A Success Story? An Exploration of the Consolidation Efforts in the University System of Georgia

A Dissertation submitted
to the Graduate School
Valdosta State University

In partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

In Public Administration

In the Department of Political Science
of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences

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Abstract

Consolidation has been practiced in governments, school districts, and business for many years and in higher education since the early 1900s with the primary focus on the efficiency and financial savings found in the process. The nine consolidations in the University System of Georgia (USG) were driven by six principles which sought to achieve better processes and efficiency of services to the regional areas in which the institutions were consolidated into a single entity. This study of the nine consolidations in the USG reveals increases in the budgets at the institutions and the cost of attendance (tuition and fees plus room and board) while finding a decrease in the enrollment at the institutions after consolidation on average. The primary area the study found a positive impact from consolidation was in the area of retention which helped to retain more students at the consolidated institutions as compared to prior to consolidation at the same institutions. In addition to the analysis of institutional data pre- and post-consolidations, analysis of committees at the nine institutions was conducted for consolidation committee member composition and a survey was conducted of committee members at three of the consolidated institutions. Responses to the surveys allowed respondents to rate their view of the success of the consolidation, the biggest obstacles encountered by the committee, and the biggest issues faced by the committee. This study of institutional data and survey of consolidation committee members reveals pathways for future consolidations to reduce problems of future consolidations.

Keywords: consolidation; enrollment; retention; higher education; budgets; cost of attendance; campus consolidation.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My journey to this point has been a while and has been supported by many people on the way in both academics and general support. I would first like to thank Dr. James LaPlant who served as committee chair for my work and was constantly there for me when I had questions and provided feedback throughout the entire process. Dr. Robert "Sherman" Yehl and Dr. Karla Hull were my other committee members who served and provided great feedback to get me through the process as well. Dr. Gerald Merwin and Dr. Keith Lee were my advisors through the DPA program and were both very helpful through the process. Dr. Merwin's guidance early on in the program was invaluable in getting my courses and general direction. Dr. Lee's work later on through the dissertation portion to help keep me on track was perfect for what I needed.

I would not have made it through the courses to get to the point of the dissertation and graduation without the motivation from my cohort of DPA classmates who all began in Fall of 2017 and the time we got together each semester was always fun and worth the trips and effort in class. Specifically, three members of my cohort kept me motivated. Dr. Jessica Velasco was the leader of our cohort in finishing her work early and the first to graduate, so I tried to keep up, and I thank you for that push to have someone to try to keep up with. Clint Backstrom and Candice Hall were always in contact and the three of us kept each other on track through classes with reminders and motivation to get through to this point.

Last but not least, are my family and friends who supported me through this journey. I am blessed with a supportive family and network of friends (including the three mentioned above) who have had my back and helped to encourage me even when I was struggling. My supportive and loving wife, Amy, who was there for me through almost my entire educational journey and supported my efforts at the same time as earning her education. My three children, Sydney, Raleigh, and Anna-Kay who missed some times with daddy working late night on school work but were always happy to see me when I came home or when they woke up in the morning. My mom and dad who encouraged me to get through the program and have always supported me in everything I have done. My many friends who asked about how my dissertation was coming and my work. Though many friends were there for me, my friend and mentor Bill Hervey constantly asked about my progress and I thank him for his constant motivation and encouragement.

I was blessed to have so many supportive individuals in my corner throughout this process with encouragement and motivation to help me keep moving even when I would get stuck in my work.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this to Amy, Sydney, Raleigh, Anna-Kay, Jim, and Kay for all the love and support you have given me over the years to reach this achievement.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In October of 2011, University System of Georgia (USG) Chancellor Henry "Hank" Huckaby announced the plans for consolidation of institutions in the system early in his term as Chancellor. Presenting a plan for his six Principles of Consolidation at the November 2011 Board of Regents (BOR) meeting set in place the consolidations which occurred over the following eight years and the unsureness of many at these institutions. To date, there have been nine consolidations involving eighteen total institutions and reducing the University System of Georgia's total institution count from 35 in 2010 to 26 in 2020. The timing for Huckaby's efforts aligned with historical observations of consolidations in government with the work beginning early in his term. Having taken over the position July 1, 2011, Huckaby showed the trend that "newly elected governments seem to be more likely to start a consolidation and also to continue it" (Molnar, 2012). As the new head of the USG, Huckaby took the opportunity to make consolidation his primary focus and his successor, Chancellor Wrigley, continued the gallant efforts of consolidation when he took the helm in 2014. This study focuses on the following research question: Have consolidations in the USG had a positive or negative impact on the institutions consolidated in regards to efforts to save money, improve education opportunities through enrollment and retention, and reduce student costs? Furthermore, this study examines the charge, issues, roadblocks, and lessons learned for the campus consolidation process.

While government consolidations are often seen as an avenue to save money for local government and citizens, consolidation in higher education was focused on saving money and reducing the costs of higher education for students. As Huckaby laid out his six Principles of Consolidation to the BOR, he presented his efforts as more than just cost savings but as methods which could increase the effectiveness of the USG as a whole. The six principles presented and approved by the BOR in November 2011 are:

1. Increase opportunities to raise education attainment levels.
2. Improve accessibility, regional identity, and compatibility.
3. Avoid duplication of academic programs while optimizing access to instruction.
4. Create significant potential for economies of scale and scope.
5. Enhance regional economic development.
6. Streamline administrative services while maintaining or improving service level and quality (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, n.d.).

The USG BOR's efforts of consolidation have resulted in an impact on 18 institutions becoming nine institutions. The impacted institutions and resulting names are:

Table 1 - Consolidated Institutions in the USG

Year of Consolidation	Institutions being Consolidated	Institution Name Resulting from Consolidation
2013	Macon State College and Middle Georgia College	Middle Georgia State University (Earned University Status in 2015)
	North Georgia College & State University and Gainesville State College	University of North Georgia
	South Georgia State College and Waycross College	South Georgia State College
	Augusta University and Georgia Health Sciences University	Augusta University (Also held names Georgia Regents University and Georgia Regents University – Augusta)
2014	Kennesaw State University and Southern Polytechnic State University	Kennesaw State University
2015	Georgia State University and Georgia Perimeter College	Georgia State University
2016	Albany State University and Darton State College	Albany State University
2017	Georgia Southern University and Armstrong State University	Georgia Southern University
	Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) and Bainbridge State College	Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC)

In each case of consolidation to this point, no campuses have been closed while institutions are developing plans to work across geographical areas which create new hurdles for the created institution. Following the six principles approved by the BOR, the BOR has pushed more affordability for higher education as well as regional identity and enhancement of the economic development in areas. "Cost of attending a public college or university in the state rose 77 percent in a decade" (Seltzer, 2017) causing the BOR to look for ways to reduce costs for students and attempt to reduce the amount of debt after graduation. In 2006, the average student debt nationally was $19,200, more than twice what it was a decade before (Trombley, 2006). "The average student loan borrower has $37,712 in student loans, a $20,000 increase" since 2005 (Hess, 2018). These numbers combined show an increase from around $9,000 in the mid-1990s to almost $38,000 in student debt for graduates which is an increase of more than 400% (Trombley, 2006; Hess, 2018).

Ribando and Evans (2015) state, "public colleges and universities have increased tuition and fees at unprecedented rates. Inflation-adjusted tuition and fees were up 247% at state flagships and 230% at state universities and college when compared to 1980 levels" (Mortensen, 2012 as cited in Ribando & Evans, 2015). The graph from Demos.org, shows how the changes in tuition have occurred from 1980-81 to 2010-11 as compared in 2010 dollars at public four-year and two-year institutions. In the chart following, the College Board's 2017 data shows the percentage of individuals grouped by balance owed for federal loans. The number of individuals owing more than $20,000 in federal student loans is 42% of borrowers (The College Board, 2017).

Figure 1 ((The College Board, 2017)

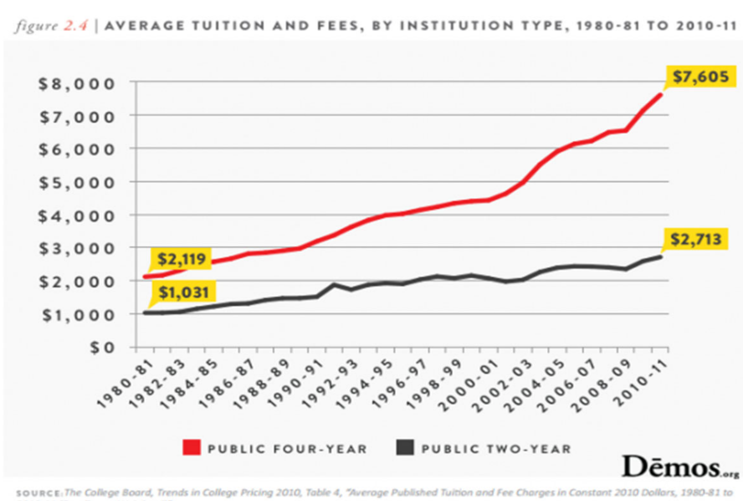
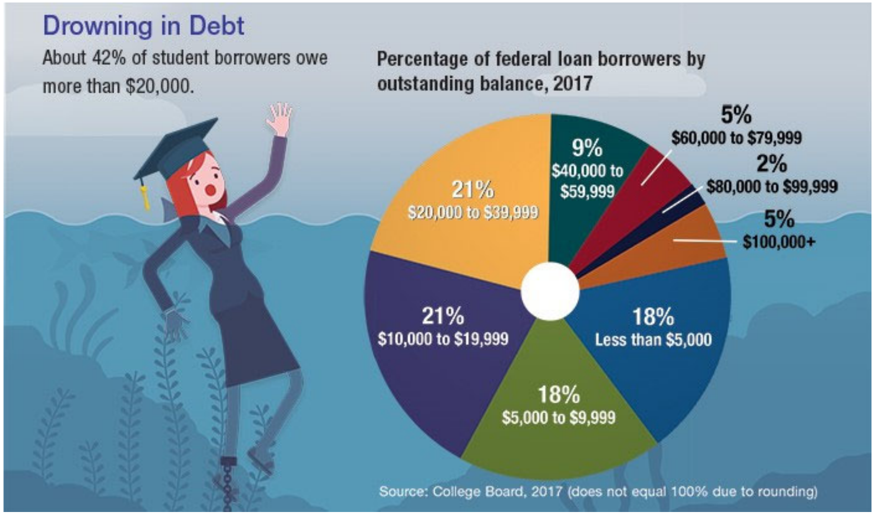


Figure 2 (The College Board, 2017)



In the same study, Ribando and Evans (2015) quote the State Higher Education Executive Officers (2013) to show, while full time enrollment (FTE) is up 27.3% in Georgia over five years, during the same period, state educational appropriations are down by 29.7% per FTE and tuition revenue is up by 77.5% for the same period. Based on these numbers, the cost of higher education is up while the support given by the state has decreased, which has caused an increased burden on the student, therefore increasing the debt upon graduation.

In addition to lowering costs for the students, "one of the main reasons for the move was to save money at a time when Georgia finances are tight" (Wieder, 2012). "Georgia officials have deliberately avoided citing a savings target" (Wieder, 2012) through this process because the 2009 consolidation of the Georgia Technical College System was overshadowed by statements of savings (Wieder, 2012). In order to achieve the savings to both the USG and the students, consolidation was recommended for eight institutions to create four new institutions taking effect in January of 2013. Following these initial consolidations, five additional consolidations have occurred between ten institutions resulting in nine total consolidations.

