution must show how the partnerships impact the stakeholders, including students.
Section 9: Faculty and Staff	How and where the faculty and staff serve in the community (e.g., boards and volunteering)
Section 10: Curricular Engagement	How the course content is dedicated to teaching community involvement and what percentage of courses teach ways to engage in the community.

Section	Documentation
Section 11: Co-Curricular Engagement	What courses go into the community with the research, service, etc.
Section 12: Pathways for Student Development and Learning Through Community Engagement	How students can increasingly get more involved over time.
Section 13: Community Engagement and Other Institutional Initiatives	Any other initiatives that show community involvement in some way.
Section 14: Reflection and Additional Information	A conclusion of sorts in which the institution reflects on all the community partnerships and involvement and how it drives their overall mission.

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, (n.d.)

### Gaps in the Literature

Higher education literature has not studied town and gown relationships in great detail, particularly at regional comprehensive universities. This was due in part to the views mentioned previously that both municipal practitioners and universities administration held of one another. As such, most of the substantive literature on the subject can be found in the last few decades. As discussed, much of the literature seeks to be broad in scope, which leaves little to help a college within a particularly unique relationship. Of the literature available, it is more focused in scope when there is a more program-based approach, such as a recycling effort or the like is studied or highlighted to show the success or failures. For instance, Sitler et al. (2006) explain how programmatic assessment of the High Street corridor that runs through Ohio State's campus and was a sore spot for municipal investment since it was university driven housing. Their assessment revealed the university did not want to invest in the area since the area looked unkept and rundown. A collaborative task force was formed, and the result was more aggressive trash collection schedules and new preferred housing contracts for high-ability students, and the result was investment from the school and the City of Columbus, Ohio. Now the area is a wonderful and sought-after area of the university town. While this assessment highlights a great limited-

term program that worked well, it does not offer lasting long-term directives to help town-gown relations. Factors such as the type of industry in a city, or the type of socioeconomic demographic that dominates the landscape can affect the relationship. Using broad strokes to outline best practices does not really develop relationships well since it does little in the way of informing actionable plans or giving specific data. Similarly, many other pieces of literature on town and gown relationships are in a case study format.

Lazzeroni and Picclauga (2015) analyzed small- and medium-sized cities with universities but focused heavily on the economic programs within the town-gown relationship for three case studies. The key finding of this study was that these universities facilitate the evolution of knowledge spaces, which contributes to these mid-size towns being known as knowledge cities in Europe. They concentrated on the European towns of Oxford, Leuven, and Pisa which does not translate as smoothly as needed to American cities for overall usefulness in this research. Again, this does not help all universities since the data is so specific it is not replicable across many institutions. The current case study literature lacks focus on regional universities in the south, and more importantly, the state of Georgia. That is where this research will become distinct and add to the field in a meaningful way. If a particular university is seeking to gain insight from one of these studies, then one must hope that the university is of similar enough characteristics that the suggestions are relatable. This research will deliver that for our relationship of focus between the University of West Georgia, and Carrollton, Georgia.

Koekkoek et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive literature review as well to look at the complexities of town-gown engagement. They identified diverse definitions and practices, reflecting the layered nature of these partnerships. The study shows four main gaps in the literature: societal perceptions of universities, the need for a more global perspective, lack of

community voice, and lack of thorough literature on the impact of community engagement. They suggest addressing these gaps through a more critical conceptual discussion supported by empirical research, broadening the theoretical lens, and using research approaches, such as theories of change. Their study highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of engagement activities, which they cite include things like service-learning programs and collaborative research projects

### **Theoretical Foundations**

Town-gown relationships are complex and multifaceted partnerships that involve various stakeholders, including universities, local communities, governmental organizations, and businesses. Applying stakeholder theory to these relationships provides a framework for understanding and managing the diverse interests and influences of each party involved. Stakeholder theory, introduced by R. Edward Freeman in 1984, states that organizations should consider the interests of all parties affected by their actions, not just shareholders. All sides of the relationship have a “share” in that all stakeholders benefit from a healthy and productive relationship. In the context of town-gown relationships, this theory emphasizes the importance of recognizing and addressing the needs and expectations of all stakeholders in both the university and community to keep the relationship sustainable. de Groot et al. (2025) conducted a review of seventeen multi stakeholder networks in higher education, noting that using stakeholder approach two main modes emerged: centralized (or university centered) mode, characterized by university dominance, and the polycentric (or collaborative) mode, emphasizing cooperative relationships. The authors note these modes provide a framework for interpreting the collaborative decision-making process that exist between universities and communities. Using stakeholder theory allows universities and communities to create value beyond traditional

educational or municipal outcomes. Creating relationships based on knowledge and information sharing, mutual trust, and involvement in decision-making processes, universities and communities can align their strategic objectives. Aligning objectives enhances the impact of universities, which contributes to community well-being as well. This theory provides a more holistic view regarding universities and communities than other theories. It more actually reflects the multitude of layers and pieces that exist in a town-gown relationship and will be one of the main lenses this research will be viewed with.

Public administration theory provides a lens through which town-gown relationships can be understood as well. One pertinent framework is collaborative governance, which involves multiple stakeholders, including public municipal agencies, non-profits, university members, students, and community members, working collectively to achieve common goals. Ansell and Gash (2008) define collaborative governance as a governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-oriented, and deliberative. This approach is instrumental in town-gown relationships, as it emphasizes shared decision-making and mutual accountability.

Another relevant concept is civic engagement, which refers to the active participation of individuals in the political and community life of their society. In the context of higher education, civic engagement refers to the responsibility of universities to contribute to the public good by fostering a sense of civic duty among students and engaging in community development initiatives. The U.S. Department of Education emphasizes the role of higher education in promoting civic learning and democratic engagement, advocating for institutions to serve as catalysts for societal betterment.

Resource dependence theory suggests that organizations are interdependent and must engage with external partners to acquire essential resources. In the context of town-gown relationships, universities and communities collaborate to access resources such as funding, expertise, and infrastructure. This mutual dependence creates strategic alliances to mitigate uncertainties and achieve shared objectives. Galaskiewicz (1985) emphasized that organizations often form interorganizational relationships to manage resource dependencies and reduce environmental uncertainties. This creates a stronger network of resources for both to rely on. While this is an important concept within the relationship, this theory is not large enough in scope to provide a lens from which we can view the entire relationship.

Institutional theory examines how organizations conform to societal norms, values, and expectations to gain legitimacy. Universities engage with communities to enhance their legitimacy and align with societal expectations. Such engagements can lead to the adoption of community-centric practices and the establishment of policies that prioritize public service and social responsibility. Koekkoek et al. (2021) solidified this idea that town-gown engagement is often driven by the need for institutions to align with societal norms and enhance their legitimacy, noting that universities enact market logic to attract resources. Legitimacy helps institutions build a footing from which they can both serve the regional development and be served by the region as well. Again, this theory concentrates only on a small aspect of the overall relationship and does not provide a holistic concept to evaluate the entirety of the relationships that exist between universities and their communities.

Applying organizational learning theory to these relationships offers a framework to understand how universities and communities can co-evolve, share knowledge, and enhance their collective capacities. By creating continuous learning, adaptability, and reciprocating knowledge

exchange, these relationships can evolve into systems that benefit both the institution and the broader community. Organizational learning theory says that institutions evolve by acquiring, interpreting, and responding to information, thereby improving their practices and outcomes. In the context of town-gown relationships, this theory emphasizes the importance of a reciprocal knowledge exchange, where both entities learn from each other to achieve common outcomes. Curwood et al. (2011) highlight that effective partnerships require universities to assess their readiness for collaboration, ensuring that institutional structures support engagement. This aligns with the organizational learning perspective, by advocating for internal evaluations to help facilitate external collaborations. Tripathi et al. (2010) suggest a model that identifies functional areas for collaboration, emphasizing the need for universities to adapt their functions to community needs. This approach fosters a learning environment where both parties continuously adapt and grow. Martin et al. (2005) discuss seven areas of paradox that the authors believe result in transformative partnerships, such as balancing academic goals with community needs and managing power dynamics. Recognizing and addressing these paradoxes through the lens of organizational learning can lead to better relationships by recognizing the barriers and addressing them. This theory closely follows stakeholder theory, but emphasizes the co-learning of each partner, and while learning to grow together is important, it is equally important that both the university and community grow within their own identity as well.

Network theory focuses on the relationships and interactions between organizations within a network. In town-gown relationships, both universities and community organizations are pieces within a larger network, and their interactions can influence the flow of information, resources, and support. Strong network ties can facilitate effective collaboration, while weak or absent ties may hinder partnership success. Wasserman and Galaskiewicz (1994) discussed the

importance of network structures in understanding interorganizational relationships and the flow of resources by noting that networks in a social context are formed organically around a common shared need or resource.

Social capital theory offers a valuable framework for analyzing the relationships between universities and their surrounding communities. This theory emphasizes the significance of social networks, trust, and reciprocity in facilitating collective action and resource sharing. By applying social capital theory to town-gown relationships, research can gain insights into how these relationships foster mutual benefits and contribute to community development. The concept of social capital has been explored by sociologists such as Pierre Bourdieu and James Coleman. Bourdieu (1986) described social capital as the aggregate of actual or potential resources linked to possession of a durable network of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. Coleman (1988) further explored this by highlighting the role of social capital in the creation of human capital, emphasizing how social structures facilitate certain actions of individuals within the structure. These foundational theories underscore the importance of social networks and relationships in achieving individual and collective goals. Collaborative partnerships between universities and local organizations can enhance resource sharing, promote civic engagement, and address community and university issues. Applying social capital theory to town-gown relationships provides a comprehensive understanding of how social networks and trust can drive action for mutual benefits. By fostering strong, reciprocal partnerships, universities and communities can collaboratively address challenges and promote sustainable development. This theory adequately encompasses the intricacies of a regional comprehensive university and its community, and will be a lens for which to view this research.

## **Challenges in Town-Gown Partnerships**

Universities and communities are inextricably linked through economic, social, and intellectual exchanges that shape local and regional development. Higher education institutions are not isolated entities as mentioned; they serve as economic anchors, knowledge hubs, and civic partners that contribute to societal progress. This section develops the idea that towns and schools are so inextricably bound together in the modern world that neither the town nor the university could sever the ties if they desired, and still function as a healthy entity

Power imbalances can arise, with universities potentially dominating the agenda-setting process, unknowingly marginalizing community concerns or priorities. Additionally, differing priorities and timelines between academic institutions and community organizations can impede the relationship. Schafer (2019) highlights the importance of public engagement strategies to overcome these challenges, as well as advocating for evidence-based approaches to foster meaningful participation. The author notes outcomes are not received well when collaborative decision making is absent.

Through a series of case studies Kemp (2013) shows how through even non-directive action, that schools affect towns, and vice versa. The author uses cases of cities and schools to show each is linked through revenue, risk associated behaviors, and social responsibilities. For instance, the author accentuates the fact that most universities enjoy preferential tax treatment as nonprofit organization of the state educational system; however, this creates a crippling financial situation because some cities are home to a university that comprises much of their physical and economically available space. Kemp (2013) reports that PILOT's (payment in lieu of taxes) have been paid in some cases to ease the tensions between town and gown. Harvard University and many universities located in the greater Boston metro area are a few examples cited.

Miller (1963) looks at the power struggle that can exist between universities and their town, and how this can hurt both sides. His focus is on the land development portion of expanding universities into the urban areas. His information is a bit dated as this is not the main concern for universities and towns these days since technologies have allowed for more maximization of resource use instead of brick-and-mortar buildings. However, his writings on the subject are among the few articles that mention the power dynamic outside of an economic impact.

### **Empirical Studies on Town-Gown Engagement**

Empirical research has explored various dimensions of university-community engagement. Roger L. Kemp (2013) published *Town and Gown Relations: A Best Practices Handbook* in which he outlines factors that are important in a town and gown relationship. However, he offers little in the way of reasoning as to why he has chosen these factors. The author takes over 60 case studies that were published as articles, compiles them into one book, and offers these to show best practices. While 60 case studies may seem definitive enough, he incorporates K-12 school systems, municipal nonprofits organizations, and universities of all sizes. This creates a wider, and more general knowledge set to draw from. The book is divided into three sections: cities and schools, best practices, and the future.

Vivan Cueto (2019) explores town and gown relationships through surveys in much the same way this study will do. She studied 122 universities and municipalities in a cross-sectional analysis. Through matching 62 government-university pairs she developed a survey that was deployed. These were followed up by semi-structured interviews when possible. Her study quantitatively revealed that trust and leadership were positively correlated with collaboration. Expectedly, her quantitative research revealed shared vision amongst leaders of the university

and community to be the most positively associated factor with collaboration. Cueto's study is helpful when considering the survey instrument in this research endeavor. The author sent out electronic surveys to the participants. The survey was designed into sections, which were each concerned with a different aim. The first section asks each constituency to rate if they agree with the Carnegie definition of an engaged institution from their perspective, university or community member. The next section asks each to rate their agreement with different aspects of the local government's capacity to partner with the university. The next section of questions concentrates on perception of the social capital of the government. A series of questions on trust and decision-making capabilities of the government shapes the next section. The survey sections are repeated, but in reverse to ask the same questions of the university. The survey is wrapped up with demographic questions. Cueto's study is important because it models the same instruments and objectives that this study will, but on a larger scale. This study will focus on one town government and one university to establish where the relationship is currently.

### **Best Practices of Town-Gown Relations**

Effective town and gown engagement is a topic for many current literature pieces that cite an array of best practices. One is establishing mutual trust and respect is crucial. This involves recognizing the knowledge and expertise that both university and community members bring to the table. Second, clear communication channels must be established to ensure transparency and facilitate the exchange of ideas. Also, co-creation of goals and objectives is a commonly mentioned practice which ensures that the relationship addresses the needs and operations of all stakeholders involved.

Additionally, continuous evaluation and reflection are essential practices mentioned to assess the effectiveness of engagement initiatives and to inform future practices. This iterative

process allows for the adaptation of strategies to better serve the evolving needs of the community and the university. Escrigas et al. (2014) emphasize the importance of monitoring and evaluating community engagement initiatives to ensure their sustainability and impact. The authors make the case that any engagement without assessment is only effective in the short term.

Kemp (2013) breaks down best practices by examining 40 towns with varying types of schools within them, mostly within the United States. Of the 40 some examples used to show best practices, none fall within Georgia and only the University of Florida and University of South Florida are presented from Florida for case study analysis. Of the 40 case studies presented none of them are representative of the targeted research of public regional comprehensive universities in Georgia. Each example given in this section of the book is written by a separate author or authors, thus carrying widely different ideas and benchmarks to consider. However, using these cities and schools who seem to showcase attributes or actions that are proven to work in other areas, one can begin to see some broad level analysis arise that perhaps can be applicable to cities and universities no matter their sizes, or unique arrangements. Such practices include intentional conversations between the two. Some case studies in this section display this in the form of joint task forces, while others take this on in the form of intentional offices of community engagement. While some high-level best practices are significant, it seems that case studies on certain colleges and specific programs not relatable to the UWG and Carrollton do not add to the field in a meaningful way regarding regional comprehensive universities in Georgia.