Consolidations and mergers in business, government, or higher education often require time for the benefits to be seen. Many cities and counties have consolidated governments across the United States in order to save money and companies have done the same in the private and public sectors. Any benefits seen immediately may be short-lived as only time can tell the true benefits of the combination of two entities and it is found that government consolidations often result in a monopolistic form of services provided and can result in a less efficient provision of services.

Defining Consolidation

"Consolidation serves as one tool available to statewide regulatory groups such as a Board of Regents, who seek cost-saving measures in higher education" (Heck et al., 2013). Abernathy (2012) points to the key of eliminating a particular department and restructuring the surviving department with the same or similar function. While Abernathy (2012) focused on service consolidations as the study, the ideas of consolidation still apply in the same manner, with the coming together of two or more governments (entities) with one to replace the prior entities.

Throughout the entire process, the term consolidation has been consistent from the USG BOR, but many refer to the efforts as a merger, while some refer to it as a takeover. The discrepancy exists in the view point of the individual or group discussing the work and how the consolidation impacts them directly, however, the processes of consolidation, merger, and takeover all have similarities and differences. Consolidation is the resulting effort of a merger in business with the idea of bringing together two separate entities to a single entity in an effort to achieve more profits through less expenses.

The term consolidation is defined in businessdictionary.com (2019) in the area of accounting to mean the "combining of two or more firms through purchase, merger, or ownership transfer to form a new firm." In Lexico.com's (2019) dictionary presented by Oxford, the two definitions both apply to the efforts in the USG: "1 The action or process of making something stronger or more solid" and "2 the action or process of combining a number of things into a single more effective coherent whole." Synonyms to the root word, consolidate, include strengthen, combine, make stronger, secure, stabilize, enhance, blend, bring together, and merge to name a few (Lexico.com, 2019). Using these definitions and synonyms for consolidation, the USG BOR and Chancellor Huckaby focused on consolidation as the specific term over others because of the meanings. "Consolidation combines agencies providing identical or similar services and eliminates at least one pre-existing structure," (Abernathy, 2012) which was the main effort of the economies of scale for this and many other consolidation efforts in reducing extra structures by combining efforts and reducing costs.

A take-over, and why some consolidations can be viewed as take-overs, "is when a larger institution takes over a smaller one" (Hiatt & Richardson, 2017). Hiatt and Richardson (2017) state "take-overs are generally more uncomplicated as academic divisions in the smaller organization are typically blended into the bigger merger partner" identifying the take-over involves less time to complete as "consolidations tend to require more effort and time to complete" (Hiatt & Richardson, 2017). This view can often come from what is considered the smaller institution or campus in the consolidation leading members of that original school to view the work as a take-over rather than a true consolidation.

In higher education, a consolidation "covers many different aspects—finance management and participation, regulation of student access and may extend to such areas as graduate training and research policy" (Neave, 1985). Neave (1985) further observes that the introduction or imposition of consolidation is from "measures bearing down on higher education from the outside from polity, from central government administration." The efforts of the government entity of the USG BOR can be viewed by those impacted, students and employees, as an introduction or imposition, but the efforts of those charged with carrying out the efforts require knowledge of what is best for their respective entity.

Regardless of what the efforts of the USG BOR are labeled, it is important to know what reasons can make these a success or failure. Consolidations and mergers are prevalent in the business world and allow for many studies of the successes and failures. While success is often attributed to strong leadership, studies have found key reasons for failures in efforts to bring together two entities into one:

"Burke and Biggart (1997) conducted a study of interorganizational relations and found that the majority of 45 failures could be attributed to six key reasons. These reasons include: (a) insufficient clarity about goals and how to measure progress toward the goals; (b) imbalance of power in the two merged organizations and control between the two merged organizations; (c) imbalance of expertise, status, and/or prestige between the two parties; (d) overconfident and unrealistic notions about the future success of the relationship; (e) lack of a contingency plan; and (f) lack of perceived equity, for example, distributions of key jobs and roles. These failure reasons are related to leadership, culture and communication, three key elements that consistently have been found to be critical to any merger" (Burke & Biggart, 1997 as found in Ellis, 2011).

Considering these six reasons, the USG BOR must focus on finding the right leaders for each consolidation implemented to help provide strong leadership and avoid the key reasons for failure. “Consolidation initially occurs at the administrative level. However, integration of departments and institutes is necessary to sustain the new institution” (Heck, et al., 2013).

History of Consolidations in Higher Education

“Consolidation serves as one tool available to statewide regulatory groups, such as a board of regents, who seek cost-saving measures in higher education” (Heck, et al., 2013). Consolidations of institutions of higher education are not a new concept throughout the world and even in the state of Georgia. Consolidations of institutions began as far back as the 1930s and 1940s with the consolidation of Rutgers and even continue in recent years. In the 1990s, the State of Minnesota consolidated 35 institutions into one institution and closed some campuses renaming the consolidated institution as the Minnesota State College and University system or MnSCU. The Technical System of Georgia consolidated several institutions in 2007-12 just ahead of the USG efforts, which may have been a precursor to the efforts and ideas for Chancellor Huckaby. “Since 2010, about 40 college mergers across at least nine states… have involved at least one public college” (Quinton, 2017). Higher education consolidation is not limited to institutions in the United States either as European institutions have made the same efforts over time to combine resources and become more efficient.

Rutgers University “more resembled a private institution” in the early 1900s with only 988 students and “only 7.4% of all New Jersey students attending college in 1923” (Wechsler, 2010). The state legislature and Board of Regents offered limited funding to both Rutgers and the Newark Institute leading to the consolidation of the Newark Institute with Dana College in 1936 which allowed the institutions to combine and later pull in the New Jersey Law School (NJLS) creating the University of Newark in order to boost enrollment and provide a larger student body and share of the students of New Jersey while providing more opportunities in the City of Newark (Wechsler, 2010). In 1945, Rutgers University was designated as a New Jersey public university and then consolidated with the University of Newark in 1946 to include the Rutgers College of Pharmacy and create the Newark Colleges of Rutgers University. Among trustees, questions arose of whether the consolidation was morally or economically wrong, and some suggested it was "fine if it works," with the overall conclusion that the move made more sense than unilateral expansion with a decline in enrollments across the region (Wechsler, 2010). Among the student population of Dana College, students saw the move as a limitation of their educational freedoms and liberalism which would lower academic standards and increase state regulation with additional growth in state aid (Wechsler, 2010). The Rutgers mergers in 1936 and 1946 were new to the idea in higher education but played out to the benefit of the institutions, the city, the students, and the state with the enrollment reaching 2,746 in 1947 (Wechsler, 2010). As the state university of New Jersey, Rutgers has taken on other institutions in the time since and most recently completed a consolidation with the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in 2013 and in February of 2020 began discussions of merging the institutions two medical schools into a single medical school with two locations (Makin, 2020).

In the 1990s, the Minnesota State College and University (MnSCU) was formed through legislation presented by then Senate Majority Leader Roger Moe to merge seven state universities, 34 technical colleges and 21 community colleges under the direction of one board (History and background, n.d.). Senator Moe's recommendations for the merger suggested the benefits of an increase in institutional accountability, improvement of student transfers, coordination of program delivery, and improvement of facility planning as the primary reasoning (History and background, n.d.). The general expectation from his plan was for long-term improvements in efficiency and effectiveness and not short-term money savings (History and background, n.d.). Begun in 1991, the effective date of the bill which passed was July 1, 1995 giving an extended timeframe for the work to be completed. The extended time period provided for a change in chancellors just before the effective date and creating a change in directives (History and background, n.d.). The system saw a reduction in employees, mainly in the state office in the early timeframe of the consolidation efforts, with no initial reduction of campuses, the system has now been reduced by 15 campuses to 38 (Trombley, 1997).

Koon (2015) covered the process of consolidation in the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) starting in 2008. The TCSG had a new commissioner when Governor Sonny Perdue appointed Ronald Jackson after two years as the interim commissioner of the system. He began his work "to improve efficiencies in college administration and ensure student access to education programs during a downturn in the state economy" by announcing a series of administrative mergers (Koon, 2015). In Jackson's plans, the mergers would not close any campuses and would house the president on a main campus with a provost to oversee the daily operations of any other campuses for the institution (Koon, 2015). A total of 17 TCSG institutions were combined into seven institutions in the process with no campus closures.

While the United States has seen many consolidations, European higher education has experienced its share of efforts to make institutions more efficient. Most efforts were established through public policy in the US with state schools and in Europe, the same can be seen. Walczak (2017) wrote of the many policies throughout Europe which led to consolidation and marketing of the institutions over the years starting in the 1970s. Higher education institutions in Europe saw efforts of consolidation throughout the 1970s and 1980s with others occurring in more recent years. Walczak (2017) explains that many of the consolidations in European higher education were the result of public policies in different countries which created a need for consolidation to more effectively support the institutions and benefit the individual country's citizens. The first of many in Europe was the *Hochschulrahmengeserz* in 1976 in the Federal Republic of Germany followed by the Swedish Higher Education Reform Act of 1977. In 1982, the Greek Higher Education Law was passed followed by the French Higher Education Guideline Law in 1984. From 1993 to 2013, Poland experienced consolidations of public and private institutions beginning with Jagiellonian University and the Medical Academy in 1993 followed by the University of Warmia and Mazury in 1999 and University of Zielona Gora in 2001 (Walczak, 2017). The European viewpoint is that the consolidation efforts serve for "improving competitiveness of universities and can also contribute to improved quality of educational services" (Walczak, 2017).

Neave (1985) reviewed a decade of European governments consolidating institutions under public policies established to change the view of academia. These policies used consolidation and qualitative change in an effort to shift the mentality of the 1960s from a place for community building among students to focus on academics. The shift occurred as the governments attempted to focus academia to providing the necessary offerings in education to promote the best workers, future for the country and what was needed at that period of time to best benefit the country. Shifts in programs were seen during this period of change to keep students focused and directed in lines of education and work which would benefit the country's economy rather than promoting community building in the institutions.

Similarly, the USG system schools were in a time of building during the 2000s with new facilities being added on campuses across the system, given the growth in athletics, recreation, student activities, and many other co-curricular spaces. With a change in chancellors and shift in leadership, the USG BOR felt it was the right time to make a shift back to the focus of providing proper regionally-based educational institutions with more focus on providing educational services.

USG Consolidations

"University consolidations have more far-reaching effects than simple increases in student numbers and programs," point out Johnson and Kosturski (2017) and "it is vital to look closely at both partners in the consolidation to see where similarities and differences lie" (Johnson & Kosturski, 2017). Of the nine consolidated institutions created by the USG BOR since 2013, all have been related to a push for economies of scale and scope as proposed under principle number 4 of Huckaby's principles. In conjunction with principle 4, principle 6 focuses on streamlining of administration but maintaining quality and service levels. Both principles 4 and 6 focus on the goals of monetary savings in personnel and streamlining operations for the institutions. Some of the institutions consolidated had higher debt and were consolidated with others with less debt and higher student enrollment to offset the two institutions and try to balance the new institution.

Most efforts have been aimed at principles 2 and 5 with 2 focusing on accessibility and regional identity while 5 focuses on regional economic development. In both principles, the aspect of developing the region in which the institution operates is a primary focus. With a focus on the regions, some of the nine consolidations had a larger area to serve while some had large distances to cover in their new consolidated institution. The evaluation of success in this area has to consider the additional travel for staff to cover multiple campuses.