### **Future Directions in the Literature**

Kemp (2013) presents several articles by other authors in this section that focus upon urban planning and how towns must plan alongside the schools for growth and expansion. Again,

he is simply collecting previously published case study articles to show what he believes represents where the field is headed. Some takeaways from this portion of the book include the need to embrace technology that eases the process of collecting feedback and connecting the university and community. Kemp furthers his assertions that frequency of interaction between administrators from both sides is a key factor in the health of the town and gown relationship.

While a compilation of case studies is more informative than single case studies, this piece of literature acts more as a pass through for case studies and their respective articles and does not really aggregate any data points to develop the best practices. Again, the focus seems to be programmatic as well, rather than the overall relationships between the schools and their towns. It is more anecdotal in its summation of the best practices but does stay broad in nature in such a way that some can try the conclusions mentioned, which can be used no matter the size of the institution or community.

### **Bright Spots in The Current Literature**

Stephen Gavazzi is another well-known, if not the best-known, author on the subject of town and gown relations. He developed an assessment tool that has been gaining ground in recent years. It is known as the Optimal College Town Assessment (OCTA). Although it is not comprehensive, as that is hardly attainable in this day and age, it does well to create baseline info and get towns and universities headed towards the metric calibration that the field hopes to be at one day through more research. Its three-step process is similar to what this study intends to do. The current pricing structure of \$5,000 US dollars for one campus usage makes this option cost prohibitive to many regional comprehensive universities. Given its proprietary nature, it is not known how many universities or communities have used the tool, however, the overall basic structure is available and discussed here.

Gavazzi et al. (2014) break town and gown relationships into 4 basic categories. The four-part typology is explained below, and the typology is shown in Figure 1.

***Harmonious (Higher Effort, Higher Comfort)***

The harmonious type is the most desirable form of town-gown relationship. Partners are dynamically involved in a significant number of activities that are of shared benefit to both the campus and community, resulting in a sense of connectedness and joint purpose. High levels of comfort are maintained and enhanced by mutual exchanges of information and exertion. This is considered optimal by the authors (Gavazzi et al., 2014).

***Traditional (Lower Effort, Higher Comfort)***

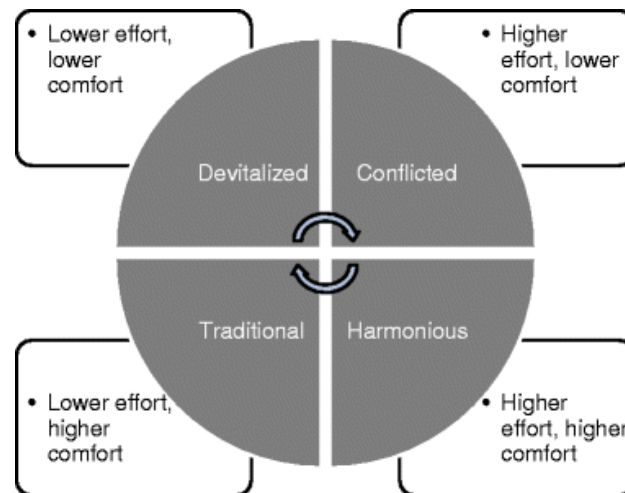
The traditional type is thought to be the default state of affairs for most campuses and communities, which generates modest amounts of relationship satisfaction. This town-gown category retains its desirable status because it takes little work to create a comfortable if sterile relationship. This is considered to be adequate by the authors (Gavazzi et al., 2014).

***Conflicted (Higher Effort, Lower Comfort)***

The conflicted type generates overall reduced satisfaction levels, but partners are still engaged with one another in an attempt to work out relationship issues. The main difficulty for this town-gown relationship type involves the persistent nature of quarrels among the partners. This is considered a troubled relationship by the OCTA (Gavazzi et al., 2014).

***Devitalized (Lower Effort, Lower Comfort)***

The devitalized type represents relationships with the least amount of overall satisfaction between campus and community members. The hallmark here is disappointment and loss, stemming from the fact that a more active and comfortable association had existed at some previous point. This is considered a troubled relationship by the authors (Gavazzi et al., 2014).

**Figure 1***Town & Gown Typologies Illustrated*

Source: Gavazzi et al., 2014

Cooper et al. (2014) discuss the partnership in a way that describes the level of the intertwined pieces in today's universities and their town to be at such a level that one cannot exist without the other. University-community partnerships have been recognized as a valuable contribution to both the academic community and our cities and towns. In the words of Henry Cisneros, former U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Design secretary, "The long-term futures of both the city and the university in this country are so intertwined that one cannot—or perhaps will not—survive without the other" (Cisneros, 1995). Increasingly, colleges and universities are bringing their time, energy, and resources to bear on local problems. They are using their other physical, financial, and intellectual capital to facilitate economic development, provide social services, technical assistance and create opportunities for applied research (Cooper et al., 2014).

## **Curriculum-Based Approach**

The institutional culture of universities, which often prioritizes academic outputs over community impact, can hinder engagement efforts. To address this, there is a growing call for embedding community engagement within the curriculum, thereby aligning academic objectives with community needs. This approach necessitates a paradigm shift in how universities perceive their role within society, moving from isolated ivory towers that have been mentioned, to active community partners.

Steven Accardi (2017) takes a novel approach in that he argues curriculum can be built in such a way that it can mend community and town and gown divides that exist. He explains that by using first-year courses regional comprehensive universities can teach in such a way that students create a new normal for the institution by which they engage the community in a mutually beneficial way. UWG does have first-year courses known as UWG 1101 courses, but at current time town and gown engagement is not a stated learning outcome for these courses.

## **Service Learning**

Service learning is similar to a curriculum-based approach and has been identified as a mechanism for fostering town-gown relations. Bryer (2011) documents a service-learning project within a graduate-level public administration course, emphasizing the role of such initiatives in promoting collaborative governance. The project involved students working directly with community partners in Orange County Florida, thereby enhancing their practical skills while addressing community needs of the town's Children's Cabinet. This experiential learning approach not only benefits students but also strengthens community capacity.

Bringle and Hatcher (2002) note that high-quality service learning in the classroom help demonstrate reciprocity since the service activity is designed to meet both the goals of the

institution and achieve a need of the community. Also, the authors explain that the community agencies are important in that, through this framework, the agencies become co-educators helping students to learn that education and collaboration can occur beyond the classroom.

Kenny et al. (2001) take a new direction in their book, which is one more aligned with the view of this research project. They explore the role of service learning and the impact it has on town and gown relationships. Providing opportunities for student civic engagement through outreach activities, higher education institutions may intercreatively create a cadre of educational and engaged citizens graduating from community–collaborative, or engaged universities (Kenny et al., 2001). Also, Kenny et al. mention that increased political pressure and university stakeholders have created a pressure for higher education to serve the communities in proximity to maximize community involvement. This includes boards of trustees, alumni, and politicians.

### **University Presidents and City Managers**

The relationship between universities and their surrounding communities is significantly influenced by the collaborative efforts of university presidents and city managers. These leaders play pivotal roles in fostering partnerships that benefit both the academic institution and the local community.

Curry (2016) examines the relationship between Simon Frasier University and its two host cities. The author explains the rapport between university presidents and city mayors (or managers) plays a pivotal role in fostering trust and collaboration. Strong personal connections at the leadership level can facilitate smoother negotiations and joint initiatives. The author notes that informal interactions and communications between university and city representatives are crucial. These less formal engagements help build mutual understanding and trust, which are essential for effective collaboration. However, the author notes the informal interactions are

dependent on an everchanging list of personnel, and implementing structured management and communication processes from the offices of the university and city can aid in aligning the strategic objectives of both the university and the city. Such processes ensure that collaborations are organized, transparent, and mutually beneficial.

Mittal and Bansal (2024) studied community engagement through the lens of developing sustainable practices and note that sustainable goals must transcend the people in roles and be codified through a pathway of concrete relationships between the university and community defined positions.

Research by these authors highlights the need for both informal and formal avenues of collaboration between university presidents and municipal staff for more harmonious relationships. This idea is a major framework for this research project.

Stephen Gavazzi (2018) looks at the specific relationship that university presidents and city managers have and how that plays into a town and gown relationship. The author likens the relationship and its stewarding to being in a marriage and goes so far as to use marriage theory to explain this. The author interviews presidents and city managers about the relationship they inherited upon taking the position, and how it has changed and how they view it within the context of a marriage of sorts. Using the metaphor of marriage, a conceptual and methodological framework is offered for understanding and assessing the quality of the town and gown interaction. The presentation of a town and gown relationship model based on the twin dimensions of effort and comfort levels sets the stage for the presentation of results from interviews conducted with university presidents and city managers that focused specific attention on their perceptions of town and gown relationship types. More specifically, these leaders were asked to discuss the type of relationship they inherited at the start of their tenure, as well as how

the town/gown interactions in which they were immersed had evolved over time. Finally, themes are presented as a set of Town-Gown Ten Commandments, see Table 2, that highlight the critical role both campus and community leaders play in the development and maintenance of harmonious town/gown relationships (Gavazzi et al., 2014, pp. 209-240).

**Table 2**

*The Ten Commandments of Town & Gown Relationships*

Number	Commandment text
1	Thou shall give high-priority to efforts that build more harmonious relationships between campus and community members.
2	Thou shall not miscalculate the time involved in developing and maintaining harmonious campus-community relationships.
3	Thou shall honor your campus and community partners.
4	Thou shall seek win-win outcomes wherever and whenever possible in campus-community interactions.
5	Thou shall remember that students are the most important point of connection between campus and community.
6	Thou shall know the power of your alumni, especially those living in communities immediately surrounding the campus.
7	Thou shall respect the notion that faculty members represent the face of both campus and community.
8	Thou shall appreciate the history of the campus-community relationship you inherited.
9	Thou shall continuously assess the present state of the relationship between campus and community representatives.
10	Thou shall leave the campus-community relationship in better shape than you found it.

Source: Gavazzi et al., 2014, pp. 209-240

## **Chapter 3:**

### **Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology employed in the study to investigate the town-gown relationships using a two-stage interview and survey approach. It outlines the research design, the target population, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods. By providing a detailed account of the methodology, this chapter aims to ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings.

#### **Research Design**

The research design selected for this study is a cross-sectional survey. A cross-sectional design enables the collection of data from a diverse range of respondents at a single point in time, allowing for an efficient and cost-effective approach to gather information on town-gown relationships. This design facilitates the examination of various dimensions and perspectives of the relationship between Carrollton and UWG. The reason for using primary data gathered from stakeholders is so that we can ascertain information from those who work most often within the boundaries of the relationship. The city manager and the university president are interviewed regarding the Ten Commandments of Town-Gown Relationships in stage one and the identified stakeholders will be surveyed in stage two to gather what each believes are factors that contribute to the health of the town-gown relationship and how they feel about it currently.

## **Target Population**

The target population of this study consists of individuals who have a stake in the relationship between the UWG and Carrollton. These individuals included municipal officials, university students, faculty members, administrative staff, and nonprofit staff. The study aims to capture a broad representation of stakeholders who play a role in the town-gown relationship. Specific to the institution, the recipients of the surveys will be the university administrators: vice presidents, assistant vice presidents, and chief officers, as well as faculty of the university and students of UWG. Specific to the community side, local leaders to include the mayor, city council members, and local chamber of commerce constituents were surveyed. The survey was also sent to the West Georgia Non-Profit Network and asked all staff of nonprofits to respond. The respondent pool for the data set was 204 respondents from distinct stakeholder groups to gather meaningful amounts of data. The response total from the university and the town constituencies rendered enough data to suffice meaningful outcomes.

## **Ethical Considerations**

The research adheres to ethical guidelines, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and privacy. The research methodology and the surveys were reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix A) before being allowed to proceed. Informed consent was obtained from all survey respondents, emphasizing their voluntary participation and the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. The data collected was securely stored and accessed only by the researcher, with all personal identifiers removed to maintain confidentiality, aside from the interviewed president and city manager.

## **Research Question Importance**

### ***Ten Commandments Interview for President and City Manager***

The provided set of questions aims to delve into various aspects of the relationship between the City of Carrollton and UWG, while also assessing respondents' levels of comfort and effort in their roles within this dynamic. This level of questioning helped deliver an answer to the research question of which typology UWG and the City of Carrollton fall within. The prediction is that UWG and Carrollton will be classified as a traditional typology relationship. These questions are designed and administered with respect to the Ten Commandments of Town-Gown Relationships (Gavazzi, 2018) and were administered to the university president and Carrollton city manager on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024 and July 17, 2024 respectively (see Appendix B for the full list of interview questions).

Priority of relationship building is the first question, with an exploration of respondents' perceived importance of establishing harmonious relationships. Different priority levels indicate varying degrees of comfort and willingness to invest effort: high priority suggests strong commitment, moderate priority implies a moderate level of comfort and effort, while low priority hints at potential discomfort or reluctance to invest significant effort.

Time calculation for relationship development is the second question and seeks to evaluate respondents' estimations of the time required for relationship building. A correctly calculated response suggests realistic expectations, aligned comfort, and effort, while a miscalculated response indicates potential discomfort or underestimation, requiring additional effort to meet expectations.

Recognition of campus and community is the third question and assesses acknowledgment of partners, implying a level of comfort and effort in relationship maintenance.

“Yes” indicates a positive approach, while “no” suggests potential discomfort or lack of effort, and “unsure” may signal a need for clarity, potentially indicating a lack of effort.

View on outcomes of interactions, the fourth question, explores respondents’ approaches to outcomes, with “seeking win-win outcomes” suggesting collaboration, “seeking a winning outcome for one side” possibly indicating a focus on individual interests, and “unsure” implying uncertainty, discomfort, or lack of clear effort.

Importance of points of connection, the fifth question, identifies perspectives on key elements in the relationship, reflecting varying levels of comfort and effort. Responses may differ based on stakeholders’ involvement. Likewise, the role of alumni in interactions is the sixth question and gauges the perceived importance of alumni, with responses indicating levels of comfort, recognition, and effort required. The seventh question, faculty as representatives, assesses comfort with faculty roles, with “yes” indicating recognition and effort, and “no” suggesting discomfort or disagreement.

Appreciation of relationship history is the eighth question and evaluates understanding and valuing historical context, with responses indicating comfort and effort or potential discomfort and lack of effort. Continuous assessment of relationship, the ninth question, examines ongoing evaluation, reflecting commitment to improvement or potential discomfort and lack of sustained effort. Expectation for the state of the future relationship state is the final questions and explores belief in positively influencing the relationship’s future, indicating comfort and effort or discomfort and perceived inability.

### ***Survey of Community & University Groups***

The questions provided were designed to gather insights into respondents’ roles within Carrollton and the UWG, while also evaluating their perceptions of the relationship between the

two entities. The survey was available beginning August 27<sup>th</sup>, 2024 through October 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Here's how each question addresses levels of comfort and effort. These questions appear on all surveys and can be referenced within Appendix C.

Role description is the first question and aims to identify the respondent's current role within Carrollton and UWG. Different roles imply varying levels of involvement and comfort. This question is being asked so that insights can be gained from respondents surrounding how their role may affect their outlook on the relationship.

Overall relationship, the second question, assesses the respondent's perception of the overall relationship between the City of Carrollton and UWG. Ratings ranging from excellent to good may indicate a higher comfort level and satisfaction, reflecting positive efforts in relationship-building. A rating of fair may suggest a moderate level of comfort and effort, while a poor rating may indicate discomfort or dissatisfaction, signaling a need for increased effort in relationship management.

The third question, communication rating, evaluates the respondent's perception of communication between Carrollton and UWG. Excellent and good ratings suggest effective communication, reflecting a higher comfort level and effort. A fair rating may indicate a moderate level of comfort and effort, while a poor rating could suggest discomfort or dissatisfaction, highlighting potential communication challenges that may require increased effort.

The fourth question, collaboration rating, gauges the respondent's perception of collaboration between Carrollton and UWG. Excellent and good ratings imply positive collaboration, indicating a higher comfort level and effort in working together. A fair rating may

suggest a moderate level of comfort and effort, while a poor rating suggests potential discomfort or dissatisfaction, signaling challenges in collaboration that may require increased effort.

The fifth question explores challenges and issues between Carrollton and UWG. Selection of challenges may indicate areas of discomfort or concern, shedding light on issues that require concerted effort to address. The “other (please specify)” option allows respondents to express specific concerns not covered, offering insights into additional challenges.

The sixth question, positive aspects of the relationship, identifies positive aspects of the relationship between Carrollton and UWG. Selection of positive aspects may indicate areas of comfort and satisfaction, reflecting positive efforts and collaboration. The “other (please specify)” option allows respondents to highlight specific positive aspects not covered, offering insights into additional strengths in the relationship.

Question seven gauges respondents’ views on how the relationship has evolved over time. It reflects their comfort level with current interactions and historical perspectives on collaboration efforts.

The eighth question, perceived contribution, assesses the perceived impact of the university’s contributions to the local community, indicating the level of effort recognized by respondents and their comfort with the university's role in supporting community development.

Question nine, duration of affiliation, assesses the length of time individuals have been associated with either the university or the city, indicating their familiarity and potential integration within the community.

The tenth question, opportunities for community engagement within courses, evaluates whether university courses provide avenues for students to participate in community-based

research, service learning, or other projects, reflecting the institution's commitment to fostering community involvement.

Frequency of engagement in community activities, the eleventh question allows respondents to indicate how often they participate in community-related activities or projects, reflecting their personal efforts towards community engagement.

Question twelve, recognition and support of contributions, assesses whether the university acknowledges and supports the contributions of students, faculty, and staff to the local community, reflecting the institution's appreciation of community involvement.

The thirteenth question, perceived importance of positive relationship, allows respondents to indicate their perception of the importance of maintaining a positive relationship between the university and the Carrollton community, reflecting their understanding of the significance of town and gown collaboration for both parties.

Question fourteen will gauge the respondents' academic affiliation with the university. Understanding whether individuals have completed, are pursuing, or have no degree from the university provides insights into their connection to the institution.

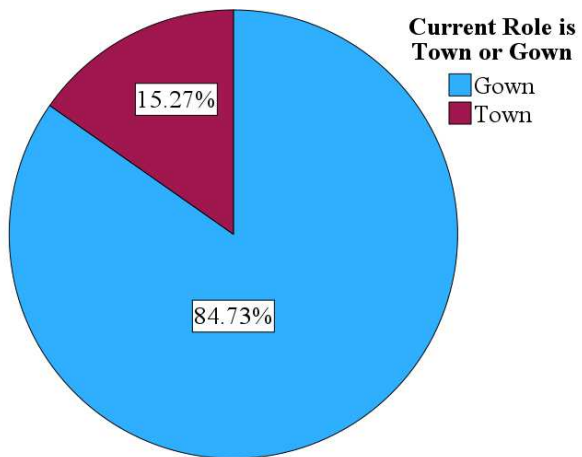
Questions fifteen and sixteen are open ended questions that allow the respondent to give a personal answer as to items they believe can enhance the relationship between UWG and Carrollton, as well as any other comments they wish to provide on the relationship. These two open-ended questions are followed by some demographic questions to round out the survey.

### **Survey Demographics**

Most survey respondents (84.7%) were affiliated with the university(gown) in some way, with community(town) respondents making up the much smaller portion (15.3%) as noted in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**

*Current Role as Town or Gown*



Females overwhelming responded to the survey, with almost two-thirds female and one third male respondents as highlighted in Figure 3. This breakdown reflects the demographics of UWG, but is not true of the City of Carrollton.

**Figure 3**

*Gender as Male or Female*

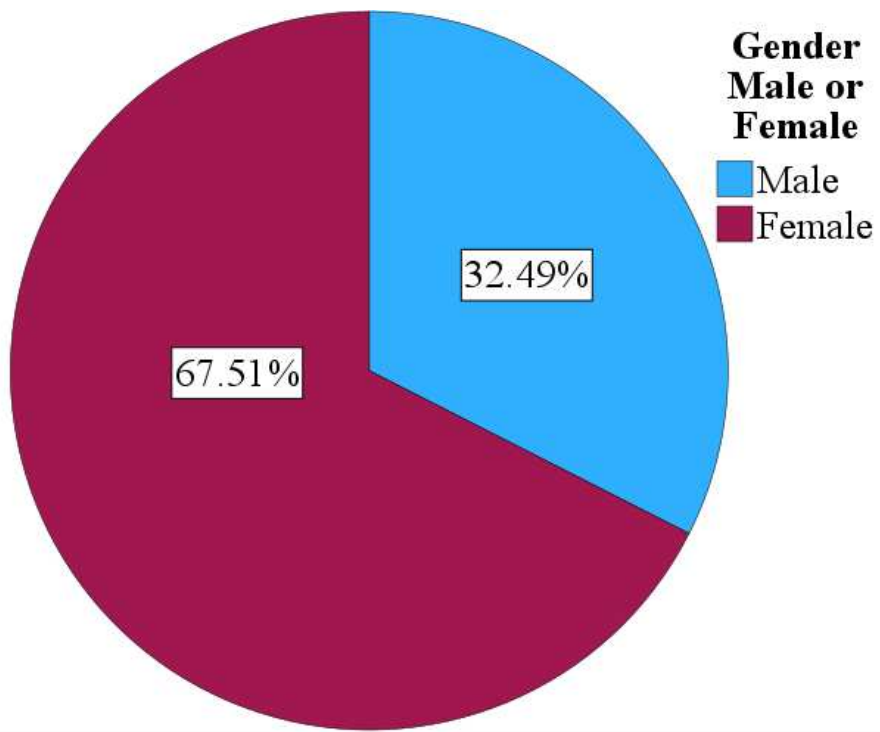
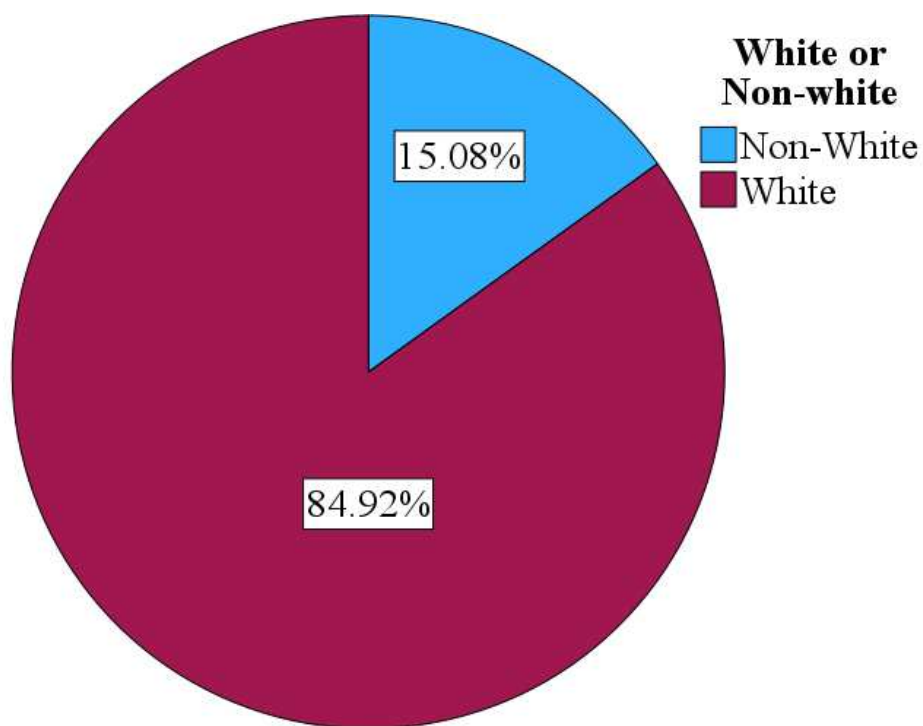


Figure 4 reveals that respondents were almost 85% white, but many other races were represented as well (9.6% Black or African American, 2.5% Hispanic or Latino, 0.5% Asian, and 2.5% Other). This is not reflective of the university or the city.

**Figure 4**

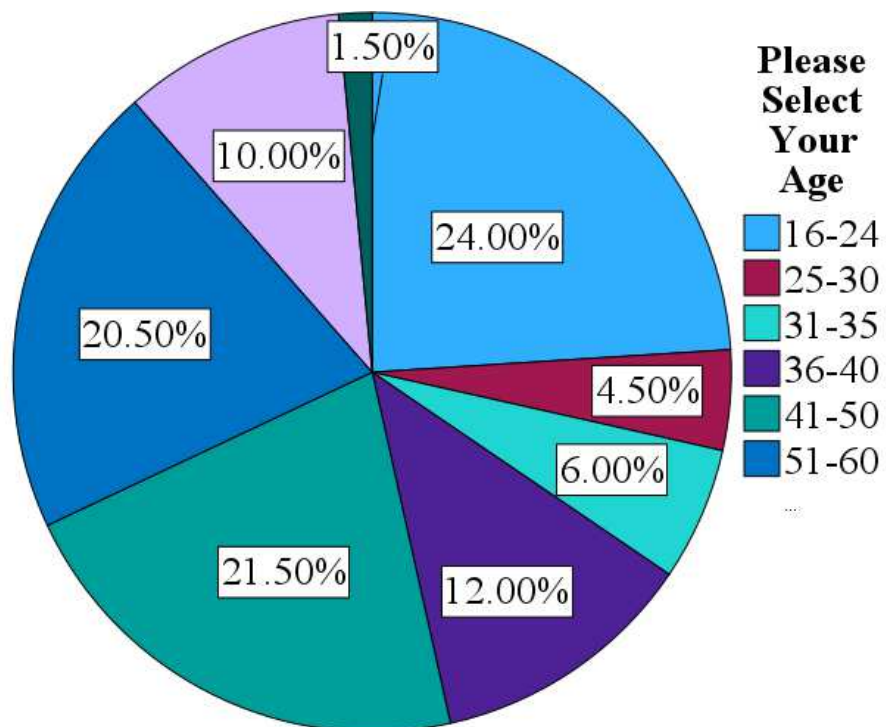
*Race as White or Non-White*



Respondents age was more evenly distributed, with ages 16-24 being the largest respondent group and 80+ years of age being the smallest group as revealed in Figure 5.

**Figure 5**

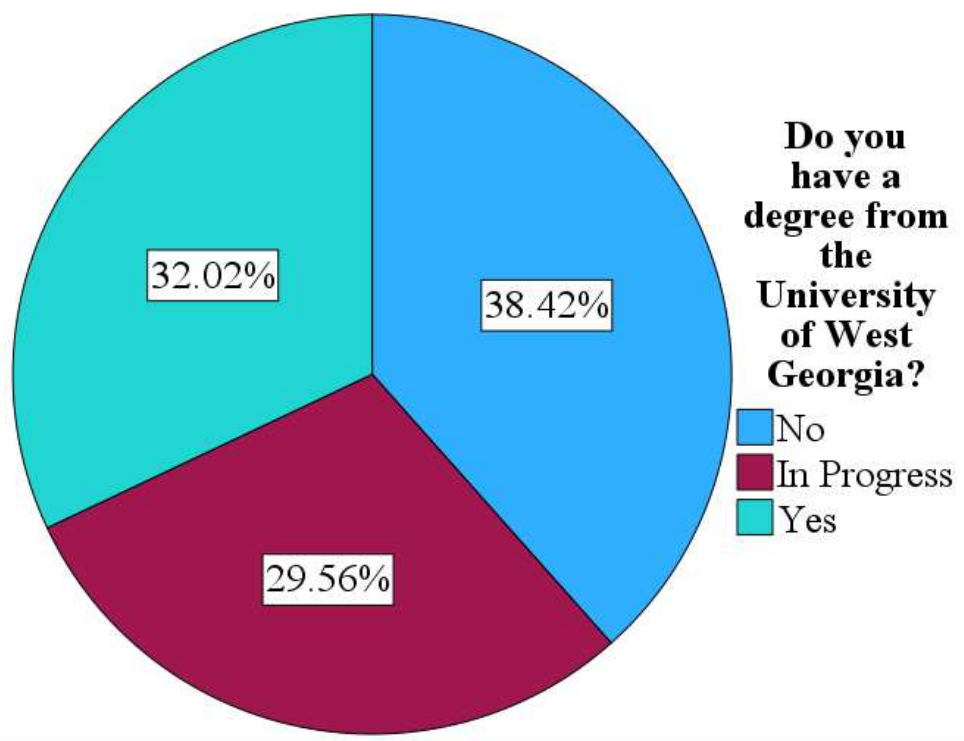
*Respondent Age by Group*



Survey respondents mostly had a degree from UWG or were in progress to obtaining a degree (70.4% combined) as reported in Figure 6

**Figure 6**

*Degree from UWG*



**Figure 7**

*Role Group*

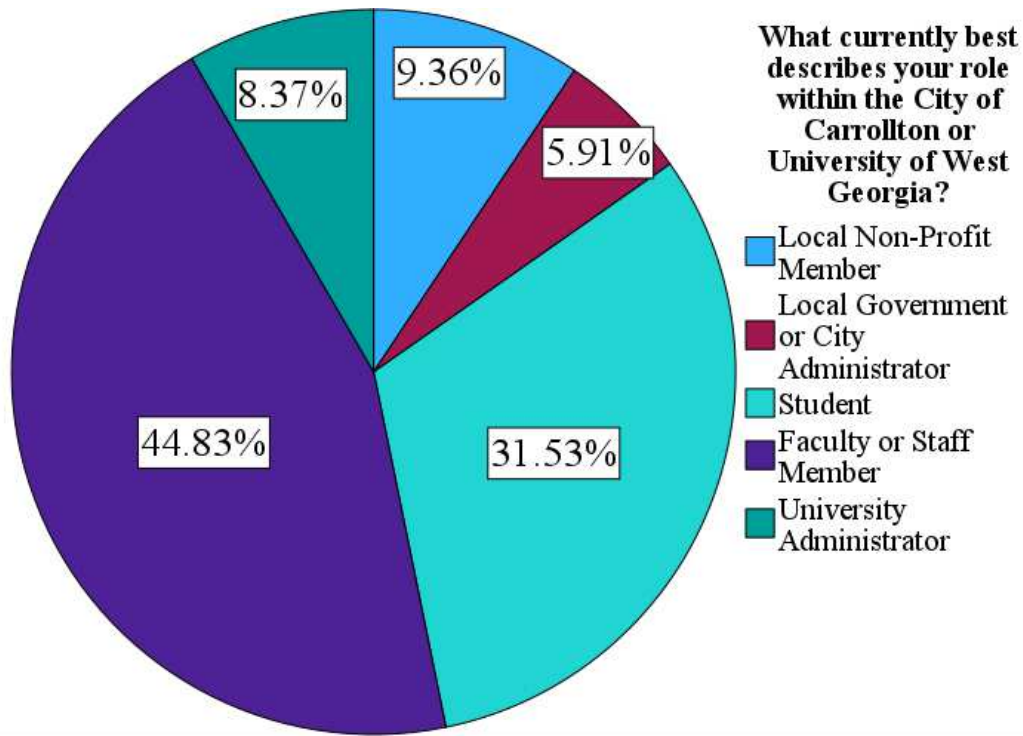


Figure 7 reveals that almost half of respondents were faculty or staff members (45%), and when combined with students, make up over 75% of all respondents. Local non-profit members, city and university administration fill out the remaining one-quarter of respondents.