Principles 1 and 3 created some of the most contentious debates for institutions. Principle 1 called for enhancement of opportunities for students to increase education levels while 3 called for avoidance of duplication of programs. Views varied as new institutions had to consider what degrees to offer on what campus while also considering whether campuses should have specific degrees only available on certain campuses. These debates came to both principles with different institutions taking different views on the offerings of degrees on a single or multiple campuses.

Overall, the six principles of consolidation were new to the USG and seemed aggressive in some of the efforts, however, it was not new to higher education. With many other institutions and states having consolidated over the past century, the USG still was making new waves in the efforts of consolidation throughout the state with the focus appearing to be aimed at the financial impact. What impacts the finances most in higher education is student tuition and fee rates, enrollment, retention of students, and employee attrition. Each of these pieces have a profound impact on the budget for an institution including state appropriations based on enrollment. The complete picture of consolidation comes into play when considering the impact of pre- and post-consolidation views of budgets, enrollment, retention, and tuition and fees.

In the study, Chapter II reviews the literature on consolidation not only in higher education but also in government and business to provide a comparison of the processes. Chapter III defines the data and methods to be used in the evaluation of the consolidations in the USG, and the chapter will describe the two stages of data collection. Chapter IV analyzes the findings in the two stages through an evaluation of trends at all nine institutions in the areas of budget, enrollment, retention, and tuition and fees as well as an exploration of the results from the surveys of consolidation committee members at three selected institutions. Chapter V is a discussion of the significance and implications of the findings in Chapter IV to provide policy recommendations and directions for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Flow Model of Consolidation

Consolidation can take place in different forms and in different areas to include government, business, and higher education. In the three areas, consolidation comes about in different methods and varies based on the needs. To arrive at the need and efforts of consolidation, Bhagwan, Grobbelaar, and Bam (2018) have identified a deal flow model for the process. They identify six steps from start to completion of consolidation beginning with formulation of the idea, locating a target, investigation, negotiation, integration, and motivation (Bhagwan, Grobbelaar, & Bam, 2018). These authors recommend these six steps in the main area of business for consolidations, mergers, and acquisitions; however, the steps can apply to the work of bringing together entities in any of the three areas of government, business, or higher education.

In the first step of the flow model, the formulation of a plan for consolidation becomes the primary work. The group sets to identify the target of the consolidation process based on the objectives, growth strategy, and rationale while working to determine the feasibility of the selected goals (Bhagwan et al., 2018). While the group set forth to make the identification and formulation varies based on the area, the process still holds true for all three areas. In government, the leaders must identify and provide rationale and feasibility for their plan.

Businesses will take a longer and wider look as the targets and objectives, which differ from governments limited by borders, focus on a larger group of targets. Higher education will differ in who drives the efforts and may be a non-partisan group such as the governmental agency or regents making the efforts to show the need for consolidation as opposed to the recommendations coming directly from the institutions.

The second step of the flow model focuses on location and can work along with step three of the investigation or due diligence. The location is the development of finding similar entities which will make a proper match to the initial entity such as an adjacent or lower level government body or similar business (Bhagwan et al., 2018). Along with locating the proper partner for the procedure, an analysis of the fit for the two comes from further feasibility and exploration of all aspects of the other entity (Bhagwan et al., 2018).

In the fourth step, contact is made in the form of negotiation between the entities which are considering becoming one. During this process, the ideas of consolidation, merger, or acquisition will be driven by one of the two firms and guide the process further. Factors to consider in business but not the others areas include price while all must consider the performance, people, legal protection, and governance (Bhagwan et al., 2018). Development through negotiation and a resolution to the type of consolidation leads to step five which is integration of the two entities to become one entity. This is customized by the decisions prior to this step which focus on the plans for success with the processes, people, technology, and systems of the new entity (Bhagwan et al., 2018).

The final step is motivation which applies in all cases. Once the consolidation, merger, or acquisition has been performed, the leadership must motivate the new entity to maximize the long-term success and value for the work completed and yet to come (Bhagwan et al., 2018). Consistency in leadership, directives, and goals are important to align all areas of the new entity.

These six steps apply to the efforts needed to be successful in all forms of bringing together entities to create a new entity. Even with these similarities in steps, there are differences between the areas of government, business, and higher education in terms of consolidation. Identifying whether the efforts are a consolidation, merger, or acquisition is one of the key components to the approach as each is viewed and handled in a variance of methods. How each entity approaches the move to a single entity is viewed differently at various levels of the organization. In government and higher education, the view of administration or politicians varies from that of the employees who are most impacted by the drive for efficiency and economies of scale. In business, the focus is aimed towards the ownership, to include shareholders, and the profit which will be seen from the work. Employees in each case can view the work differently from owners, administration, and politicians based on how it impacts their employment. How the process is approached and handled through the steps and actions of those in charge of the work will determine the view of all involved including customers, students, and citizens.

Methods of Consolidation

In consolidation efforts, two types of consolidations exist. True consolidation in a local government requires approval by voters or the state legislature while service consolidations do not require the approval of either. Based on these two ideas, the consolidations of the institutions in the USG would be considered a service consolidation which "results in the elimination of an existing department and the restructuring of a surviving or reconstituted organization with the same or similar function" (Abernathy, 2012). Additionally, "unlike municipal consolidation, the process typically does not require voter or legislative approval" (Holzer and Fry, 2011 as cited in Maher, 2015). The consolidations were approved through the channels of the BOR on the recommendation of the Chancellors, both Huckaby and then Wrigley, of the USG. "Service consolidation is not solely about cost savings" and "often include multiple goal statements. These goals are often about enhancing service quality" (Maher, 2015). "Stated goals of consolidation include achieving efficiency, cost reductions, reducing duplication, providing a larger range of options for students, standardizing credits for transfer across institutions, and in several cases, improving regional and international competitiveness and enhance rankings" (University Mergers in Europe, 2015 as cited in Hiatt and Richardson, 2017).

Similar to the two types, there are two modes for which consolidation occurs and the success of the consolidation can be defined in different ways but the "objective should be to stabilize and ultimately reduce debt" (Molnar, 2012). The two modes for consolidation are spending cuts and cuts in administration (Kickert & Randma-Liiv, 2017). "Spending cuts are more likely to stabilize debt" than are cuts in administration (Kickert & Randma-Liiv, 2017). Cuts in administration are seen and felt as temporary cuts to the budget therefore not a sustainable adjustment. For the consolidation efforts of the USG to see a reduction in budgets for the long-term, the consolidated institutions will have to find spending cuts past the initial savings seen in administration cuts.

Governments

Consolidation has been a method of governments chasing efficiency for many reasons in the past. Administrators see potential for increases in efficacy, costs savings, and development of economic benefits in the process which drives the efforts (Maher, 2015). City-county consolidations often focus upon efficiency in services, and one of the earliest was the 1805 consolidation of the City of New Orleans and Orleans Parish to create the New Orleans City-Parish (Duvall, 1999 as cited in Maher, 2015). The method of consolidation in government is thought to reduce government expenditures and increase economic development opportunities (Faulk, Schaal, & Taylor, 2013). Since 1960, there have been 26 successful consolidations in the US of city-county efforts with Georgia having the most at eight (Faulk et al., 2013).

These consolidations generally involve what is considered a general-purpose government such as cities, counties, and townships. Historically, the low number of consolidations comes from debates "between regionalists and localists over the most appropriate structure for local government…the arguments tend to fall into one of four categories: efficiency, equity, spillovers, and development" (Hall, Matti, & Yang, 2018). The regional and local debate stems from discussions regarding economies of scale for a larger government entity to create more savings but also creates arguments by opponents wanting to avoid "fragmentation as institutionalizing segregation by race and wealth" (Hall et al., 2018). These debates play into the consolidation of institutions when the USG considers the consolidation of schools with diverse backgrounds. Similarly, many consolidations are not solely focused on cost savings in the newly formed government or entity, but often have multiple goal statements focused on quality (Maher, 2015). While Maher points to his study showing little evidence of communities committing to service consolidation experiencing overall reductions in spending, only one found a negative relationship between consolidation of services and operating expenditures.

Debates over consolidation often focus upon the area of efficiency and the actual cost savings. Maher (2015) pointed to cost savings as "very difficult to predict (Hirsch, 1959) and startup costs are often not accurately estimated or completely ignored (Holzer and Fry, 2011)." He goes on to point to the need for "clear expenditure evaluations (before, during, and after consolidation)" as important since true results may not be known until after the consolidation has occurred (Maher, 2015).

Much of the literature has focused on consolidations within the United States; however, European efforts have also produced the consolidation of government entities. Molnar (2012) focused on the larger consolidations in OECD countries and found evidence which suggests success in cost savings comes from reductions in spending and increases in revenue items for these governments. She identifies three factors which impact the success of consolidation: duration, size, and intensity (Molnar, 2012). The length or duration of the time given or taken to complete the consolidation can impact the success as additional complications can arise, which will hinder the consolidation efforts. In addition to the duration, the size of the consolidation taking place, geographically as well as monetarily, can have an impact which slows the process. Finally, the intensity of the consolidation is identified as the "annual average size of the reduction of the underlying cyclically-adjusted budget balance" (Molnar, 2012). The difference in intensity can range from large improvements in the budget over a short time or a gradual integration of expenditure cuts and increases in revenue over a longer period of time (Molnar, 2012).

Molnar (2012) also provides empirical data which reveals that adjustments in the spending of the government rather than tax driven changes to stabilize the government are more lasting (Molnar, 2012). She further points to revenue-based consolidation to be less effective due to increased spending and may show temporary stabilization but proves to hamper the efforts in the medium term (Molnar, 2012). She concludes in her work, "Consolidations based on spending cuts are more likely to stabilize debt" rather than revenue-driven or tax driven, debt-based consolidations.

In comparison to Molnar's study, Kicker and Randma-Liiv (2017) show a correlation between spending cuts and fiscal impact to have a positive effect on the budget for sustained savings but consider it insignificant, while also pointing out cuts in administration only have a negative fiscal effect which does not sustain over time. They point to fiscal consolidation being defined as the process of reducing budget deficits and debt accumulation. Through a study of multiple European countries who began consolidation as early as 2008, Kicker and Randma-Liiv compared the efforts of these countries in reducing their debt. Prior data reveals consolidation with spending cuts rather than increases in taxes helps reduce deficits, while spending-based fiscal consolidation can create economic growth if cutbacks are made properly in administration. This study concluded consolidation using cut backs can actually make the economy weaker in a country, and countries should focus on stimulation of economic growth instead of fiscal austerity. Kicker and Randma-Liiv conclude governments in Western Europe will have to focus on proper spending cuts to stabilize their governments rather than making across the board cuts.

Each effort of consolidation tends to focus on cost savings from reducing expenses through economies of scale whether in the US or globally. Abernathy (2012) focused on service consolidations in his study using a survey of government officials involved in consolidations to study the perceived benefits of consolidation through financial, service, accountability, and miscellaneous areas. Survey data showed financial savings was the highest expected advantage with 50.9% selecting this as the top expectation of the consolidation, while 18.8% selected efficiency and only 5.6% choosing economies of scale. Other findings from his study show the top service advantage, according to the data, as revealed by the 30.1% who believed there would be enhanced delivery of services, 15% believed consolidation could lessen public confusion, and 15% saw reduction of duplication as an advantage.