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Results and Findings**

This research was conducted using a two-stage analysis in which the city manager and university president were first interviewed for their perspective on the relationship using the framework of the Ten Commandments of town-gown relationships. The interview results are discussed below followed by the second stage of the research, survey of the constituents, discussed next.

#### **First Stage Analysis: Ten Commandments Interviews**

In the interviews with the city manager and the university president, both leaders provide insights into the town-gown relationship between the university and the City of Carrollton. Through the lens of Stephen Gavazzi's Ten Commandments of Town and Gown Relationships, these interviews emphasize themes such as collaboration, mutual benefit, time investment, community recognition, and leadership roles. While both individuals broadly align on the importance of partnership, their perspectives also highlight contrasting viewpoints on roles and interactions within this dynamic.

#### **Priority of the Town-Gown Relationship**

Both the city manager and the university president affirm the high priority of building a strong, harmonious relationship between the university and the city. The city manager acknowledges that this relationship has become a priority since Dr. Kelly's presidency, signaling that past leadership didn't focus as much on fostering a connection. He notes that in previous

years, the city and university often operated in isolation, with little mutual interaction. The city manager's realization of the importance of a collaborative relationship seems to be a recent development, largely influenced by the university president's efforts.

In contrast, the university president takes a more proactive and comprehensive stance from the start, describing the relationship as an extremely high priority. He sees the university not just as an educational institution but as an essential part of the fabric of the local community, going so far as to state, "I don't care where you went to school. If you live here, this is your university" (B. Kelly, personal communication, July 3, 2024). The president emphasizes the interdependence of the university and the community, viewing their success as intertwined. For him, cultivating this relationship is not a secondary task but the core of his role.

### **Time and Effort in Building the Relationship**

Both interviewees discuss the time commitment required to build and maintain a positive town-gown relationship, but they approach this from different perspectives. The city manager reflects on his earlier failure to properly account for the time needed to maintain such relationships, stating that prior to this university president, it was not even on his radar. He now recognizes the substantial time and effort required, both for initial relationship-building and for ongoing collaboration.

The university president, however, offers a more strategic view. From his perspective, building relationships is not an additional task but central to his role as a university leader. He dismisses the idea that maintaining relationships is like a second job, instead calling it the job. This is reinforced by his leadership approach: he hires senior administrators to manage the operational aspects of the university so that he can focus on community relations. The

president's extensive experience in leadership (this being his third presidency) equips him with a clear sense of priorities, where community engagement stands as paramount.

### **Honoring Campus and Community Partners**

When posed with the third commandment, honoring the campus and community partnerships, both the city manager and president responded with a version of yes signaling they both agree that each of them recognizes and honors the relationship currently.

### **Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Outcomes**

Both leaders seek mutual benefit in their dealings between the university and the city, aligning with Gavazzi's principle of seeking win-win outcomes in town-gown relationships. The city manager is pragmatic, recognizing that while win-win solutions are ideal, they are not always possible. He mentions that sometimes sacrifices are required, but generally, the goal is to find solutions that benefit both the city and the university. His focus is on cooperation that benefits the community, especially in terms of economic impact, as the student population significantly contributes to the local economy.

The university president is similarly committed to win-win outcomes but takes a more assertive stance. He contends that while there are occasions when the university must act in its own interests, the goal is almost always to achieve outcomes where all parties feel they are “on the same team and rowing in the same direction” (B. Kelly, personal communication, July 3, 2024). He views the relationship as highly interdependent, emphasizing that the city, county, and university are too closely linked for either side to pursue self-interested outcomes without harming the other.

## **Key Points of Connection**

When asked about the most important points of connection between the university and the city, both leaders identify similar groups but with differing emphases. The city manager points to a broad array of community stakeholders—university leadership, city leadership, business leaders, and the student body—as vital to maintaining a robust connection. He emphasizes that students should be viewed as a key economic force in the city, likening them to tourists who contribute significantly to the local economy.

The university president, on the other hand, highlights senior leadership and students as the two primary points of connection. His reasoning is more focused: fewer faculty members live in the local community compared to students and senior leaders, so faculty do not play as central a role in community relations. He also underscores the importance of alumni in maintaining this relationship, noting that alumni tend to take their university very seriously, especially those living in close proximity. For him, alumni are crucial to bridging the gap between the university and the broader community.

## **Role of Alumni**

Both leaders recognize the importance of alumni, though their emphasis differs. The city manager views alumni as essential to the university, particularly those who live in the local area. He sees them as potential bridge-builders between the city and the university, as they often have strong ties to both. However, he notes that alumni may be more important to the university than to the city, indicating that their role in town-gown relations might be more symbolic than operational from the city's perspective.

The university president takes a more active stance on alumni engagement, stating that their importance depends on how much effort is put into activating them. He stresses that the

university has been working intentionally to engage alumni, particularly through the alumni board and other initiatives. For him, alumni play a critical role in campus-community interactions, especially those living near the university, and failing to honor that relationship can result in significant backlash from the local alumni community.

### **Faculty as the Face of the Community**

Another area where the two leaders concur is the role of faculty in representing both the campus and the community. The city manager straightforwardly says no, suggesting that faculty do not represent the face of both. The university president agrees, pointing out that while there may have been a time when faculty members were more visible in the community, this is no longer the case. He attributes this to the fact that many faculty members do not live in Carrollton or the surrounding area, limiting their direct involvement in community activities. This could lead one to question the Carnegie designation as a Community Engaged Institution.

Both acknowledge that there are exceptions, with faculty who actively engage in civic organizations or community initiatives. However, this level of involvement seems to be more the result of individual choice rather than a systemic expectation. The president's perspective is shaped by a pragmatic understanding of where faculty live and work, emphasizing that community engagement is no longer an inherent part of faculty life at the university.

### **Evolution of the Relationship**

Both interviews reflect an appreciation for the evolving relationship between the university and the city, particularly under recent leadership. The city manager expresses gratitude for the improvements in the town-gown relationship under the university president, comparing it to past administrations where there was less collaboration. He acknowledges that the relationship has grown stronger over time and attributes this largely to intentional efforts from both sides.

The university president similarly praises the progress made under his administration, but he also highlights the groundwork laid by previous leaders, such as the previous president, who began the process of nurturing the town-gown relationship. The president, however, takes credit for expanding that foundation and spreading the connection to a broader swath of the community. He describes his efforts as deliberately inclusive, aiming to build relationships with everyone from local business owners to restaurant staff, viewing these connections as integral to the university's success. Both seem to agree that the history of their inherited relationship has not always been as good as it is currently.

### **Constant Assessment and Future Outlook**

Both leaders agree that constant assessment of the town-gown relationship is necessary. The city manager highlights regular collaboration on projects and ongoing communication with university leadership. He expresses confidence that the relationship will continue to grow, even with the impending departure of Dr. Kelly, and commits to reaching out to future university leaders to maintain the partnership.

The university president also stresses the importance of ongoing assessment and describes his close collaboration with local officials, including the city manager, city council, and county authorities. He views this relationship as essential to the success of both the university and the community. The president is confident that he will leave the town-gown relationship in a stronger position than he found it, attributing this to his intentional focus on building and sustaining partnerships from the moment he arrived in Carrollton.

**Table 3***President & City Manager Comparison*

	University President	City Manager	Agree/Disagree
<p>Commandment 1 <i>Thou shall give high priority to efforts that build more harmonious relationships between campus and community members.</i></p>	<p>“Extremely high” priority. “I don’t care where you went to school, if you live here this is your university”</p>	<p>“Has become a strong priority with the current administration.” Did not realize importance at first, but does now.</p>	<p>Agree</p>
<p>Commandment 2 <i>Thou shall not miscalculate the time involved in developing and maintaining harmonious campus-community relationships.</i></p>	<p>Not a second job, but “the job.” He should hire capable administrators so he focuses on community relations.</p>	<p>Now recognizes the importance since the current president came. Required for ongoing collaboration.</p>	<p>Agree</p>
<p>Commandment 3 <i>Thou shall honor your campus and community partners.</i></p>	<p>“Yes, I believe we do”</p>	<p>“Yes, we do from the city’s side, for sure”</p>	<p>Agree</p>
<p>Commandment 4 <i>Thou shall seek win-win outcomes wherever and whenever possible in campus-community interactions.</i></p>	<p>More assertive stance. All of city, county, and university strive for win-win outcomes.</p>	<p>Win-win is ideal but not always possible. Focus should be on cooperation and economic impact.</p>	<p>Disagree</p>
<p>Commandment 5 <i>Thou shall remember that students are the most important point of connection between campus and community.</i></p>	<p>Highlights leadership and students, but mentions local alumni as an integral piece.</p>	<p>Explains that students are part, but not whole, to the most important piece. Mentions business and municipal leadership</p>	<p>Partially Agree</p>
<p>Commandment 6 <i>Thou shall know the power of your alumni, especially those living in communities</i></p>	<p>Details that failing to activate local alumni can create significant backlash.</p>	<p>Views alumni as bridge builders, but notes they have higher importance to the university than the city.</p>	<p>Agree</p>

	University President	City Manager	Agree/Disagree
<i>immediately surrounding the campus.</i>			
Commandment 7 <i>Thou shall respect the notion that faculty members represent the face of both campus and community.</i>	States that some faculty live close and engage but most do not and it is not a part of their ethos. A result of individual choice	Firm No. Says faculty members are not visible in the community.	Agree
Commandment 8 <i>Thou shall appreciate the history of the campus-community relationship you inherited.</i>	Acknowledges that his predecessor laid the ground work and the he was able to expand on it.	Acknowledges that previous administration did less and the relationship has grown.	Agree
Commandment 9 <i>Thou shall continuously assess the present state of the relationship between campus and community representative.</i>	Confident that he has continually looked for new ways to partner and get a sense of progress between the two	Expresses the need to constantly communicate and asses' new ways to collaborate.	Agree
Commandment 10 <i>Thou shall leave the campus-community relationship in better shape than you found it.</i>	Confident that he is leaving the relationship better than he found it.	Expresses belief that the relationship will grow even with a new president to come.	Agree

### Interview Conclusion

As evidenced in Table 3, both the city manager and the university president see the town-gown relationship as vital to the success of both the university and the city. The two top administrators agree on eight of the ten commandments. While their perspectives align on many points, such as the importance of collaboration and mutual benefit, the president takes a more proactive and strategic view of his role in fostering the relationship. The city manager, while

now recognizing the importance of the partnership, reflects on a time when it was not as prioritized. Commandment five is important to note in that both only partially agree, saying students are important but then differ on the importance beyond that, with the university president viewing local alumni as integral pieces, and the city manager viewing local leadership and business leadership as key.

Overall, both leaders emphasize that the relationship is constantly evolving and requires ongoing effort, with leadership playing a crucial role in shaping its future. Themes of mutual dependence, community engagement, and leadership commitment run through both interviews, underscoring the complexity and importance of the town-gown dynamic in Carrollton. It is also important to note that amongst all the mutual agreement the two do not agree on commandment four, with the city manager noting that win-win outcomes are ideal but the city must work in its best interests and the president saying they both must win for the relationship to succeed.

### **Second Stage Analysis: Survey Results**

This section will illuminate the complexities of the relationship between UWG and the Carrollton by utilizing survey respondent data to make connections of significance between different role groups within the relationship, as well as correlate factors that drive relationship views. Regression analysis of the survey data will help predict factors that drive the relationship views and help predict the outlook for certain key relationship factors. Survey respondent answers were coded to read as numerical data and analysis was performed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30.

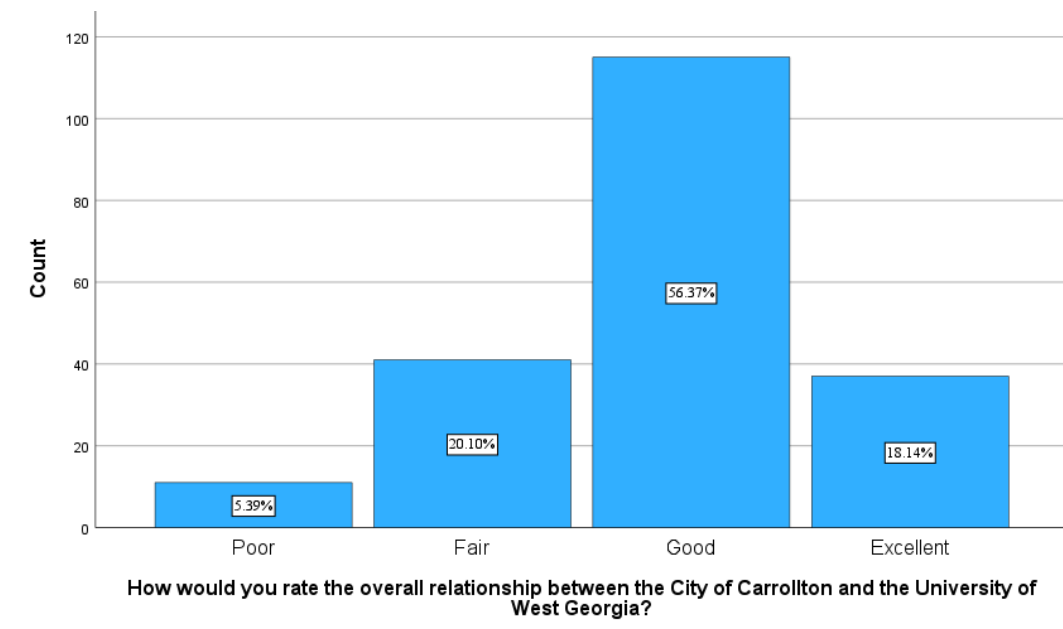
**Figure 8***Rating the Overall Town-Gown Relationship*

Figure 8 shows most respondents (74.51%) feel that the overall relationship is good or excellent, indicating an overall positive outlook of the relationship, with the remainder (25.49) of respondents viewing it as fair or poor.