Faulk et al. (2013) studied the consolidation of Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky, in terms of the spending pre-consolidation, during consolidation, and post-consolidation. By using percentages of the total budget spent in the three phases as opposed to actual dollar amounts, the study shows where spending changed as a portion of the budget. The study showed increases and decreases in different areas of general and administration, public safety, public works, solid waste, inspection permits, economic development, culture and recreation, and interest. Faulk et al. found an increase in the consolidation year in general and administration, but a drop after consolidation, and they found the same in solid waste. Four of the other categories saw a rise in cost share during the post-consolidation year were public safety and public works. The biggest area of cost saving shown for Louisville-Jefferson County, Kentucky, was in the area of interest which decreased from 6.1% in the averaged nine years pre-consolidation to 2.6% in the eight years post consolidation. This particular study by Faulk et al. showed savings in areas which benefited from the consolidation and allowed funding to go to more important areas of need through the process.

Both Faulk et al. (2013) and Abernathy (2012) point to community education and communication as key components to the success of a consolidation. Abernathy (2012) indicates the responses from county managers in North Carolina promote education and communication with the public as key points to the success in the efforts of service consolidations. Faulk et al. (2013) provide insight in the cost share changes for the budget as a manner by which a government can use the data to promote and redefine the public image of the government for key issues.

Businesses (Mergers, Acquisitions, and Consolidations)

In business, there are typically three methods by which businesses come together: mergers, acquisitions, and consolidation. Each has similar efforts, meanings, and use as in government and higher education, though, consolidation is less of a common practice than mergers and acquisitions in business. In any of these methods of combining companies, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) is the department within the federal government which must approve the chosen method of entities joining (Panicola, 2019) as compared to government approvals from voters or the government leaders and higher education coming from regional accreditation units and the governing board of trustees of the institutions.

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are seen often in business and a widely common practice in healthcare. M&A are often used for the expansion of operations and to reach into new areas or markets. Battersbey (2018) identifies a merger as two or more separate entities come together to create a new entity in which the original entities are, theoretically, equal partners. He identifies acquisitions as the purchase of one entity by another entity when the purchased entity is absorbed by the purchaser. Acquisitions can also be completed when the purchasing company acquires the assets of another business and is common when a company files bankruptcy to have another acquire its assets only (Battersby, 2018). Consolidation differs from M&A in which two or more entities come together to create a new entity with approval from shareholders of both and equitable shares are given to all shareholders in the new firm (Battersby, 2018).

Corporate governance is a key difference between business consolidations and those in the government and higher education sectors and can be broken into three primary groups: manager holdings, unaffiliated shareholders, and board of directors (Zhao & Pascual, 2018).

Manager holdings is identified as a company where the shares of the company are concentrated in managers and will look to maximize the wealth of the shareholders (Zhao & Pascual, 2018). In the unaffiliated shareholder governance, the knowledge of the shareholders impacts the overall performance of the corporate governance as the unaffiliated shareholder manages aspects of the company operations which could reduce agent problems and enhance corporate performance along with positive intention within M&A (Zhao & Pascual, 2018). Governance by the Board of Directors with the smaller board sizes have shown a better ability to supervise the actions of the CEOs and create stronger governance (Zhao & Pascual, 2018).

One primary difference in consolidating business, in comparison to higher education and government entities, is the premium price compared to the rate of return on consolidation for the entities involved (Zhao & Pascual, 2018). In M&A, the premium is the expected earnings the investors will see from the target company and is typically higher than the market price (Zhao & Pascual, 2018). Companies must consider the impact of the premium on future operating to not acquire too much additional debt in the process, which would make the M&A unsuccessful by impacting the cash flow and loss of wealth in the long-term (Zhao & Pascual, 2018). Consolidation as compared to M&A brings the two entities together to form a new company and reissues shares to the shareholders under the new company without the premium and potential impact to cash flows or long-term wealth through paper transactions rather than actual payments (Zhao & Pascual, 2018).

Business consolidations, mergers, and acquisitions can focus on two different market areas. In-market efforts focuses on targets in the same or adjacent geographic markets to the business, which differs from cross-market efforts which look to expand the geographic map in further reaching markets which are not typically adjacent (Panicola, 2019). Cross-market consolidation or M&A by a business may expand across states which are not in close proximity or could expand internationally. Governments and higher education will often focus on the in-market efforts similar to a business. Hospital and healthcare systems use in-market for the benefits of efficiency in operations and reduction of redundancy in order to provide better quality at lower costs (Panicola, 2019). Businesses differ in the desire to expand market areas through cross-market mergers to expand the geographic and diversity of offerings. In addition, cross-market mergers can provide increased assets to help support the company and assist in funding capital projects even when income may be trending down (Panicola, 2019).

School Districts

In addition to higher education, local educations systems have experienced consolidation over the years. Duncombe and Yinger (2010) identify the expected savings in consolidation of education related to economies of size which they define as a decline in the cost of education per pupil but more specifically for education, "economies of size exist if spending on education per pupil declines as the number of pupils goes up, controlling for school district performance." The performance is key and must be controlled to meet proper measures for each district by test scores, graduation rates, and other measures.

A study by Meyer, Scott, Strang, and Creighton from 1987 covers the reduction in school districts from 1940-1980 which saw over 100,000 school districts eliminated during the period (Meyer, Scott, Strang, & Creighton, 1987). Meyer et al. (1987) also showed the reduction in average school districts per state to decline from 2,437 to 318 while the average number of pupils in the same period increased from 216 to 2,646 (Meyer et al., 1987; Strang, 1987). Both studies point to the ideas of centralization of leadership and administration while reducing the costs overall for the consolidated districts. In addition, Meyer et al. (1987) provided data showing significant decreases in the number of schools from nearly 4,000 down to 2,000 in the period and districts from almost 2,500 to less than 500 for the organization and centralization. While the study showed decreases in districts and schools, the number of superintendents remained steady and the number of principals increased from around 800 to just over 2,000 (Meyer et al., 1987).

Strang theorized in his 1987 study, the larger consolidated districts allow for proper administration of public education by replacing local politics with formal organization. This issue could be seen in school district consolidation as local politics play into the educational system locally, however, is different from higher education which often is a form of state politics for public institutions. Both share the points of Meyer et al. (1987) and Strang (1987) which consider the efforts of consolidation in the education system as bureaucratization and centralization of the work. Strang focuses on the centralization stating "large, bureaucratic organizations make sense. They are big enough and standardized enough for information and influence to flow smoothly to and from the center" (Strang, 1987). In the same notion, a central leader for an institution can have larger reaching impact over the institutions and multiple campuses for more centralized development of the consolidated institution in higher education.

Both studies by Meyer et al. (1987) and Strang (1987) refer to savings primarily in the capital expenditures rather than in administration and personnel. A more recent study by Duncombe and Yinger (2001) showed initial increases in cost per pupil when consolidation occurred with a gradual decline between years four and seven after consolidation which eventually off-set the increase in cost per pupil. In the study of New York districts, the areas of instruction, administration, and transportation saw "cost savings beyond those associated with enrollment reach 19 to 34 percent, again depending on the category, by the tenth year after consolidation" (Duncombe & Yinger, 2001). The study concluded the smaller school districts benefit more than the larger districts in consolidation. Duncombe and Yinger (2001) concluded cost savings are around 22 percent for the two 300-pupil districts, 7-9 percent in the study of the two 900-pupil districts, and very little impact to cost for the two 1,500-pupil districts in the study. The conclusion for school district consolidation was the smaller districts consolidation tended to warrant the investment of state aid for the efforts but not in the larger districts (Duncombe & Yinger, 2001).

Higher Education

One primary difference in business acquisitions and mergers as compared to consolidation in higher education is the level of success. Hiatt and Richardson (2017) refer to Rowley's (1997) academic institution rate of success at 90% for consolidation while they refer to corporate organizations having a much lower success rate according to Choi (2011) without providing an exact percentage. Higher education consolidations are often based on policy and the needs of the region, state, or country in preparing students for what is deemed to be the best for prosperity and well-being of the region served (Neave, 1985).

The basic ideas of a consolidation, as laid out by the USG, focuses on savings from reduction in costs through economies of scale. The reduction of positions, duplicate services, sharing of buildings, and equipment (Maher, 2015) all provide specific areas where reduction will occur. Though the idea of economies of scale suggests that governments consolidate to eliminate duplication and redundancy in the organizations by achieving economies of scale and scope (Faulk et al., 2013; Goodman & Leland, 2013).

“The basic premise underlying consolidation is that it offers a means of providing the same services more efficiently” (Maher, 2015). These ideas stand true for the consolidations of the USG in the attempt to save money from duplicate positions as well as to reduce repetitive programs which could then serve the students regionally and more efficiently. Under the same premise of savings, the US healthcare system has had success in consolidations and mergers though some situations have created more costs and lesser service after consolidation, which is what higher education must avoid. To avoid this issue, the USG BOR and other consolidating institutions need to consider the same question Panicola (2019) asks of the healthcare mergers, acquisitions, and consolidations, is “this good for the U.S. health care and in the best interests of patients and communities.” She goes on to point out the idea of consolidation in health care is “a moral question focused on the common good and one management, boards, and sponsors… should be asking” (Panicola, 2019). In relation to higher education, the focus must be on keeping the costs low and operating more efficiently “versus focusing almost single-mindedly on a narrow set of moral issues that revolve around cooperation” (Panicola, 2019). Panicola (2019) points to health care and hospital consolidation as needing to be focused on the patients and not “to obtain a strategic or financial edge over the competition.”

Higher education consolidation is not new as “about 40 college consolidations across nine states” have occurred since 2010 and at least half have included at least one public college (Quinton, 2017). Prior to 2010, consolidations were seen in New Jersey and other states but what is called the mega-merger occurred in Minnesota as the state merged 53 campuses into one state system. This consolidation involved two-year and four-year institutions coming together into one system and six years after the consolidation occurred, “there appear to have been more losses than gains” (Trombley, 1997). The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) did not see success during the first six years due to an extensive timetable for completion, changing leadership, and heavy layoffs which created unrest in the new system (Trombley, 1997). Issues pointed to the system being too big as problematic for the administration as well (Trombley, 1997). The system was provided a four-year period within which to make the consolidation of 53 institutions without removing any campuses, but the reductions occurred in the system main office early on. Consolidation of two-year colleges with technical colleges created a "statewide pay schedule for technical college faculty and support staff" which "has cost an additional $13 million a year" (Trombley, 1997).

Since the MnSCU consolidation, the system has reduced from 53 to 38 campuses (MnSCU Board of Trustees, 2017) and the number of employees went from 20,000 in 1997 (Trombley) to 18,374 in 2010 and 16,917 in 2015 (MnSCU Board of Trustees, 2017). The operating budget for Fiscal Year 1998 (FY98) was $988 million, yet 20 years later, the Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) budget was $2 billion (MnSCU Board of Trustees, 2017). A reduction of 15 campuses for MnSCU and over 3,000 employees saw the budget double in 20 years while the number of students enrolled in 1996 was 145,172 (Trombley, 1997) and it has decreased to 131,640 for 2017 (MnSCU Board of Trustees, 2017). MnSCU has seen the budget double while staffing, number of campuses, and headcount of system students all decreased in the past 20 years. The highly contested consolidation for the system has seemed to achieve some of the goals 26 years later but not the desired savings in budget and increase of accessibility to students. One view of the reasoning for lack of success in the MnSCU consolidation could be the result of the majority leader of the Minnesota State Senate, Roger Moe, forcing the legislative move to consolidate the system (Trombley, 1997). "Conditions that make governments decide to consolidate also influence the outcome of consolidation" (Molnar, 2012). Based on this idea, the force and methods used by Moe, in achieving the consolidation, could be the cause by which the resistance occurred early on and stretched out the timeframe for completion.

MnSCU initially did not desire to close campuses as the system goals included providing regional access to all communities, but it has closed 15 campuses since the move was made. Public support often drives these efforts with studies showing favor to “measures that will decrease costs without harming either access or quality” (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). Access is a key to the public view along with retaining quality as many see the need for higher education as the key to high-quality jobs (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008). In addition to creating access, most Americans are opposed to measures which reduce the quality of education such as a reduction of hours required to graduate as “nearly two-thirds reject the ideas of reducing the number of courses required for a degree or of consolidating programs by closing regional campuses” (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2008).

European consolidation efforts of the late 20th century were aimed at government control over higher education. Laws, acts, and other statutes passed in Germany, France, Sweden, and Greece from 1976 to 1984 aimed efforts at control of higher education by the government. Across the four countries, consolidation efforts focused on “strengthening the regional dimension and the formal influence of local political interests” while also “thickening the administrative overlay” (Neave, 1985). European efforts were aimed primarily at “mass higher education in terms of internal organization of academia, reinforcement and introduction of ‘scientific management techniques’ which served to increase government control over the external frame of higher education and also in its inner workings” (Neave, 1985). France’s Grand Excellence initiative “has encouraged the development of groups of universities, some that may result in mergers" with the intention of competing globally with other higher education institutions (Hiatt & Richardson, 2017).

The USG began the process in 2011 with the six principles of consolidation approved by the BOR, but saving money is not included in the principles. The principles of consolidation focus on efficiency and better delivery methods in order "to pump any administrative savings back into academics" (Wieder, 2012). Without including a specific numerical goal, the USG can focus on efficiency, without the need to show savings, as the effort to not close campuses could have the effect of the consolidations ending up costing the state money (Wieder, 2012).

The need for the consolidation to save money to be reinvested in academics comes on the heels of reductions in state and federal funding available to institutions of higher education. "In 2012, state governments provided 34.1% of the federal, state, and personal spending on higher education, down from 60.3% in 1975" (Ribando & Evans, 2015). Additionally, Ribando and Evans (2015) show significant increases in tuition costs while state educational expenditures are down over the same five-year period of review. Lauren Russel, a graduate student at MIT, found the average consolidation of institutions in higher education impact the student with a seven percent increase in tuition (Quinton, 2017). With increased tuition already an issue for institutions, consolidation can increase the tuition even more as the state provides fewer appropriations to the institutions.

One research study on the impact to student success in consolidation of institutions in the USG prior to 2017 shows a positive impact on the students in the first year of attendance as Lauren Russell of MIT stated:

“My evidence suggests that USG consolidations increased persistence for first-time undergraduate students…Students attending institutions that consolidated were more likely to complete two semesters of college than similar students at non-consolidated institutions after consolidations took effect. Taken as a whole, my results suggest that consolidations were beneficial of students and most likely reflect productivity improvements realized at affected campuses” (Downey, 2017).

Russell’s work also showed the increase in students completing at least two years at the first four consolidated institutions to have risen by 7.4% (Quinton, 2017). While Russell’s study revealed there was no rise in tuition and fees during the period under examination, the USG did approve increases at multiple consolidated institutions in the past three years. But the impact on students can be negative as Hiatt and Richardson (2017) highlight one of the USG consolidations, in which the actions by the institutions “can produce significant levels of stress in the student population.” Their study was a review of the consolidation of Kennesaw State University (KSU) and Southern Polytechnic State University (SPSU) as one of the first USG consolidations. While Russell showed success in the first and second year of college for students, Hiatt and Richardson (2015) showed significant stress caused to students on the SPSU campus due to the elimination of programs, requirements to transfer and loss of credit, need to change programs to finish, time restrictions to complete their work, and additional travel. While student success was seen in some areas, the additional stress was added to other students involved in the consolidations of the USG institutions.

Successes of the consolidations often pointed to by the USG include savings of spending. In an article from 2017, it was estimated “consolidations resulted in a collective savings of $24.4 million” (Seltzer, 2017). More recently, Chancellor Wrigley has used the number of $32 million in savings in speaking engagements regarding the consolidations. While there are currently no studies which breakdown the exact spending of the consolidated institutions available, the consolidation of Georgia Perimeter College and Georgia State University, which created a larger map and added five campuses to Georgia State, showed $6 million of the savings used to “hire new advisers, financial aid counselors and other staff for student services” (Quinton, 2017). While success has many definitions, Molnar (2012) states that “success is defined in different ways in the literature, but its objective should be to stabilize and ultimately to reduce debt.”

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The study is driven by the following research question: have consolidations in the USG had a positive or negative impact on the institutions consolidated in regards to efforts to save money, improve education opportunities through enrollment and retention, and reduce student costs? This study also explores the campus consolidation process in relation to not only the composition of the committee but also the charge, issues, roadblocks, and lessons learned.

Research Hypotheses:

For this study, there are two stages of the research. Stage one considers budgets, student enrollment as FTE, student retention, and tuition and fees (cost of attendance) as the four key areas to be examined in the data analysis. Stage two is a comparison of the make-up of the consolidation committees at the nine institutions, and a survey of five members of the committees at three selected consolidated institutions. A total of ten hypotheses are be tested in the study.

Budget:

H1: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in personal services.

H2: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in operating expenses.

Student enrollment:

H3: Consolidation has a negative impact on enrollment initially.

Student Retention:

H4: There is a negative effect on student retention following consolidation.

Tuition and Fees:

H5: There is an increase in tuition and fees after consolidation.

H6: Cost of attendance at consolidated institutions increases after consolidation.

Surveys of Consolidation Committee Members:

H7: Each institution encountered similar challenges in the consolidation process.

H8: Changes in leadership during the consolidation negatively impacted the consolidation process.

H9: Multiple charges to the committee negatively impacted the consolidation process.

H10: The charge was the same for each institution.

Methodology

The methodology for assessment of the nine consolidated institutions in the University System of Georgia is a two-stage approach. The first stage is a quantitative approach to focus on four primary areas of data with subsets in two of the data sets to analyze the impact of the consolidations. The four areas to be reviewed are budget, enrollment, retention, and tuition and fee structures. These four areas make up the intended impacted areas with the consolidations focused upon saving money and improving enrollment numbers while lowering costs through reduction of redundancy in positions through economies of scale. The first subset of data comes in the category of budget in which the overall budget is split into personal services, operating expenses, athletics, and student affairs for review of where the savings were found. The second subset of data is part of the enrollment impact to consider of full-time enrollment (FTE) as compared to registered hours.

The USG runs all budgets on a fiscal year (FY) with the number following FY as the year of June 30. For example, FY10 is the year from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010. As there are nine different consolidations which took place between 18 institutions beginning with announcements in 2011 and the last in 2017, data is analyzed for up to five years prior to consolidation and up to five years post-consolidation. More recent consolidations have less data post-consolidation making the same number of years pre-consolidation a comparable comparison. Comparison of the same time-frame pre- and post-consolidation allowed comparison of trends leading up to the approval, announcement, starting date, and subsequent years of the consolidated institutions data in the areas studied. FY20 numbers for enrollment, tuition and fees, and retention from FY19 to FY20 were used from fall of 2019 and comparisons for the fall semester data in each year. Budgets are not finalized and reported for actual expenditures until July of each year, therefore FY20 budget data was not available and data was used through FY19 in this data set.

The first area to be considered is budget for the institutions. With an effort to reduce redundancy in positions as well as improve efficiency, the budget efforts look at the overall budget as well as the subcategories of personnel, operations, student activities, and travel. A comparison of the budgets of the nine institutions' data was used for an equal number of years as available up to five years pre- and post-consolidation. The comparison provides direct view of what areas (personnel, etc.) savings were seen or costs were increased. Additionally, review of the revenue area of tuition revenue was included in the comparison of pre- and post-consolidation data to assess changes in revenue for the institutions. The USG provides annual reports on the web site with the breakdown of budget by FY to allow for the documentation and gathering of data from the web site for this portion of data.

The second area to be reviewed was enrollment at the institutions. Using data for the same timeframes as the budgets, a timeline was used to review each institution showing the trends of enrollment at the institutions pre- and post-consolidation. The enrollment numbers used look at both FTE and headcount for the institutions. The author recognizes that other factors may play an impact in the enrollment trends, however, the expectation is to find a commonality in the impact on enrollment at each institution. For consistency in efforts and comparison, data for this measurement comes from the USG reports as some institutions have this data posted on their own site and it may vary slightly from the USG posting, the USG report uses numbers as of the census date for the fall term and were the comparison for this study.

The third comparison of institutional data is retention, which has an impact on enrollment as well. One study showed an increase in retention of first semester to second semester students as well as first-year to second-year students at consolidated institutions in the USG (Downey, 2017). The trends are reviewed in retention numbers overall for the institutions in the same period as enrollment and budget timeframes. Data was gathered for the separate institutions prior to and leading up to consolidation and in the available years post-consolidation to see if the trend has increased as the principles work to make sure a better offering is made to the students at the consolidated institutions. Data used in this portion was based on retention at the individual institution as well as system-wide retention of students from each cohort at the one-year, two-year, and four-year marks. This data is accessible from the institutions directly and through the USG site. The data from the USG site was used for consistency in collection of all data.

The fourth area was a comparison of the tuition and fee structures at the institutions and cost of attendance (COA) was reviewed for the same period of time as the other four areas of data used in the study. The efforts and principles set forth to lower the cost for students to attend the institutions and the tuition and fee structures in conjunction with the COA provides a numerical comparison to the cost to the student at the institutions pre- and post-consolidation. This data is available in several areas and was gathered from the web sites of the individual institutions for the tuition and fees. The tuition and fees information is available through each institution's web site along with room and board costs to provide a proper set of data for analysis.

The second stage of the study used a survey of committees at selected institutions, approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix A), as well as a review of the diversity of representation of the consolidation committee make-up for all nine. First, an analysis of the make-up of the consolidation committees was conducted for the ix of members. Secondly, data for the survey comes from three consolidated institutions using a survey of the members of the institution's consolidation committee. In order to consider a diversity in the types of institutions consolidated, the selections were of a state university (Middle Georgia State University), comprehensive regional university (Georgia Southern University), and research university (Augusta University). The questions for the leaders of each consolidation group seeks to find the commonality of issues encountered in the process at each institution as well as learn what went well and what could be done differently. Further, a review of the leadership of the consolidation committee and the institution (president and provost) was considered in an effort to link any potential issues to a change of leadership in either area. In addition to changes in the leadership, the charge given to the committee was a focus of the survey to determine if changes occurred during the process or if the charge was consistent throughout to the committee.