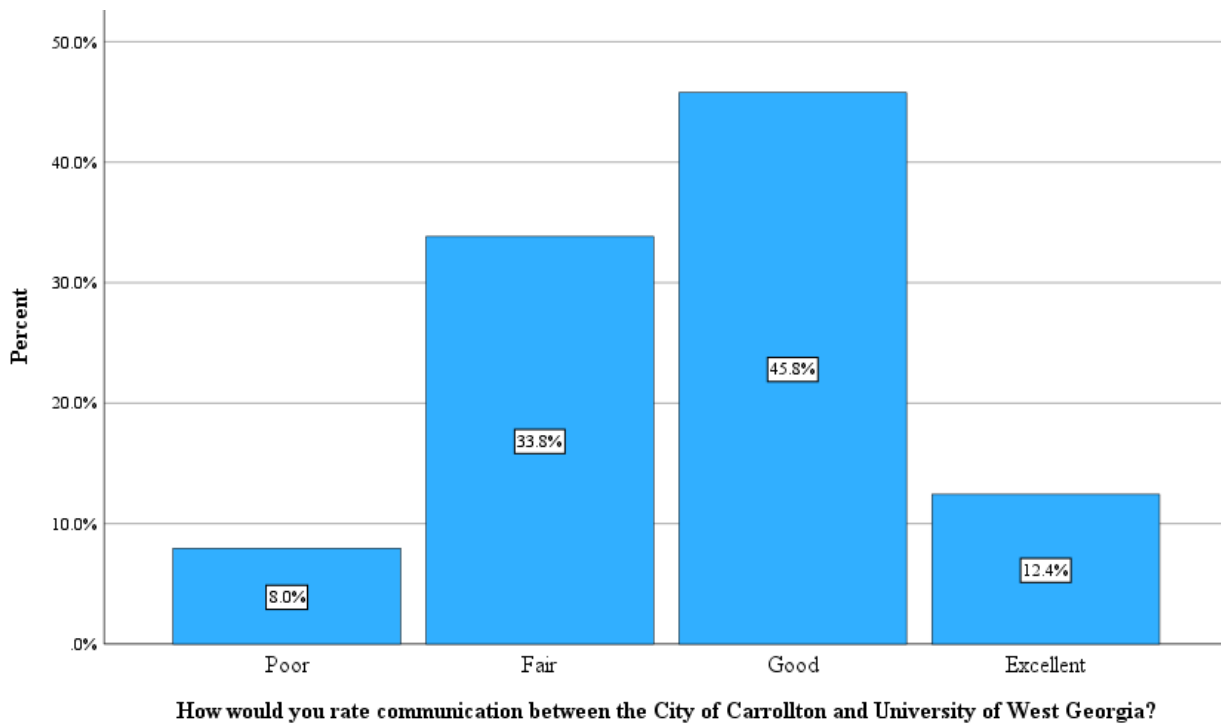
**Figure 9***Rating Town-Gown Communication*

Figure 9 shows most respondents (58.20%) believe that the communication is good or excellent, which indicates that a majority feel like UWG and the City of Carrollton communicate well, with less than half (41.8%) feeling fair or poor about communication.

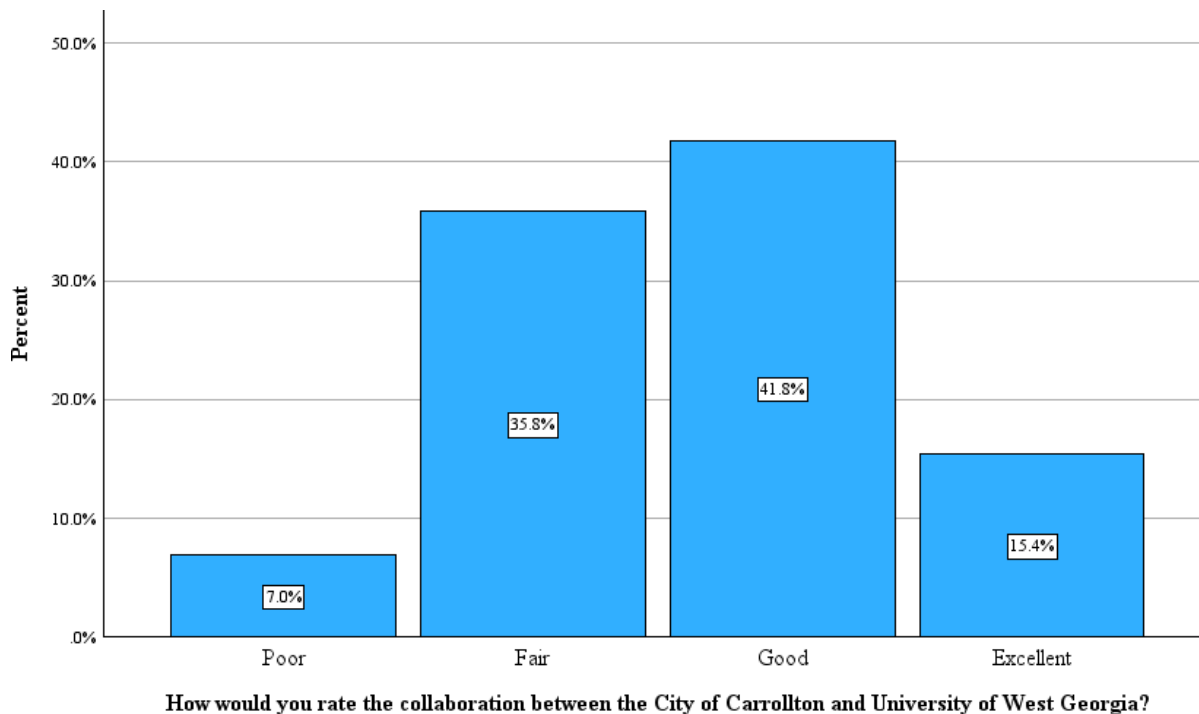
**Figure 10***Rating Town-Gown Collaboration*

Figure 10 shows over half of the respondents (57.2%) believe that collaboration is good or excellent, revealing that most people believe that UWG and Carrollton do well in this regard. Less than half (42.8%) believe collaboration is poor or fair.

### **Evaluation of Town-Gown Relationship by Role Group**

Table 4 provides insights into the perceptions of the five role groups identified in the survey (local non-profit members, local government/city administrators, students, faculty/staff members, and university administrators) across key areas.

When examining the overall relationship, local government/city administrators gave the highest rating ( $M = 3.4$ ), suggesting they view the relationship overall most positively. Students had the lowest rating ( $M = 2.8$ ), indicating a less favorable perception compared to other groups (the overall average [total] across all roles is 2.9, with a moderate standard deviation [0.8]).

Local government/city administrators also rated communication highest ( $M = 2.9$ ). The overall communication ratings ( $M = 2.6$ ) is lower than those for the overall relationship, signaling room for improvement. City administrators scored collaboration the highest ( $M = 3.3$ ). Students and faculty/staff members rated collaboration the lowest ( $M = 2.7$  and  $2.5$ , respectively). The overall mean for collaboration [2.7] highlights a general perception of modest collaboration. Perceptions of improvement in the relationship over time were mixed. City administrators again showed the most positivity ( $M = 2.9$ ), while students rated it the lowest ( $M = 2.3$ ). The total mean of perception over time, 2.4, suggests an average perception of slight improvement. All groups agreed that UWG makes a valuable contribution, with university administrators rating it the highest ( $M = 4.7$ ) and students the lowest ( $M = 4.2$ ). This difference is statistically significant. The total mean is 4.4, indicating strong agreement across all groups. This response was also the highest rated mean score in the entire survey.

Also revealed in Table 4 are ratings for UWG courses providing community-based research opportunities were relatively consistent, ranging from 2.5 (students) to 2.8 (university administrators). The total mean (2.6) suggests limited satisfaction in this area. No statistically significant differences between roles are present here. Local non-profit members reported the most frequent community engagement ( $M = 3.5$ ), while students reported the least ( $M = 2.3$ ). The total mean is 2.7, indicating variability in levels of engagement among groups. Ratings were moderate across groups for university acknowledgment of support and contribution, with university administrators scoring the highest ( $M = 2.6$ ) and faculty/staff members the lowest ( $M = 2.1$ ). The total mean is 2.3, showing some dissatisfaction in this area. There is broad agreement on the importance of UWG maintaining a positive relationship with Carrollton. Scores are high across all groups, ranging from 2.9 (students) to 3.0 (city administrators and university

administrators). The total mean is 2.9, reflecting consensus on the importance of this relationship.

A scaled measure of overall relationship sentiment was computed (using questions two through four) and aggregating the scores from each respondent, and subsequently role groups. These questions were chosen for their significance in evaluating the overall relationship, the communication, and collaboration. These questions were chosen to create a scaled relationship score since they are very highly correlated to one another. A Pearson correlation score of .71 between overall relationship and communication, a correlation score of .74 between overall relationship and collaboration, and a correlation score of .804 between overall collaboration and communication all indicate that these questions can tell a great deal when combined. The minimum score of the scaled relationship is 3.00, with a maximum of 12.0. The mean is 8.2 with a standard deviation of 2.2. The survey respondent's data on these questions tell a great deal about their thoughts on the overall relationship. These three views give a large-scale idea of the relationship from many angles. As evidenced, the mean scores for each role group represent their overall sentiment of the relationship on a scale from three to twelve. Local government/city administrators rated the relationship best overall ( $M = 9.6$ ) and faculty/staff rating it the lowest ( $M = 7.8$ ).

City administrators and university administrators tend to view the relationship, communication, and collaboration between UWG and Carrollton more positively than students and faculty/staff members. Students consistently provided lower ratings, especially in areas such as collaboration, communication, and perceptions of progress over time.

**Table 4***Mean Evaluation of Town-Gown Relationship by Role*

	Local Non- Profit Member	Local Government or City Administrator	Student	Faculty or Staff Member	University Administrator	Overall Mean
Question 2: <i>Overall Relationship</i>	3.1	3.4*	2.8*	2.8*	3.1	2.9
Question 3: <i>Communication</i>	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.6
Question 4: <i>Collaboration</i>	2.8	3.3*	2.7*	2.5*	2.9*	2.7
Question 7: <i>Relationship Over Time</i>	2.5	2.9*	2.3*	2.3*	2.8*	2.4
Question 8: <i>Valuable Contribution</i>	4.5	4.5	4.2*	4.4	4.7*	4.4
Question 10: <i>Courses at UWG</i>	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.6	2.8	2.6
Question 11: <i>Engagement Activities</i>	3.5*	3.1*	2.3*	2.6*	3.0*	2.7
Question 12: <i>Acknowledgement and Support</i>	2.2	2.6*	2.5*	2.1*	2.6*	2.3
Question 13: <i>Positive Relationship Importance</i>	2.9	3.0	2.9*	3.0*	3.0	2.9

	Local Non- Profit Member	Local Government or City Administrator	Student	Faculty or Staff Member	University Administrator	Overall Mean
Scaled Relationship: <i>An aggregated score of questions 2-4 meant to gauge overall relationship sentiment.</i>	8.7	9.6*	8.2	7.8*	8.6	8.2

\* Difference of means test is statistically significant at  $p < .05$

\*\*Difference of means test is statistically significant at  $p < .01$

### Significant Difference of Means

A difference of means test (t-test) is utilized to explore statistically significant differences by role group for the evaluation of the town-gown relationship. These scores are marked with an asterisk in Table 4. Below is an explanation of each pairing that is significant. When a difference of means test is statistically significant, as evidenced by the t-test score, it means that the same difference should likely appear in the larger population.

With respect to the rating of the overall relationship, the mean scores of the different role groups of local government/city administrators and students are significantly different.

Administrators rate the relationship more positively ( $M = 3.4$ ) than students ( $M = 2.8$ ). In this case the t-score is 2.23 which indicates that administrators view the relationship more positively overall (.5886 points) than students. The same is true for the roles of local government/city administrators and faculty/staff members. Local government or city administrators rated the relationship higher ( $M = 3.4$ ) compared to faculty or staff members ( $M = 2.8$ ). The results here

are similar with a t-score of 3.102 indicating that the difference (.6365 points) is statistically significant.

Regarding communication, all role groups agreed that communication was positive (overall  $M = 2.6$ ), but no one role group had significantly different rating than another group.

When addressing the mean scores for collaboration amongst role groups, a few differences emerge as significant. Local government/city administrators perceive collaboration between the City of Carrollton and the UWG more positively ( $M = 3.3$ ) than students ( $M = 2.7$ ). This pairing results in a t-score of 3.343, indicating it is significant in its difference (.5469 points). The same is true for local government/city administrators ( $M = 3.3$ ) and faculty/staff ( $M = 2.5$ ), which has a difference (.793 points) that is significant given the t-score of  $t = 3.343$ . Likewise, the difference (.4217 points) between faculty/staff and university administrators bears significance with a t-score of  $t = 2.033$ , with university administrators viewing collaboration slightly more positively ( $M = 2.9$ ) than faculty/staff ( $M = 2.5$ ).

One area that showed no statistical differences was the respondents views on the idea that UWG courses provide the students with an opportunity to engage in the community in some way. All respondents rated the agreement to that statement with a mean ranging from  $M = 2.5$ - $2.8$ .

Regarding the respondents view on the relationship over time, more significant differences of means are present. Local government/city administrators perceive the relationship over time between the City of Carrollton and the UWG to have gotten better ( $M = 2.9$ ) than students ( $M = 2.3$ ). With a t-score of 3.652, the difference is statistically significant. Again, the same is true for local government/city administrators ( $M = 2.9$ ) and faculty/staff ( $M = 2.3$ ), which has a difference (.644 points) that is significant given the t-score of 3.110. Similarly,

comparing university administrators ( $M = 2.8$ ) and students ( $M = 2.3$ ) produces a difference (.5508 points) that is significant given the t-score of 3.631. Again, the same is true for university administrators ( $M = 2.8$ ) and faculty/staff ( $M = 2.3$ ) which has a difference (.5508 points) that is significant given the t-score of 3.114. The large number of significant differences of means regarding the views on the relationship over time demonstrates varying views by role.

Respondents view on UWG making a valuable contribution, shows more significant differences of means are present as well. Comparing university administrators ( $M = 4.7$ ) and students ( $M = 4.2$ ) produces a difference (.534 points) that is significant given the t-score of 2.494.

Differences are evidenced across all groups with respect to engagement in community related activities, indicating that the role groups both act very differently. Local non-profit members ( $M = 3.5$ ) and students ( $M = 2.3$ ) have a significant difference (1.2763 points), with a t-score of 4.834. Likewise, we see significant disparity in the mean scores of local non-profits members ( $M = 3.5$ ), faculty/staff ( $M = 2.6$ ), and university administrators ( $M = 3.0$ ), with significant difference (.893 and .5263 points respectively), and t scores of 4.264 and 2.019 respectively. Student respondent mean ( $M = 2.3$ ) also bares significant difference with many other role groups, including local government/city administrators ( $M = 3.1$ ), faculty/staff ( $M = 2.6$ ), and university administrators ( $M = 3.0$ ), with t-scores of 5.565, 2.452, and 2.634 respectively. It is noteworthy that the city aligned groups score highest, while it is apparent that students who responded do not engage in community activities as often as other role groups.