Consolidation committees, as listed on the USG web site, were used to create a list of individuals for potential respondents to the survey. The first portion of this assessment was a comparison of the make-up of the committee members in a table reporting the number of members which are administration, faculty, staff, student, and community member. This assessment was compared across all nine institutions. For the survey, responses were sought from five members of the consolidation committee from the three institutions above with aspirations of responses from at least one administrator (preferably president or provost), one faculty member, one staff member, one student, and one community member for each institution, as available. A Qualtrics survey was created and link sent to each member of the committee selected. Faculty, staff, and administrators still with the institution were contacted as institutional emails were accessible. To contact the student members from the committees, the researcher used LinkedIn, Facebook, and other social media to contact the individual in order to receive an email address to send the link. For community members, if the individual's business is listed on the committee page, the researcher first attempted to find the email from the individual through the company site, but if this is not successful, the same method used to contact the student members was used by the researcher. The survey was sent to all members with email addresses which are attainable in order to get at least 5 responses from each institutional committee. After the initial email is sent, a second email was sent 7 days later as a follow up. If enough surveys have not been returned by the 14th day, the researcher made phone calls to individual members of the committees with less than 5 responses to attempt to gather more responses.

The survey consists of nineteen questions for the committee members (See Appendix B). Questions one through four focus on the make-up of the committee and changes in the individuals on the committee. Question one asks for the institution the individual represents in order to determine when an adequate number of responses have been received from the institution's committee and question two asks for the group represented: administrator, faculty, staff, student, or community member. Question three asks if the individual completing the survey was an original member of the committee in order to determine if the individual was aware of the process from the beginning and of changes. Question four focuses on how long the individual was on the committee and provides an idea of what impact their time on the committee could have on their view of the rest of the questions.

Questions five through nine are directed at the charge provided to the committee from beginning to end of the process. Question five asks for the original charge while question six asks if changes occurred during the process for the charge to the committee. Question seven asks for the top priority of the committee. Question eight focuses on where the directives or charges came from: Board of Regents, Chancellor, leadership in the institutions, or other areas. The purpose is to determine if charges and directives came from the same place for all committees in their work. Question nine is a follow up to eight, to determine if multiple directives came from multiple levels or entities. This provides for a consideration of where the directives come from to provide the best benefit and work to the committee.

Question ten asks the respondent about their opinion on the make-up of the committee as some committees had a mix of administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members while some had no community members. A prompt on how the group worked with these individuals from different parts of the institution helped determine if the diversity of the multiple stakeholders is beneficial or not to consolidation committees.

Questions eleven focuses on issues and potential problems which impacted the work of the committees and asked for the three major issues of the committee. This assisted in determining some of the major issues which could be seen across different consolidations which are similar in order to assist future consolidation committees with areas to address early. This data was displayed in a word cloud giving the top ten themes found from respondents. In creating the word cloud through Qualtrics, common words such as “the”, “and”, etc. were removed. Other common words may have to be removed such as “institution”, “consolidation”, or “merger” to find the primary themes as these words are not the descriptive words which explain the major issues.

Questions twelve and thirteen focus on leadership for the committee and university. In most cases, the president for the new institution was a member of one of the two institutions, however, in some of the cases the president or provost changed early in the committee work or before the work was completed. The purpose of question twelve is to determine which institutions experienced a change in the leadership, while question thirteen focuses on the aspect of whether or not the change impacted the committees work through delays, directive changes, or methods for completion of the consolidation.

Questions fourteen through sixteen are an opportunity for the respondent to give their opinion in the work of the committee and provided an opportunity for feedback in developing best practices for future consolidations. Question fourteen is an opinion question of whether the respondent thought the consolidation was successful for the institution. Question fifteen asks what lessons the committee may have learned from the process which could benefit other committees and individuals going through the process in the future. Question sixteen searches for the most difficult aspect the committee member encountered during the process. Determining what problems were encountered can help other committees avoid the pitfalls which may have been encountered by these committees. As in question eleven, question sixteen uses Qualtrics to create the world cloud which requires common words such as “the”, “and”, etc. to be removed. Other common words may have to be removed such as “institution”, “consolidation”, or “merger” to find the primary themes as these words are not the descriptive words which explain the major issues.

The final three questions are numbers seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen ask about the respondent’s views on culture and the new institution as well as gaining perspective for the responses. Question seventeen asks the respondent to assess their view of the organizational culture of the new institution with the options of the institution has one shared culture now or if different campuses still share an organizational culture similar to what was experienced prior to consolidation. Question eighteen asks for the view of whether the consolidation was viewed as a takeover by the respondent or if it was in fact considered consolidation. The answer to this question can give perspective to the overall views of the survey as well through the view the respondent has of the work of the consolidation being successful. Finally, question nineteen asks if the respondent is still a member of the institution in the same position as served on the committee allowing for the answers of yes and providing the position served to be the same as before consolidation or if it was different now from when serving on the committee. The other option is no the individual is no longer a member of the institution.

For the first stage of this study, a quantitative trend analysis was utilized to investigate the areas of budget, student enrollment, student retention, and tuition and fees across the nine consolidated institutions. Averages pre- and post-consolidations were analyzed with the expectation of declines immediately following consolidation in areas such as budget, enrollment, and retention as well as the potential for an increase in the cost of attendance. This allows for the testing of the first six hypotheses.

In the second stage of this study, a quantitative analysis was conducted of the survey results in relation to the charge, uses, roadblocks, and lessons learned from committee members at three different types of institutions: state university, comprehensive regional university, and a research university. Using the survey data for analysis allowed for testing of the final four hypotheses through the closed and open-ended survey questions.

The overall goal of the methods examined in this study are to consider the impact that each consolidation had on the new institution as compared to the former institutions in the areas of budget, enrollment, retention, and tuition and fees along with an investigation of how changes in leadership, committees, charges, or issues may have impacted the consolidation committee work to complete the consolidations. These areas provide future consolidation efforts with expectations for their process. The survey portion, of consolidation committee members at the three institutions selected, provides the opportunity to find information to assist the USG, BOR, Chancellor, and institution leadership with a start of best practices when moving through consolidation efforts in the future. Developing feedback from prior groups will help all levels of the institution and leaders initiating the consolidations with ways to create a better transition for their work and what to expect through the process.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Stage one of this study conducts a data analysis of the consolidated institutions to look for trends in savings or higher expenses from pre- to post-consolidation. There are four areas studied as stated in the previous chapter beginning with the budget followed by enrollment, retention, and cost of attendance. After considering the data related to these areas, stage two analyzes the survey data received from consolidation committee members at three institutions in relation to strengths, weaknesses, outcomes, and lessons learned. Questions were designed to gain feedback for development of best practices for future consolidations based on the experiences and information received from committee members of completed consolidations.

Stage One: By the Numbers

In stage one of the study, comparisons of data are based on an equal number of years pre- and post-consolidation up to five years of each. The first four newly created institutions from FY13 of Middle Georgia State University (MGA), University of North Georgia (UNG), Augusta University (AUG), and South Georgia State College (SGSC) along with the FY14 consolidation of Kennesaw State University (KSU) and FY15 Georgia State University (GState) each have five years pre- and post-consolidation data available. The FY16 creation of Albany State University (ASU) has four years post-consolidation compared to four years pre-consolidation. The last two cases of consolidation in the USG, involving Georgia Southern University (GSU) in one case and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College (ABAC) in the other, occurred in FY16 and data are analyzed for two years prior to consolidation and two years post-consolidation.

Budget

Budget is the area in which the consolidations were most focused to show savings in expenses in order to reduce costs to the institutions and pass savings along to the students. In examination and comparison of the nine newly formed institutions, we see trends in budget increases in most cases. Budget has many breakdowns but the overall total budget is the first area to compare for each institution. Breakdowns from the total budget include the Education & General (E&G) budget which is made up of other areas to include personal services and operating expenses as well as travel. Student activities is another area in which comparison of the impact on students can be reviewed for comparison. Finally, budget also involves revenues, and while state appropriations make up a significant amount of the revenues for public institutions, auxiliary services and tuition revenue are areas in which the institution looks to make up for shortages from the state appropriations.

Table 2 – Total Budget for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$100,506,237	$109,922,257	$2,417,705 (2.2%)	$105,018,089	$4,511,852 (4.49%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$131,585,824	$170,152,803	-$1,886,423 (-1.11%)	$198,785,550	$67,199,725 (51.07%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$699,364,602	$729,111,083	$28,438,700 (3.9%)	$808,540,158	$109,175,556 (15.61%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$30,632,558	$36,333,633	-$3,306,198 (-9.1%)	$31,849,429	$1,216,872 (3.97%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$362,529,772	$432,976,956	$21,750,326 (3.59%)	$508,747,895	$146,218,123 (40.33%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$859,491,188	$915,751,451	$50,921,336 (5.56%)	$1,067,319,582	$207,828,394 (24.18%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$141,079,732	$144,566,243	-$9,596,094 (-6.64%)	$124,929,422	-$16,150,309 (-11.45%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$484,089,246	$492,763,008	-$18,947,278 (-3.85%)	$475,620,506	-$8,468,740 (-1.75%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$75,303,007	$71,979,988	-$8,924,515 (-1.98%)	$63,031,531	-$12,271,476 (-16.30%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$320,509,129	$344,839,714	$6,763,062 (-0.83%)	$375,982,463	$55,473,333 (12.24%)

Beginning with the broad overview of the total budget shown in Table 2, we see pre-consolidation averages for the five years prior to consolidation for the first six institutions (MGA, UNG, AUG, SGSC, KSU, and GState) followed by four years of data averaged for ASU and two years for each of GSU and ABAC. The same timeframe (five, four, or two years) is used for the post-consolidation average of each institution to compare the changes from pre- to post-consolidation. Additionally, the year of consolidation is provided separate and the change in the first year is found in the table as well to show the impact in year one after consolidation. MGA saw an average increase of 4.49% in the pre- to post-consolidation averages after half the increase was shown in year one at 2.2%. AUG showed increases in the pre- to post-consolidation averages as well as year one with 15.61% overall following a 3.9% increase in the first year. Despite savings for UNG in year one of 1.11%, they showed the largest increase in the post-consolidation change at 51.07% compared to the pre-consolidated average. With the largest decrease of all institutions at 9.1% in year one, SGSC still experienced an increase of 3.97% in the post-consolidation average. KSU experienced the third largest increase in year one at 3.59%

but largest increase pre- to post-consolidation of the nine institutions at 40.33%. GState had the largest year one increase at 5.56% and continued to grow the budget with an increase of 24.18% in the post-consolidation average. While ASU, GSU, and ABAC all have experienced savings in both year one and the post-consolidation average, the shorter time period for averages could be the overall answer to this trend. ASU's total budget decreased by 6.64% in year one and showed the second largest reduction in the post-consolidation averages at 11.45%. GSU was third in year one savings at 3.85% but the savings shrunk in the post-consolidation average to 1.75%. ABAC saved 1.98% in year one and had the largest savings in the post-consolidation averages with 16.30%.

Taking the averages of the institutions total budgets from Table 2 and comparing the same data for the nine institutions collectively, the first year resulted in a decrease of 0.83% for average of percentage decreases. The dollar amount change showed an increase average of $6,763,062 for the institutions, which is in contrast to the percentage due to some institutions having large dollar amount changes which are represented by lower percentage increases, such as GState going up over $50 million representing only 5.56% increase in comparison to the prior year's budget. The post-consolidation average was even higher with a 12.24% increase in the average representing over $55 million in increase despite three of the nine showing savings over the time period.

Table 3 – Education & General Budget (E&G) for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$81,996,589	$87,728,763	$3,400,443 (3.88%)	$84,027,474	$2,030,885 (2.48%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$102,935,798	$133,580,695	$1,775,132 (1.33%)	$162,235,824	$59,300,026 (57.61%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$673,874,832	$709,020,334	$25,300,570 (3.57%)	$786,700,589	$112,825,756 (16.74%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$24,526,063	$29,255,490	-$2,743,617 (-9.38%)	$25,637,224	$1,111,160 (4.53%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$288,761,851	$342,932,443	$16,521,811 (1.97%)	$404,064,422	$115,302,571 (39.93%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$740,861,070	$806,315,475	$82,309,092 (10.21%)	$977,112,970	$236,251,901 (31.89%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$115,126,669	$117,485,340	-$8,921,841 (-7.59%)	$97,117,968	-$18,008,701 (-15.64%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$363,912,908	$370,713,970	-$16,309,437 (-4.4%)	$358,764,404	-$5,148,504 (-1.41%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$62,664,791	$58,682,740	-6,947,953 (-11.84%)	$52,007,530	-$10,657,261 (-17.01%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$272,740,063	$295,079,472	$10,487,133 (-1.36%)	$327,518,711	$54,778,648 (13.23%)

The total budget is comprised of multiple smaller budgets including E&G (personal services, operating expenses, and travel), student activities, and a plethora of other budgets from student fees. Considering the E&G budget as the primary area for savings to be seen, the focus on personal services, where initial cost savings are expected, and operating expenses, where long-term cost savings will bring sustainable savings, will give the institution a better view of where savings are actually occurring and the sustainability.

The first part of the budget broken down is the E&G which is made up of state appropriations provided to the school from the USG, BOR, and the state government along with revenues generated by the institution. This budget covers the costs of personal services and operating expenses. Personal services includes salaries, benefits, taxes, and other costs associated with the faculty and staff of the institution while operating expenses is the budget for everything from facility maintenance to day-to-day operating costs such as phones, copiers, utility bills, etc. Beginning with the overall E&G budget, MGA showed an increase of 2.48% from pre- to post-consolidation average in this category with a 3.88% increase in the year after consolidation. Just slightly higher than MGA, SGSC saw a 4.53% increase pre- to post- with a decrease in the year after consolidation of 9.38%. AUG's increase from pre- to post- was 16.74% with 3.57% of the increase coming in the year after consolidation but not nearly as high as the 57.61% increase in E&G seen at UNG after just a 1.33% increase in the year after consolidation. Of the next group to consolidation, KSU had a 39.93% increase pre- to post-consolidation after just 1.97% increase in year one. GState increased by 31.89%, when comparing pre- to post-consolidation averages, and had the highest of all institutions in the year after consolidation at 10.21%.

With less time to measure, ASU, GSU, and ABAC experienced a decrease in the E&G budget from pre- to post-consolidation. ASU has decreased by 15.64% starting with saving 7.59% in the year after consolidation. ABAC has decreased their budget by 17.01% in the pre- to post-consolidation comparison after 11.84% savings in year one. GSU had a modest savings of 1.41% pre-to post-consolidation despite saving 4.4% in the first year after consolidation.

Overall, the E&G averages across the nine institutions revealed a decrease in this budget area in year one after consolidation of 1.36% when averaging the percentage change for the institutions, though the dollar amount showed an average increase of over $10 million per institution when averaging the total increase system-wide. The pre- to post-consolidation changes resulted in a 20.08% average increase across all institutions with over a $54 million average increase across the institutions.

Table 4 – Personal Services Budget for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$50,349,952	$50,570,956	-$64,149 (-0.13)	$52,338,351	$1,988,399 (3.95%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$66,806,180	$83,857,682	$4,391,036 (5.24%)	$110,134,626	$43,328,446 (64.86%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$469,890,546	$500,448,379	$25,784,471 (5.15%)	$587,338,826	$117,448,280 (24.99%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$13,813,761	$14,587,033	-986,801 (-6.76%)	$13,657,017	-$156,744 (-1.13%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$190,761,192	$223,170,643	$4,625,600 (3.52%)	$261,947,608	$71,186,416 (37.32%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$503,940,983	$554,714,250	-$4,527,280 (-0.82%)	$598,995,361	$95,054,378 (18.86%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$65,292,655	$66,478,475	-$2,840,550 (-4.27%)	$57,526,463	-$7,766,192 (-11.89%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$242,419,997	$256,509,417	$5,043,991 (1.97%)	$259,087,356	$16,667,359 (6.88%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$30,873,013	$31,959,529	-$2,903,413 (-9.08%)	$29,436,446	-$1,436,567 (-4.65%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$181,572,031	$198,032,929	$3,169,212 (-0.58%)	$218,940,228	$37,368,197 (15.46%)

The E&G budgets are made up of other budgets in the institution which include personal services and operating expenses. Looking at each of these individually can assist in determining where savings actually exist in the personnel or operational spending. Proven savings which will last in governmental, school district, and other consolidations have shown to be in operating expenses while initial and quick savings are found in the personal services.

Starting with personal services shown in Table 4, six of the nine institutions experienced an increase in the pre- to post-consolidation comparison. Beginning with MGA, the pre- to post-consolidation data comparison shows an increase of 3.95% and only a savings of 0.13% in year one after consolidation. SGSC was one institution which experienced savings in year one of 6.76% after consolidation and an overall decrease in the pre- to post- budget of 1.13%. AUG and UNG continued to show increases in both the pre- to post-consolidation data and the year one after consolidation data. AUG increase 24.99% in the pre- to post-consolidation comparison after starting with a 5.15% increase in year one. UNG increased by 64.86% pre- to post-consolidation jumpstarted by a 5.24% increase in year one. With similar years to compare, KSU increased their budget by 37.23% in the pre- to post-consolidation comparison averages while year one was a 3.52% increase. GState started with a savings in year one of 0.82% followed by the increase to 18.86% higher in the post-consolidation average than the pre-consolidation average.

The later three have had mixed results in shorter time periods than the first six consolidations as ASU and ABAC have experienced savings as compared to increases for GSU. ASU has saved 11.89% in the pre- to post-consolidation averages after a 4.27% savings in year one, and ABAC saved 4.65% in their pre- and post- averages after starting with a 9.08% savings in year one. GSU started their year one with an increase of 1.97% which led to a 6.88% increase in the overall comparison of pre- to post-consolidation averages for the institution.

Overall, the institutions decreased an average of 0.58% in year one after consolidation though the dollar amount showed an average increase of $3.169 million across the institutions. The overall average in pre- to post-consolidation averages was an increase as well of 15.46% of the budget representing an average of over $37 million across the institutions with six of the nine consolidations demonstrating an increase.

Table 5 – Operating Expenses Budget for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$30,287,912	$35,690,903	$3,415,162 (9.57%)	$30,650,653	$362,741 (1.20%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$34,643,679	$47,242,524	-$1,600,693 (-3.39%)	$48,970,591	$14,326,912 (41.36%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$196,883,395	$201,685,939	$25,756 (0.01%)	$193,517,065	-$3,366,330 (-1.71%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$9,908,355	$14,413,038	-$1,887,175 (-13.09%)	$11,479,286	$1,570,930 (15.85%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$86,083,296	$106,625,263	$11,441,613 (10.73%)	$131,043,755	$44,960,460 (52.23%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$215,602,676	$228,719,566	$74,852,525 (32.73%)	$348,737,176	$133,134,500 (61.75%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$47,594,338	$48,997,815	-$5,596,276 (-11.42%)	$38,070,647	-$9,523,691 (-20.01%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$109,583,152	$107,329,696	-$22,230,604 (-20.71%)	$92,805,810	-$16,777,342 (-15.31%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$30,993,807	$25,975,927	-$4,284,247 (-16.49%)	$21,464,256	-$9,529,551 (-30.75%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$84,620,068	$90,742,297	$6,015,118 (-1.34%)	$101,859,915	$17,239,848 (11.62%)

The second portion of the E&G budget is operating expenses which includes utilities, maintenance, service contracts, and all other areas of facilities which help keep the institution's physical areas operational. Studies of other consolidations outside of higher education show this area to be the more successful area for cutting budget which will show lasting savings as compared to personal services. One item of note in this study as related to the area of operating expenses is the multiple campuses which were operated individually prior to the consolidation but contracts have been consolidated to cover multiple campuses providing more bargaining power for institutions having larger coverage and work for items which are contracted out as compared to two separate institutions contracting out services with two smaller areas covered. Most of the institutions had to commit to rebranding for signage, marketing, colors (for some institutions), and other initial costs to facility changes in the consolidation year or year-one post consolidation creating an increase in operating expenses.

MGA was an institution which had to completely rebrand the two institutions coming together including the school's team name, colors, and mascot requiring a large amount of money to redo many of the areas on all campuses to rebrand the institution. The rebranding efforts and new marketing for the name and institution overall could provide for a 9.57% increase ($3.5 million) in year one after consolidation as shown in Table 5. Comparing the pre- to post-consolidation averages, MGA experienced a 1.2% increase in operating expenses. AUG was another institution with quite a bit of rebranding required for the new name and athletics but in year one after consolidation increased by 0.01% and decreased operation expenses by 1.71% in the pre- to post-consolidation averages. UNG and SGSC each kept their names in the consolidation but had to rebrand additional campuses. UNG decreased spending in year one by 3.39% but found a 41.36% increase in pre- to post-consolidation averages while SGSC had a

13.09% savings in year one before increasing by 15.85% in the pre- to post-consolidation averages. KSU and GState both remained with the same name but had to rebrand campuses, GState had multiple GPC campuses to rebrand, and the amount of campus rebranding was apparent in the year one budgets with KSU saving 1.5% and GState increasing by 32.73%. Each had a significant increase in the pre- to post-consolidation averages with KSU up 52.23% and GState up 61.75% after consolidation.

The savings continue to show for the short-term with the institutions of ASU, GSU, and ABAC having shorter time periods to measure and savings reflecting in this data. ASU has experienced a 20.01% savings in operating expenses pre- to post-consolidation including more than half that reflecting in year one after consolidation at 11.42%. ABAC saw more than half of the 30.75% savings reflected in year one after consolidation with a 16.49% decrease initially. GSU had a different experience with savings of 20.71% in year one after consolidation but only 15.31% in the pre- to post-consolidation changes reflecting an increase past year one for the institution.

Overall, the year one after consolidation change for the nine institutions averaged to a decrease of 1.34% though the larger increases at some institutions in dollars showed an increase just over $6 million average across institutions. The overall average from pre- to post-consolidation for the institutions saw an increase of 11.62% ($17 million average per institution) in the budgets with five of the nine having increases ranging from 1.2% at MGA up to 61.75% at GState outweighing the overall savings at the other four institutions.