Respondents views on the university acknowledging community involvement has several significant differences as well. Local government/city administrators ( $M = 2.6$ ) and faculty/staff ( $M = 2.1$ ) hold different views (.4389 points) which is significant given the t-score of 2.019.

Again, the same is true for faculty/staff ( $M = 2.1$ ) and students ( $M = 2.5$ ), which has a difference (.3243 points) that is significant given the t-score of 2.901. University administrators ( $M = 2.6$ ) and faculty/staff ( $M = 2.2$ ) has a difference (.4438 points) that is significant given the t-score of 2.357. Varying views of the acknowledgment of contributions exists across all role groups.

When surveyed for how important the respondents believe it is to maintain a positive relationship, all respondents seemed to agree it is important, with one significant difference in means. Comparing faculty/staff ( $M = 3.0$ ) and students ( $M = 2.9$ ) produces a difference (.0917 points) that is significant given the t-score of 2.197. Faculty/staff hold a slightly more favorable view of how important it is to maintain a positive relationship.

Question two, three, and four were combined to create a score for how respondents felt about the relationship overall. As the table above shows, all role group mean scores are high on the scale, indicating all role groups feel pretty good in general about the relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton. Local government/city administrators viewed it the most positive ( $M = 9.6$ ), and they had a significant difference with faculty/staff ( $M = 7.8$ ) with a t-score of 2.976.

Interestingly, when using the scaled score and comparing means for the racial groups, no statistically significant differences emerged, although all race groups rated the relationship highly. Even with racial groups categorized into whites and non-whites, there is no significant difference in their high scores. Table 5 shows scaled scores by each racial group. While Asian respondents rated the relationship the highest, and African American the lowest, there still was not a statistically significant difference that emerged between the two groups.

**Table 5***Evaluation of Scaled Relationship by Race*

	Hispanic or Latino	Black or African American	White	Asian	American Indian or Alaska Native	Other
Scaled Relationship: <i>An aggregated score of questions 2-4 meant to gauge overall relationship sentiment.</i>	8.4	8.0	8.1	11.0	N/A	8.0

**Regression Analysis**

Next, a multivariate analysis was performed. Regression analysis demonstrates if certain variables, independent variables, can predict the outcome of something else, the dependent variable. For this research the regression analysis was used to try and predict the respondents outlook of the town-gown relationship using different answers from the survey questions. It should be noted that no multicollinearity was produced in any regression model, meaning that the independent variables did not correlate with one another. This is evidenced by the VIF scores below 2.0 in each model.

For the first regression model, the dependent variable is the scaled relationship data derived from the questions specially surveying the rating of the overall relationship, overall

communication, and overall collaboration. The independent variables used to try and predict the scored relationship are years in role, engagement in community related activities, a degree from UWG, gender, and race. Also, a dummy variable was used in which the role groups were separated into two groups, town (local government/city administrator and local non-profit member) and gown (university administrator, faculty/staff, and student).

**Table 6**

*Independent Variables Affecting Scaled Relationship*

Variable	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>T</i>
Constant	8.047	1.336	6.023
Years in Role	-.347	.194	-1.785*
Community engagement	.044	.171	.256
Degree from UWG	-.146	.194	-.755
Age	.182	.097	1.871*
Gender (male or female)	.167	.327	.511
White or non-white	.022	.435	-.051
Town or gown role	.739	.473	1.564

$R^2 = .054$

$N = 203$

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .01$

As noted in Table 6, the R-squared (0.054) reveals only 5.4% of the variation in the dependent variable (scale of relationship) is explained by the independent variables. Years in role (-0.347,  $p = 0.076$ ) is significant at  $p < .10$  and has a negative relationship, meaning that more years in their respective roles negatively affect their view of the town-gown relationship. Age (0.182,  $p = 0.063$ ) is also significant at  $p < .10$ , suggesting older participants have a more positive view of the town-gown relationship. The key variable of town-gown role is not significant with a t-score of 1.56.

Table 7 summarizes the respondents' views of the relationship over time as the dependent variable and years in role, engagement in community activities, university acknowledgement contributions, degree from UWG, age, and gender as independent variables or predictors. Respondents race is coded either white or non-white and their role as either town or gown related, which constitutes the final two independent variables in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Independent Variables Affecting Relationship Feeling Over Time*

Variable	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>T</i>
Constant	1.219	.269	4.523
Years in Role	-.028	.054	-.516
Community engagement	.020	.047	.435
University acknowledgement	.433	.062	6.996***
Degree from UWG	-.032	.053	-.605
Age	.037	.027	1.351
White or non-white	.145	.124	1.174
Current role (town or gown)	.222	.129	1.729
Gender (male or female)	-.080	.094	-.858

$R^2 = .256$

$N = 203$

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

The R-squared (0.256) reveals 25.6 % of the variation in the dependent variable (relationship over time) is explained by the independent variables. The strongest and statistically significant predictor is university acknowledgment with a positive relationship ( $p < 0.001$ ). This means respondents' perceptions of the UWG's acknowledgment of contributions strongly influence their views of the relationship between the UWG and Carrollton, and how it has become more positive. Control variables like years in role, community involvement, age, gender, and degree are not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ). These predictors have weaker contributions to explaining the dependent variable.

Next, Table 8 reveals the same independent variables, or predictors, were tested in a regression analysis using respondents views on UWG making a valuable contribution to the local community as the dependent variable.

**Table 8**

*Independent Variables Affecting Respondents Feelings of a Valuable Contribution*

Variable	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>T</i>
Constant	3.658	.307	11.932
Years in Role	.043	.062	.702
Community engagement	.031	.054	.579
University acknowledgement	.269	.072	3.794**
Degree from UWG	-.075	.061	-1.243
Age	.027	.031	.870
White or non-white	.087	.142	.615
Current role (town or gown)	-.003	.147	-.022
Gender (male or female)	-.236	.107	-2.198**

$R^2 = .126$

$N = 203$

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

The R-squared (0.126) reveals 12.6 % of the variation in the dependent variable (UWG valuable contribution) is explained by the independent variables. Once again, UWG's acknowledgment of contributions ( $p < 0.001$ ) is the strongest positive relationship and most significant predictor of perceptions regarding the university's contributions to the local community. Gender (male or female) ( $p = 0.029$ ) has a statistically significant but smaller negative impact on the dependent variable, with females being less likely to agree UWG makes a valuable contribution. Again, control variables like years in role, community involvement frequency, age, race (white or non-white), and current role do not significantly predict the dependent variable ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Table 9 reveals the same independent variables were tested in a regression analysis against respondents' views on the importance of UWG maintaining a positive relationship with the community as the dependent variable.

**Table 9**

*Independent Variables Affecting Importance of Maintaining Positive Relationship*

Variable	<i>B</i>	Std. Error	<i>T</i>
Constant	2.711	.110	24.566
Years in Role	.011	.022	.493
Community engagement	.019	.019	.972
University acknowledgement	.030	.025	1.169
Degree from UWG	-.002	.022	-.096
Age	.010	.011	.900
White or non-white	.060	.051	1.180
Current role (town or gown)	-.015	.053	-.278
Gender (male or female)	-.012	.038	-.303

$R^2 = .042$

$N = 203$

\* $p < .10$ ; \*\* $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p < .01$

The R-squared (0.042) reveals 4.2 % of the variation in the dependent variable (UWG maintaining a positive relationship over time) is explained by the independent variables. None of the predictors are statistically significant (all p-values  $> 0.05$ ), suggesting that they do not have a meaningful impact on perceptions of how important it is for the university to maintain a positive relationship with the Carrollton community.

**Nature of The Relationship**

When asked about positive aspects between UWG and the City of Carrollton, respondents were given several predetermined items to choose from, as well as the ability to mark "other" and specify unique positive aspects they may be aware of.

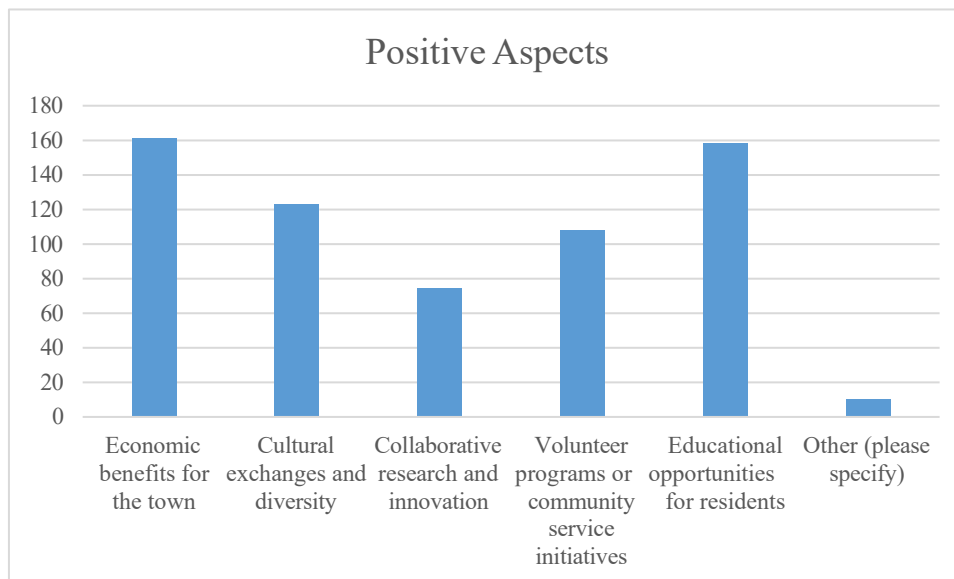
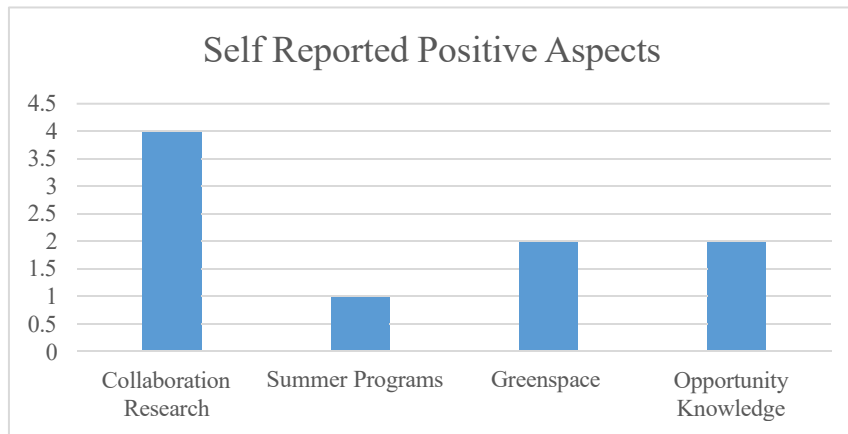
**Figure 11***Positive Aspects of Town-Gown Relationship*

Figure 11 reveals that economic benefits for the town are the most frequently selected positive aspect, chosen in 80% ( $n = 161$ ) of responses when combined with other benefits. It highlights the positive economic impact UWG has on Carrollton. Educational opportunities for residents scored highly as well, with 79% ( $n = 158$ ) choosing it as a response. Cultural exchanges and diversity are also highly valued, with 61% ( $n = 123$ ) choosing it frequently in combination with other benefits. Respondents appreciate the diversity and cultural interactions that the university brings to the local community. Collaborative research and innovation were frequently chosen, 37% ( $n = 74$ ) and highlights efforts and innovations between UWG and the city are noted as beneficial. These partnerships suggest shared projects or initiatives that enhance local development and knowledge sharing. Volunteer programs and community service initiatives appeared often as well, 54% ( $n = 108$ ), and highlights the positive impact of volunteer programs and community service, indicating a mutually beneficial relationship in which students and faculty actively contribute to the community.

Figure 12 below reveals open responses when respondents indicated “other” and provided their own responses. Ten responses were coded for themes that emerged within each one and grouped into four main categories that arose. Some of them included potential for future collaboration with multiple responses reflect the perception that there is significant potential for enhanced collaboration, though it has not yet been fully realized. Comments like “the potential for collaboration exists” and “so much possibility” indicate a sense of optimism tempered by current limitations. Some respondents mentioned specific instances of collaboration, such as UWG’s partnership with the Department of Juvenile Justice for the SPARK Program, in which judicially at-risk youth are paired with college students from similar backgrounds to serve as mentors, and the sharing of resources during a water crisis. Another noteworthy contribution was the city selling 300 acres of land to UWG for a nominal fee, facilitating the construction of the university’s stadium. Community use of campus greenspaces appeared commonly as well. The campus’s greenspaces are appreciated by residents in neighboring areas, highlighting UWG’s contribution to the community’s quality of life through accessible outdoor spaces. The Carrollton Greenbelt is mentioned within these comments frequently, highlighting it as a central piece of the greenspace.

**Figure 12**

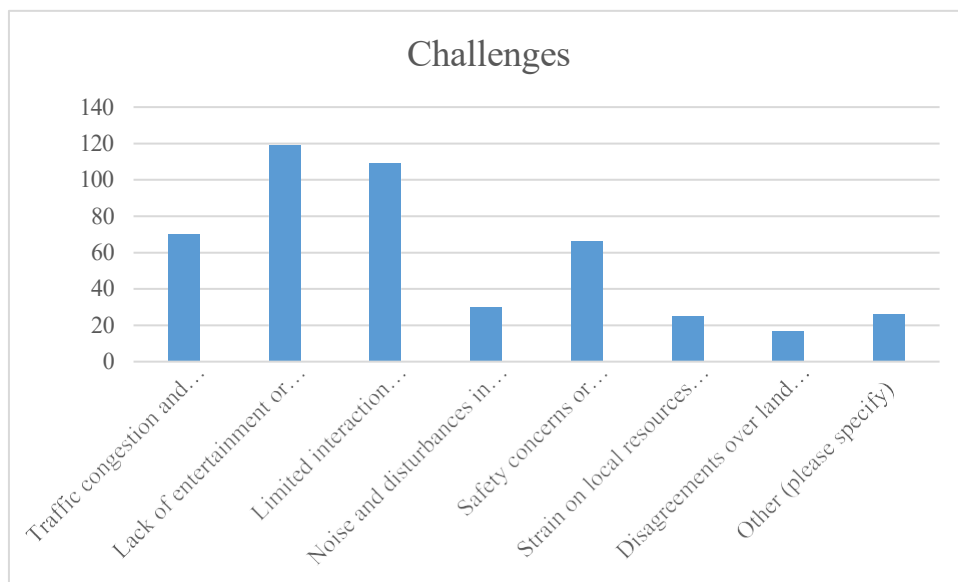
*Positive Aspects of Town-Gown Relationship*



When asked about challenges the arise between UWG and the City of Carrollton, respondents were given several predetermined items to choose from, as well as the ability to mark “other” and specify unique concerns they may be aware of. Figure 13 reveals the respondent’s choices.

**Figure 13**

*Challenges of Town-Gown Relationship*



Lack of entertainment or community activities for students, 25% ( $n = 119$ ), is the single most frequently selected issue. It suggests that many respondents believe there are insufficient activities or entertainment options for students within the community. Limited interaction between residents and students, chosen 23% ( $n = 109$ ), is the second highest selection, indicating that both a lack of entertainment and limited interaction are perceived as key challenges. Traffic congestion and parking problems, 15% ( $n = 70$ ), was frequently cited. These are common concerns in college towns, particularly where student populations fluctuate. Safety concerns or incidents of crime, 14% ( $n = 66$ ), is not the top concern, but safety issues were noted multiple times, indicating they are a point of tension, particularly when combined with noise or limited student-community interaction. Noise and disturbances in residential areas appeared in various combinations, 6% ( $n = 30$ ) total, but wasn't one of the top standalone issues. It often appeared alongside concerns about crime or safety and a lack of entertainment, suggesting it may be linked to student gatherings or nightlife. Disagreements over land use and development issue appeared in some responses, 4% ( $n = 17$ ), but it was rarely cited alone. It was more often mentioned in combination with other concerns like resource strain, student-resident interaction, or entertainment issues, suggesting it may be part of broader challenges related to community planning. Respondents chose "other" 6% ( $n = 26$ ) of the time indicating that many had other opinions they wished to express.

Figure 14 below reveals frequent themes when respondents chose "other" and provided further detail. Twenty-three responses were coded for themes that emerged. Some of these include perceptions of hostility or racism. Some respondents mention perceptions of negative or potentially racist attitudes toward UWG students, especially those who are not local. This includes a mention of the city maintaining its "white roots" and the discomfort expressed by

students of color with local authorities or residents. Lack of connection appears in multiple comments and points to a disconnect between the university and the city. Respondents feel that UWG and the City of Carrollton are “on completely different planets” or that there is insufficient collaboration and opportunity for integration. Conflict with conservative beliefs appears in respondents answers and highlights ideological differences, such as complaints about UWG’s promotion of diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and critical race theory (CRT), which conflict with the more conservative beliefs reportedly held by some residents of Carrollton. Lack of amenities other than those aimed at drinking appear in other comments. Visibility in the city appears, noting the unattractive state of Maple Street, suggest areas where the city could improve to make it more appealing for the university community.

#### Figure 14

##### *Challenges of Town-Gown Relationship (Open Responses)*

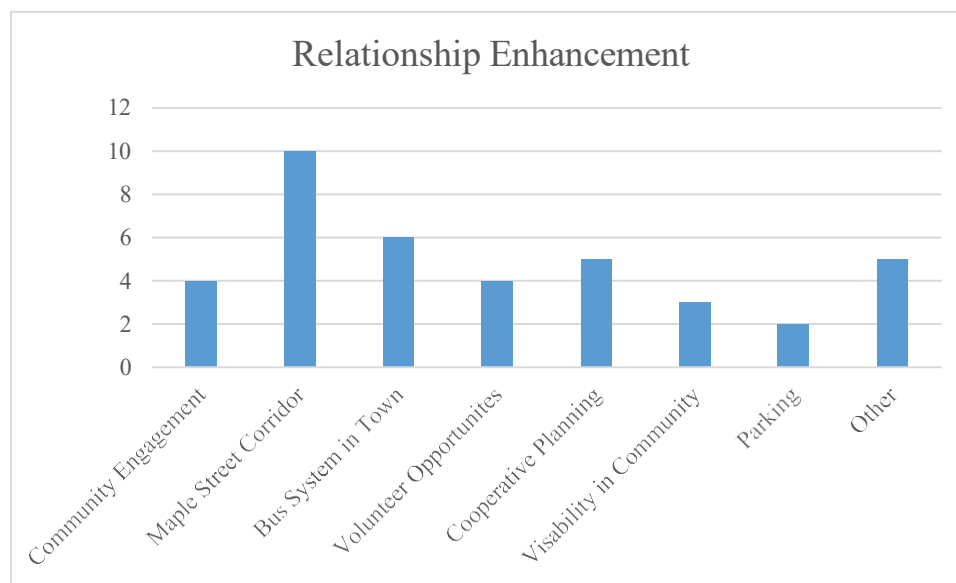


When respondents were asked about any specific initiatives or programs they believe would enhance the relationship, they were only given the ability to give open and personal responses, no predetermined answers. Figure 15 below reveals the common themes that emerged

from the self-reported responses. The majority (66.7%) did not offer anything specific or answer the question. Of those who did provide responses the frequent themes include community engagement initiatives such as volunteering opportunities, particularly for students, with local charities, community service projects, and local events like parades. Infrastructure improvements such as enhanced transportation, shuttle buses to downtown, and improvements to the Maple Street Corridor, which serves as an entrance to the university, were items mentioned. More involvement from UWG students in the local Carrollton community, including visibility in the community through service requirements in coursework and better communication about university events open to the public was noted as well.

### Figure 15

*Initiatives or Programs to Enhance Town-Gown Relationship (Open Responses)*

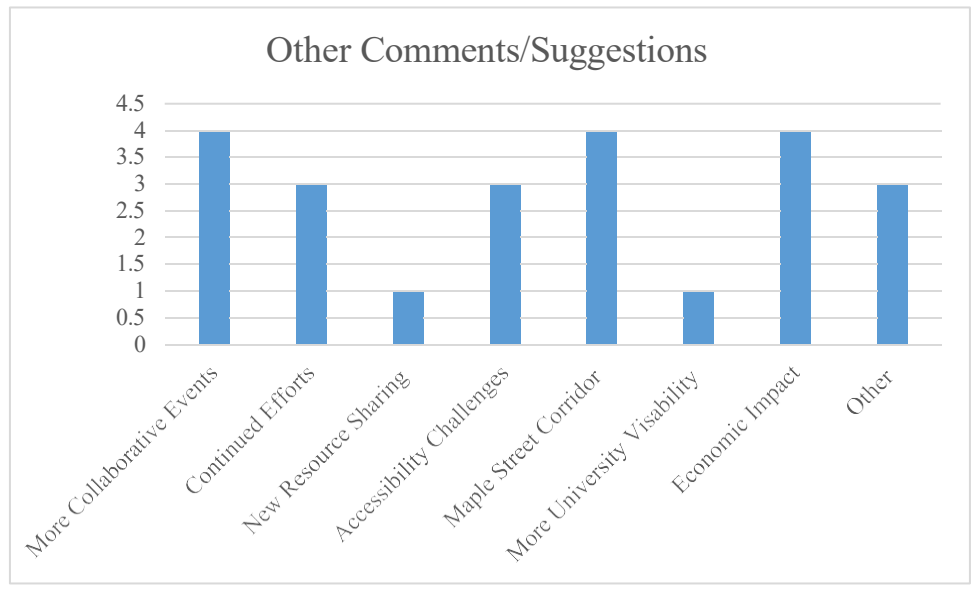


When respondents were asked about any other comments or suggestions they would like to share regarding the relationship they were only given the ability to give open and personal responses, no predetermined answers. Figure 16 below discusses the themes that emerged from self-reported responses. Several respondents feel that the relationship has improved over recent

years, but there is still a need for continued efforts to strengthen ties, especially in fostering community events and creating a more attractive college-town atmosphere. Many comments emphasize the need for more community events and entertainment options that are inclusive of students and affordable. Suggestions include more events like Winter Wonderland, greater promotion of local events to students, and additional venues or spaces for student social activities close to campus. Accessibility challenges are a concern, with some noting the lack of transportation options and insufficient infrastructure like sidewalks and bike lanes around the campus. There's a call for better public transit and improvements to the Maple Street corridor to make it safer and more appealing for students. Some respondents highlight UWG's economic impact on Carrollton and suggest that more effort is needed to showcase the cultural and educational benefits the university brings to the community. There are also calls for increased collaboration in areas such as service-learning projects that involve students in local organizations. A few comments raise concerns about perceived disparities in how students of different backgrounds are treated within the community. Issues related to student housing, interactions with local police, and inclusivity in city events and policies are mentioned as areas needing attention to make all students feel welcome. A recurring theme is the need for better communication through university visibility about existing partnerships and city-university collaborations. Some respondents indicate they are unaware of ongoing initiatives, suggesting UWG should more actively promote these partnerships in its communications. Some respondents reflect on a perceived disconnect between the UWG community and Carrollton residents. They suggest that past collaborative traditions have faded, and a revival of community partnerships, especially around shared resources and local pride that could improve relations.

**Figure 16**

*Themes from Open Responses*



**Overview of Survey Results**

The survey data highlights the complexities of the relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton. Overall, most respondents (74.5%) perceive the relationship positively, though areas such as communication (58.2% positive) and collaboration (57.2% positive) show room for improvement. A scaled measure combining key factors (relationship, communication, and collaboration) showed high correlation among these variables. The overall mean score was 8.2 (out of 12), with city administrators rating the relationship highest (9.6) and faculty/staff lowest (7.8).

Significant differences exist between groups, particularly in perceptions of collaboration, relationship over time, and engagement. Regression analysis shows that years in role negatively impact views of the relationship, while age correlates with a more positive perception. University acknowledgment of contributions is the strongest predictor of positive relationship perception.

Engagement in community activities and gender (female respondents rating UWG's contribution lower) also influence views. Overall, predictors explain only a small portion of variation in perceptions, suggesting additional factors shape views on the town-gown relationship.

The relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton has both positive aspects and challenges. Economic benefits (80%) are largely discussed with most realizing UWG contributes significantly to Carrollton's economy. Educational opportunities (79%) show UWG provides learning benefits for residents. Cultural exchange and diversity (61%) show respondents realized that UWG fosters a diverse community. Some challenges include lack of student entertainment/activities (25%), signaling limited recreational options for students. Limited student-resident interaction (23%) shows a disconnect between the two groups.

The study highlights a gap in perception between local government and university-affiliated groups, particularly students and faculty. City administrators and university officials view the relationship favorably, students and faculty/staff report lower satisfaction, particularly in collaboration, communication, and perceived progress over time. These insights indicate both strengths and areas for potential improvement in the UWG-Carrollton relationship. These findings warrant further examination and interpretation which will be the focus of chapter 5, as well as what it means for limitations and future research.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter delivers an all-encompassing evaluation that analyzes and interprets the research results from Chapter 4. An analysis of the town-gown relationship between UWG and Carrollton emerged from existing quantitative survey data combined with qualitative interview responses. This discussion establishes a thorough assessment through the combination of statistical information with comments from stakeholders and emerging patterns in this connection.

#### **Priority of the Town-Gown Relationship**

Research results established significant statistical differences between how groups of stakeholders value and understand the town-gown connection. The survey response distribution indicated a good or excellent relationship score for 74.5% of participants. Yet, regression analysis of the independent variables affecting the scaled relationship, Table 6, showed relationship perception decreased with increasing years in the role ( $B = -0.347, p < 0.10$ ) and increased according to respondent age ( $B = 0.182, p < 0.10$ ). This may indicate that respondents grow weary of the relationship the more they are immersed within it.

Local government/city administrators (3.4167) reported a more positive view of the relationship regarding question two compared to the assessments from students (2.8281) and faculty/staff (2.7802), resulting in statistically significant differences ( $t = 2.23$  and  $t = 3.102$ , respectively). This likely indicates the interactions these two groups have are vastly different.

Local government/city administrators likely get a more curated and top-level view of the relationship, while students and faculty are immersed in day-to-day raw interactions.

Interviews supported the quantitative results, demonstrating that city and university leaders understand that relationships matter but demonstrate distinct implementation methods. The university president describes community relations as “the job,” while the city manager demonstrates an evolved comprehension of its significance, indicating different institutional objectives regarding this matter.

### **Time and Effort in Building the Relationship**

The research reveals evident differences in how stakeholders spend their time carrying out activities tied to engagement. The statistical results from question eleven show that local non-profit members are more active in community activities than students since their engagement stands at 3.5 compared to students' 2.25 while also showing a statistically noteworthy difference ( $t = 4.834$ ). This is typical, since non-profits members objectively seek out gaps to fill in the community, while students are focused on education and entertainment.

Through the interviews, this study established that organizations take different methods to invest their time in relationship building, which aligns with Gavazzi et al. (2014). Both the university president and the city manager made proactive hiring decisions to balance operational tasks with community interaction, and the city manager gradually adapted to the understanding of this connection. These different approaches show that organizational units use separate methods to develop relationships but are ultimately working toward many mutual goals.

### **Honoring Campus and Community Partners**

The findings show clearly that stakeholder groups recognize differences in appreciation given by the organization. University recognition of staff and student contributions in the

community strongly showed how people grew to value their relationships during the study period ( $B = 0.433, p < 0.01$ ) in the regression analysis of independent variables affecting feelings over time (Table 7).

Local government/city administrators thought more highly of acknowledgment programs than faculty/staff, who rated them .4389 points lower than administrators ( $t = 2.019$ ) regarding question twelve. University administrators also showed substantial differences from faculty/staff with their ratings of 2.5882 ( $t = 2.357$ ). The variances point to established differences between different groups of stakeholders in their understanding of recognition practices, with faculty/staff having a better view of the relationship when they believe that contributions were properly recognized. This should signal to decision makers the formal recognition can enhance the relationship perceptions.

The in-depth partner interviews showed diverse views about recognition, especially regarding how they used their alumni associations. Although leadership at both locations agreed on alumni importance, they had distinct views about their role, with the university president seeking active participation. At the same time, the city manager accepted them as ambassadors between institutions. The distinction affects how each side approach stakeholder engagement and show appreciation. The city could enhance relationships by formally embracing the alumni in some way.

### **Mutual Benefit and Win-Win Outcomes**

The most commonly cited benefit, however, was the economic benefits which were cited in 80% of responses, meaning across all stakeholder groups the value of the university is seen and heard. The results of the regression analysis regarding independent variables affecting the relationship of overt time, Table 8, showed that in addition to gender ( $B = -0.236, p < 0.05$ ),

university acknowledgment of support ( $B = 0.269, p < 0.05$ ) significantly influenced the perceptions about the value of the contributions made by the university to the community, collectively accounting for 12.6% of the variance in perceived value contribution when combined with the other independent variables. As noted above, the perceptions of value contribution can be formalized to increase the relationship outcomes.

The data identified specific successful collaborative results, including the SPARK Program partnership, resource sharing in times of crisis, and the strategic 300-acre land deal for stadium development. Nevertheless, it shows missed opportunities to enjoy mutual advantages since only 57.2% responded that collaboration was good or excellent in question four. This implies that activities have proven successful for pieces of the partnership, but systemic obstacles may exist to realize consistent win-win outcomes across the relationship. This, again, points to a more formal process to mutually engage one another for targeted outcomes, rather than letting the results happen as they may. Guided involvement to needed outcomes is key here.

### **Key Points of Connection**

There were significant variations in the level of engagement or connection points by different constituencies and how they perceive them. The data indicated consistently lower reported levels of community engagement, as evidenced by responses to question eleven, for students ( $M = 2.3$ ) than all other groups with considerable differences when compared to local government/city administrators ( $M = 3.1$ ), faculty/staff ( $M = 2.6$ ), and university administrators ( $M = 3.0$ ).

Regression analysis of independent variables affecting the scaled relationship, Table 6, failed to identify either racial demographics or role designation (town versus gown) as significant predictors of relationship quality. It showed that the connection points go beyond

demographic categories, meaning Carrollton and UWG do well regarding race relations. Some of the represented data point to challenges in creating these connections though, including lack of entertainment or community activities (25%) and low student and resident interaction (23%). This indicates that the community could strategically make future decisions regarding amenities that appeal to the university students and be proactive in welcoming them into those areas.

### **Evolution of the Relationship**

The relationship evaluation data from the study's duration produced different results between stakeholder categories. Statistical testing showed that local government/city administrators reported better changes than students and faculty/staff between years based on their mean scores. Local government/city administrators reached a mean of 2.9167 on question seven, while students scored 2.2500, and faculty/staff received 2.2727.

University administrators reported more positive relationship perceptions ( $M = 2.8$ ) in question two, as students and faculty/staff scores proved lower ( $t = 3.631$  and  $t = 3.114$ , respectively).

The analysis found that university recognition of stakeholder contributions held the most influence as a predictor for positive relationship perceptions ( $B = 0.433$ ), as referenced in Table 7, with these variables explaining 25.6% of the total variance. How organizations show their appreciation for stakeholders proves essential for the way stakeholders evaluate the progression of relationships.

### **Constant Assessment and Future Outlook**

According to the findings, users face multiple difficulties with systematic relationship evaluation. Regression analysis tested the influential variables on the significance of relationship maintenance over time which produced weak prediction accuracy with  $R^2 = 0.042$ , noted in

Table 9 regression model. Given this, role-based and demographic data may not correctly explain stakeholder relationship maintenance over time perspectives.

Data analysis reveals that institutions need to address three main issues: insufficient student-focused facilities, the existing political-cultural barriers, and the need for infrastructure development. The research study identified select advancement opportunities through dedicated measures, which included better transportation infrastructure, enhanced community outreach initiatives, and better partnership publicity.

### **Synthesis of Key Findings**

Multiple findings stemming from the research help comprehend relations between towns and universities inside medium-sized communities like Carrollton and UWG. The research revealed a major difference between what institutions say publicly and what takes place in town-gown partnerships in practice. Both city and university leaders frequently endorse collaboration, but their operational frameworks for maintaining prolonged cooperation remain weak and irregular.

The study delivered a significant observation about how institutional memory and connection stability between institutions impact partnership success. Research findings demonstrated that university and city leadership changes must not disrupt successful town-gown relations because institutional knowledge and built partnerships function as essential bases for success, amplifying the suggestions by Lazzeroni and Piccaluga (2015) and the recommendations by Gavazzi (2018). This research helped add to the conventional thinking about the importance of formal agreements, while not ignoring the absolute need for strong informal partner networks alongside the uninterrupted relationship maintenance system.

Different groups of stakeholders demonstrate varying perceptions and levels of importance regarding their interactions between the town and the university. The different views about community engagement between faculty members and administrators emerge since faculty perceive unrecognizable barriers to engagement, whereas students find partnership prospects that administration and town leaders missed such as student centric amenities and a need for transportation initiatives.

### **Traditional Typology (High Comfort, Low Effort)**

The research revealed a gap between town-gown administrators and the faculty/staff and students on their rating of the strength of the relationship. The administrators are the policy and decision makers who likely discuss town-gown relations in their own echo chambers, thus believing the relationship needs less work, and responding as such on the survey. Faculty and staff are less engaged in the community and perceive the relationship as needing more work. This indicates a high level of comfort reported, and a lower level of effort as well. A larger survey respondent group in a future study may reveal a different outcome given this research was limited to 203 responses.

### **Carnegie Designation Implications**

These results of this research will help inform the Carnegie designation that is up for renewal in 2026. Given the contrast of city administrators having a more positive view than faculty, staff, and students, it may affect the performance indicators. The negative relationship that exists with years in role and the scaled relationship is entirely on the university side. It is most pronounced with university administrators, and there is a weak negative relationship with faculty/staff and no relationship for students. The relationship is positive for city administrators and non-profit leaders. Although one should be cautious interpreting these results based upon

the sample size, this is worth considering for the future of the Carnegie designation for UWG. Future success in this regard may depend on finding those pathways for faculty and students to connect to the community.

### **Research Question**

The research conducted on the relationship between UWG and the City of Carrollton aligns closely with Gavazzi's *traditional* town-gown typology. The research indicates a clear but separate coexistence between the university and the community, where mutual respect and interaction exist, yet each entity largely operates within its own sphere. This is particularly evident in the interviews with the president and city manager. While there are instances of collaboration and shared interests, again evidenced in the interviews as well as open responses, the relationship is defined by a sense of independence rather than deep integration or conflict. This classification as *traditional* underscores the balance between cooperation and separation, where both the town and the gown acknowledge each other's presence but do not fully intertwine their goals and resources. The research does share ways of moving the relationship into a harmonious typology through formal recognition of the relationship's key stakeholders and formal relationship touchpoints that can be cultivated and maintained.

### **Theoretical Implications**

From this study, several important contributions are made to social capital theory in the context of town-gown relationships. The findings suggest that the traditional conceptualizations of social capital as a uniformly positive force should be expanded to include the present context of town-gown relationships because even though they help explain some of the challenges they present, they do not elaborate on how such theories can be adapted to different situations. The

study shows that social capital can actually nurture an isolated, exclusive set of networks that unwittingly shut out some stakeholder groups, in particular where they were students and recent faculty hires.

Moreover, the research shows how social capital behaves at different institutional levels. While high-level administrators might maintain strong personal relationships, social capital, in this sense, does not translate to effective collaboration at operating levels. This finding implies a more sophisticated type of the social capital principle functioning in organization hierarchies. Effective town and gown relations need purposeful efforts that connect administrative leaders to operational staff, according to Kemp (2013), for social capital to become authentic collaboration throughout all organizational levels.

The findings suggest that the current stakeholder theory is no longer appropriate for the town-gown relationship. Traditionally, stakeholder models are based on static stakeholder groups with concentrated interests. Specifically, this research finds that project interests in town-gown relationships may sometimes be fluid and context-dependent. For example, faculty might simultaneously embody the university interest in some contexts while advancing the community interest in other contexts. Also, students' stake may shift as they navigate the community over time. This research was based on the idea that each stakeholder group had a set interest, but the results show a need for a revised town-gown stakeholder model that embraces the spectrum of interests the stakeholders can have.

This study adds to organizational learning theory by highlighting the distinctive problems of institution maintenance of town-gown relationships. The findings indicate that developing successful town-gown relationships involves intensive and complex mechanisms of preserving

and transferring knowledge between institutions and leadership transitions. This research showed that too much of the current relationship is person specific, practically at the top levels.

### **Practical Implications**

The research data presents important implications that everyone at various organizational levels. UWG should enhance their operational systems to reward and recognize faculty members and staff for their work with community groups. Even when academic systems operate traditionally, reward systems devalue community involvement, which reduces faculty and staff interest in town-gown collaborative activities. According to these findings, university administrators should formally include community engagement objectives within their strategic planning approaches, commonly called strategic planning. Academic institutions must create quantifiable indicators that measure community outreach effectiveness and define systems for monitoring town-gown collaboration activities.

UWG must review their existing resource distribution strategies because they affect their ability to support town-gown relationships. The research demonstrates that effective town-gown partnerships succeed when institutions allocate staff resources and funding instead of depending on casual voluntary work from uniquely invested members.

The implications for city administrators and their leadership teams become equally important. As evident from this study's findings, Carrollton should create advanced procedures that maximize university assets to support economic growth. Modern city administrations should advance their economic development strategy by investigating methods to transfer knowledge and set up innovative, collaborative projects while breaking away from traditional student spending assessments.

Additionally, the study recommends that UWG play a more prominent role in community planning processes, primarily focusing on student housing, transportation, and quality of life. On the other hand, Carrollton must create advanced communication methods to reach their diverse university stakeholders since these groups demand different types of engagement. This enforces the notion mentioned in the literature review, Mittal and Bansal (2024), that growth of the relationship should transcend the people within the roles and have formalized mechanisms along with the already informal connections.

### **Regional Comprehensive University Implications**

Many of the implications for UWG can be lessons for other regional comprehensive universities to implement. The need for a more concrete relationship system that transcends the individuals in the roles. City and university staff positions dedicated to the town-gown relationship can pay dividends where they do not already exist. The creation of quantifiable indicators and metrics is a replicable recommendation for any similar relationships as well.

### **Limitations**

Research can never be all encompassing, and often lends itself to limitation it must recognize. First and foremost, this research respondent pool would have benefited from being larger in terms of overall stakeholder sample size. With only 203 respondents completing the entire survey, it proved difficult to get significant results in some key areas of examination. Another limitation that presented itself concerns the demographic data. Overwhelmingly, respondents were white (85%). This is not akin to the university or town demographics landscape, and presents this research with a disproportionate review of white respondent views of the relationship. It is possible that more significant differences could have appeared if the white versus non-white respondent population was more appropriately representative of the

demographics at large. Likewise, the scope of the interviews presents a limitation as well. With only one city manager and one university president being interviewed, the views and themes may not be replicable across other institutions so easily.

### **Recommendations**

Longitudinal studies could help extended and follow-up on these studies. Follow-ups of town-gown connections throughout successive years of university and economic cycles will show how these partnerships develop. New research needs to study both standard performance indicators and assess how institutions and their communities think about partnership success. In-depth comparative case studies could move this research forward on town-gown partnerships by surveying across multiple universities and social backgrounds to show what succeeds everywhere as well as what works best in particular environments. Mixed-methods approaches are almost certainly needed for future research. The needs are so varied that they dictate to use advanced mixing of different research methods to measure town-gown partnership numbers and examine the deep interactions between higher education institutions and local communities.

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**Appendix A: VSU Institutional Review Board Exemption Report**



**Institutional Review Board (IRB)  
for the Protection of Human Research Participants**

**PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT**

Protocol Number: 04528-2024

Responsible Researcher(s): Clint Backstrom

Supervising Faculty: Dr. James LaPlant

Dissertation Research Member:

Project Title: *Assessment of the Town and Gown Relationship Amongst the University of West Georgia and Carrollton, Georgia.*

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:**

This research protocol is **exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations, **category 2**. If the nature of the research changes such that exemption criteria no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator ([irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu)) before continuing your research study.

**ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:**

- *Exempt protocol guidelines **permit** the recording of interview sessions provided recordings are made to create an accurate transcript. Exempt guidelines **prohibit** the collection, storage, and/or sharing of recordings. Therefore, upon creation of the transcript, the recorded interview/focus group session must be deleted from all recording and storage devices used.*
- *In keeping with established consent guidelines, audio/video recordings must include the researcher reading aloud the consent statement, confirming participant understanding, and establishing their willingness to take part in the interview. The transcript must document the researcher reading and obtaining consent. Participants must be provided with a copy of the research statement.*
- *Pseudonym lists must be kept in a separate, secure file from corresponding name, email lists, etc..*
- *Upon completion of the research study all data (e.g. data, pseudonym list, email list, transcript, payment logs, etc.) must be securely maintained (e.g. locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a **minimum of 3 years**. At the end of the required time, collected data must be permanently destroyed.*

*Please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at [tmwright@valdosta.edu](mailto:tmwright@valdosta.edu) to ensure an updated record of your exemption.*

*Elizabeth W. Olphie*

*07.26.2024*

Elizabeth W. Olphie, IRB Administrator

Date

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.

Please direct questions to [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu) or 229-259-5045.

**Appendix B: Ten Commandments Interview for President and City Manager**

1. How much of a priority is it to build a harmonious relationship between the University of West Georgia and the City of Carrollton?

- High Priority
- Moderate Priority
- Low Priority

2. Would you say that you have correctly calculated or miscalculated the amount of time that it takes to develop and maintain a harmonious relationship between the University of West Georgia and the City of Carrollton?

- Correctly Calculated
- Miscalculated
- Unsure

If miscalculated, why?

3. Do you honor and recognize campus and community partners?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide an example.

4. How do you view the outcomes of campus-community interactions?

- Seek win-win outcomes wherever and whenever possible
- Seek a winning outcome for one side wherever and whenever possible
- Unsure

5. What is the most important point of connection between the University of West Georgia and the City of Carrollton?

- Students
- Faculty
- Business leaders
- City leaders
- University leaders
- None of the above

6. How important are alumni to campus-community interactions, especially those living in communities immediately surrounding the campus?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important At All

7. Do you agree with the statement that faculty members represent the face of both the campus and community?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

8. Would you say that you appreciate the history of the campus-community relationship that you inherited?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

9. Does the University of West Georgia/City of Carrollton continually assess the town-gown relationship?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes, please provide an example.

10. Do you believe that you will be able to leave the relationship between the University of West Georgia and the City of Carrollton in a better position than you found it?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

If yes or no, why?

**Appendix C: Common Questions for All Surveys**

### Common Questions for All Surveys

Thank you for participating in this survey about the City of Carrollton and the University of West Georgia. We are interested in gathering information and insights regarding the interactions and dynamics between the city and university. Your responses will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

1. What currently best describes your role within the City of Carrollton or University of West Georgia?

- University Administrator
- Faculty or Staff member
- Student
- Local Government or City Administrator
- Local Non-Profit Member

2. How would you rate the overall relationship between the City of Carrollton and University of West Georgia?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

3. How would you rate communication between the City of Carrollton and University of West Georgia?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

4. How would you rate the collaboration between the City of Carrollton and University of West Georgia?

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

5. What are some challenges or issues that arise between the City of Carrollton and University of West Georgia? (Select all that apply)

- Noise and disturbances in residential areas
- Lack of entertainment or community activities for students
- Traffic congestion and parking problems

- Disagreements over land use and development
- Limited interaction between students and residents
- Strain on local resources and infrastructure
- Safety concerns or incidents of crime
- Other (please specify)

6. What are some positive aspects of the relationship between the City of Carrollton and University of West Georgia? (Select all that apply)

- Economic benefits for the town
- Cultural exchanges and diversity
- Collaborative research and innovation
- Volunteer programs or community service initiatives
- Educational opportunities for residents
- Other (please specify)

7. Over time has the relationship between the University of West Georgia and the City of Carrollton gotten:

- Better
- Worse
- Stayed The Same

8. The University of West Georgia makes a valuable contribution to the local community.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Unsure
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

9. How many years have you been at the University of West Georgia (for students, faculty, staff, and administrators) or the City of Carrollton (for city leaders and non-profits)?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 Years
- 6-10 Years
- 10+ Years

10. Do the courses at the University of West Georgia provide opportunities for students to engage in community-based research, service learning, or other community projects?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

11. How often do you engage in community-related activities or projects in the local community?

- Weekly
- Monthly
- Yearly
- Not At All

12. Does the university acknowledge and support the contributions of students, faculty and staff to the local community?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

13. How important do you think it is for the university to maintain a positive relationship with the Carrollton community?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important

14. Do you have a degree from the University of West Georgia

- Yes
- No
- In Progress

15. Are there any specific initiatives or programs that you believe would enhance the town-gown relationship? (Open-ended)

16. Are there any other comments or suggestions you would like to share regarding the town-gown relationship in your community? (Open-ended)

17. Please select your Age.

- 16-24
- 25-30
- 31-35
- 36-40
- 41-50
- 51-60
- 61-80
- 80+

18. Please select your Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary / Third Gender

19. What is your Race?

- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- White
- Asian
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Other