Table 6 – Student Activities Budget for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$1,568,680	$4,273,977	$263,048 (6.15%)	$2,938,615	$1,369,935 (87.33%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$2,705,765	$3,041,093	-$95,984 (-3.15%)	$3,117,037	$411,271 (15.20%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$2,339,454	$2,133,592	-$56,015 (-2.63%)	$1,909,591	-$429,863 (-18.37%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$474,398	$438,274	-$63,971 (-14.6%)	$453,383	-$21,015 (-4.43%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$11,198,013	$15,358,523	$281,634 (1.83%)	$15,968,246	$4,770,233 (42.60%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$46,111,713	$19,214,105	$953,227 (4.96%)	$19,545,066	-$26,566,647 (-57.61%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$4,019,067	$4,358,000	-$229,450 (-5.27%)	$3,956,152	-$62,915 (-1.57%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$12,299,562	$12,821,554	-$331,735 (-2.59%)	$12,220,089	-$79,473 (-0.65%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$2,093,640	$2,050,179	-$1,683,679 (-82.12%)	$375,000	-$1,718,640 (-82.09%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$9,201,143	$7,076,589	-$106,992 (-10.82%)	$6,720,353	-$2,480,790 (-2.18%)

While not an area in which the expected savings were to be found, student activities is an interesting budget area which should be considered for institutions. Though students come to the institution for an education, the student experience is a large part of what the student gets out of being on campus for the educational experience. Student activities budgets provide an idea of what students are offered for their experience on campus as activities are provided and consolidated institutions endeavor to provide the same services for each campus in order to provide a consistent experience for the students of the institution. Considering these factors, savings in this area are interesting to see for the institution as it can provide a better idea of where cuts may be made which take away from the student for consolidation or give more to the student through the same activities across multiple campuses.

Again starting with MGA, as highlighted in Table 6, the student activities budget with a 6.15% increase in year one after consolidation and increased by 87.33% for the pre- to post-consolidation average. UNG saw a savings of 3.15% in year one after consolidation but an increase of 15.2% in spending after consolidation as compared to prior to consolidation. Of the first four, AUG and SGSC were the two who saw decreases in student activities spending in both year one after consolidation at 2.63% and 14.6%, respectively, and in the post-consolidation average of 18.37% and 4.43%, respectively. KSU saw increases in the year one of 1.83% and in the post-consolidation comparison of 42.6% for this area, however, GState experienced significant savings of 57.61% in post-consolidation after a 4.96% increase in the first year after consolidation.

The smaller years of sample size at ASU, GSU, and ABAC showed savings with significant savings at ABAC of 82.12% in year one and 82.09% post-consolidation and minor savings at ASU and GSU of year one 5.27% and 2.59%, respectively, followed by post-consolidation decreases of 1.57% and 0.65% respectively.

The overall savings for all institutions appeared at an average of 10.82% in year one after consolidation which represents an average savings of $106,992 per institution. The pre- to post-consolidation savings measured at a 2.18% decrease for the overall average representing almost $2.5 million in savings. Six of the nine institutions saved money in the consolidation process for student activities with ABAC saving the highest percentage at 82.09%, while three increased spending including MGA being the opposite of ABAC at an 87.33% increase. This area of the budget is the only in which we see a pre-to post-consolidation decrease in the average across institutions.

These reductions can represent several variations of methods from savings with contracts, reduction of staff paid from this budget to reduce redundancy, or a reduction in overall extra-curricular funding for the students in this particular budget and shifts to other budget areas for supporting the activities. Reorganization of the student activities budget by Student Affairs could be another answer to the reasoning in which specific services may move from the student activities budget to nursing for the health centers, recreation and wellness taking over intramurals in a new budget, or other adjustments the consolidation may have created.

Table 7 – Travel Budget for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$1,402,748	$704,918	-$6,584 (-0.93%)	$635,944	-$766,804 (-54.66%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$897,466	$1,234,038	-$168,779 (-13.68%)	$1,450,375	$552,909 (61.61%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$2,120,393	$2,519,774	-$241,594 (-9.59%)	$2,802,071	$681,678 (32.15%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$217,756	$233,981	$95,297 (40.73%)	$365,651	$147,895 (67.92%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$2,522,951	$3,191,670	$179,623 (5.63%)	$3,415,934	$892,983 (35.39%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$4,027,089	$3,765,648	$367,766 (9.77%)	$4,806,315	$779,226 (19.35%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$973,681	$892,258	-$129,057 (-14.46%)	$793,371	-$180,310 (-18.52%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$3,084,241	$3,306,595	$301,961 (9.13%)	$3,868,559	$784,318 (25.43%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$656,614	$637,582	$70,578 (11.07%)	$763,192	$106,578 (16.23%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$1,766,993	$1,831,829	$52,135 (4.19%)	$2,100,157	$333,164 (20.54%)

A final area which is expected to be impacted by consolidations in the budget is travel. With each consolidation involving multiple campuses and these campuses ranging in separated distance from a couple miles to over 120 miles, increased travel is a given expectation for the faculty and staff of these institutions. Interestingly enough, as revealed in Table 7, two of the nine institutions experienced decreases in spending for travel in the post-consolidation as compared to pre-consolidation while four experienced savings in the first year after consolidation.

MGA went from two institutions of which one had two campuses and one with three, to a single institution of five campuses separated by as many as 70 miles to the furthest campuses. Despite this distance, MGA saved 0.93% in year one after consolidation and a 54.66% reduction in the post-consolidation average compared to the pre-consolidation average. UNG became an institution of five campuses through the consolidation with the furthest separated by 120 miles and after an initial savings of 13.68% in year one after consolidation, saw the travel budget increase by 61.61% post-consolidation. AUG has four campuses spread across a maximum distance of five miles apart allowing savings in year one of 9.59% but the post-consolidation average compared to pre-consolidation was an increase of 32.15% in the travel budget. SGSC has two campuses separated by just under 40 miles and travel costs went up by 40.73% in year one after consolidation and 67.92% in the post-consolidation compared to pre-consolidation numbers. Another short distance for consolidation was KSU which had two campuses separated by less than ten miles (about 15 minutes in travel time) and saw increases of 5.63% in year one and 35.39% in the post-consolidation average. With the main campus of GState located in downtown Atlanta, the addition of the GPC campuses in five locations spread out the campus to a larger area around the Atlanta area extending distances between campuses to as much as 70 miles at the longest distance between campuses but no further than 42 miles from the main campus in downtown Atlanta. The impact to the travel budget in this consolidation was a 9.77% increase in travel for year one after consolidation and overall 19.35% increase in the post-consolidation average from pre-consolidation.

With shorter time periods for comparison, we still see the final three consolidations with our second savings at ASU but increases at GSU and ABAC. ASU saved 14.46% in the first year after consolidation with the ASU and ASU West Campus separated by less than five miles and a savings of 18.52% in the post-consolidation average. With much longer distances in the GSU and ABAC consolidations, neither saved in year one or post-consolidation. GSU saw the distance between campuses at around 54 miles and experienced a 9.13% increase in year one and overall 25.43% increase in the post-consolidation average. ABAC brought together campuses which were separated by just under 90 miles and were met with increases of 11.07% in year one after consolidation and 16.23% in the post-consolidation average for the extended separation of campuses.

Overall, the nine institutions experienced decreases in year one after consolidation in four of the nine cases but an overall average increase of 4.19% ($52,135) across the institutions. The post-consolidation changes provided just two of the institutions with savings from pre-consolidation and an overall increase of 20.54% ($333,164) for the nine combined institutions.

Table 8 – Tuition Revenue for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$19,018,494	$21,508,423	-$591,860 (-2.75%)	$21,929,684	$2,911,190 (15.31%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$35,850,091	$48,099,521	$1,594,110 (3.31%)	$62,083,535	$26,233,444 (73.18%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$50,347,091	$65,272,013	$6,230,883 (9.55%)	$77,089,970	$26,742,879 (53.12%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$5,300,737	$6,650,177	-$814,957 (-12.25%)	$5,965,169	$664,432 (12.53%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	$115,059,376	$144,748,398	$8,570,073 (5.92%)	$171,068,435	$56,009,059 (48.68%)
GState/GPC (GState)	$231,788,774	$272,726,992	$9,988,123 (3.66%)	$288,878,596	$57,089,822 (24.63%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$30,484,634	$31,766,355	-$5,639,710 (-17.75%)	$22,634,396	-$7,850,238 (-25.75%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$137,125,334	$139,731,604	-$1,353,895 (-0.97%)	$136,671,641	-$453,693 (-0.33%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$14,476,182	$13,914,345	-$2,734,388 (-19.65)	$10,937,660	-$3,538,523 (-24.44%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$71,050,079	$82,713,092	$1,694,264 (-3.44%)	$88,584,343	$17,534,264 (19.66%)

When discussing budgets, expenses are not the only important part to impact the data as revenues are important to the budget as well. Public institutions receive revenues from three typical areas: state appropriations, tuition, and auxiliary services. While state appropriations and auxiliary services revenue are not part of this study, tuition revenue is related directly to the enrollment. When considering the impact of enrollment in consolidation as part of this study, providing data on tuition revenue can assist in this assessment.

Tuition revenue is important for every institution, public and private, providing discretionary money by which the institution can fund specific items and projects as they wish. While tuition rates are determined by the USG BOR and approval is required for increases, the institutions who were part of consolidation saw different impacts to their tuition revenue based on enrollment impact from consolidation. Larger institutions such as UNG, ASU, and GState who have a State University level tuition structure, gained many students who were attending a State College or two-year level institution which had a lower tuition. Absorption of these students into a larger student body provided significant increases to most of the institutions. While savings to students was one area highlighted by consolidations, the students at the school with a lower tuition are now paying more to attend, most likely, the same campus already being attended.

Table 8 shows the six institutions who have experienced at least five years post-consolidation, all have seen increases in the post-consolidation averages with only two experiencing a loss in year one after consolidation. MGA dropped 2.75% in year one and SGSC dropped 12.25% but both rebounded as MGA experienced a gain of 15.31% in the post-consolidation average while SGSC was up 12.53% in the same period. UNG saw a minimal gain of 3.31% in year one after consolidation but gained 73.18% in the post-consolidation average, and AUG gained 9.55% in year one leading to 53.12% in post-consolidation gains. KSU saw an increase in year one of just 5.92% but the post-consolidation average grew to a 48.68% gain for the institution. GState saw a 3.66% gain in year one after consolidation and then 24.63% in the post-consolidation average.

Each of the three institutions with less than five years post-consolidation has seen a decrease in the tuition revenue with ASU having a 17.75% loss in year one after consolidation and dropping to 25.75% in the post-consolidation average. GSU had minimal losses in both areas with an initial drop of 0.97% and just 0.33% lost in tuition revenues after consolidation. ABAC had the largest loss of all nine institutions in the first year after consolidation at 19.65% and lost 24.44% in the post-consolidation time period.

The overall result in tuition revenue was a loss of 3.44% for the average across the institutions though the overall average in dollars was a gain of almost $1.7 million across institutions in the first year after consolidation as some institutions had large dollar gains in small percentages for the institution. The overall growth of 19.66% for all institutions in the post-consolidation average equated to a gain of $17,534.264 per institution.

Enrollment

Enrollment is a major part of any institution and when institutions consolidate, the impact on the enrollment can have positive or negative impacts. Many issues can be caused by anything as simple as a name change which impacts enrollment due to confusion or inability to find the correct place to send your information. Enrollment is measured in three primary methods for institutions: headcount, full-time enrollment (FTE), and credit hours. This study focuses on the first two areas of headcount and FTE and uses data as produced by the USG and posted annually on the site for fall of each year as of the institution's census date. As with the budget data, the periods are used as FY for the fall of the year. FY08 is data from fall semester 2007 enrollment, for example.

Table 9 – Fall Headcount for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	9,771	8,884	-895 (-10.07%)	7,729	-2,042 (-20.9%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	14,065	15,072	483 (2.54%)	17,162	3,097 (22.02%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	9,729	9,557	-562 (-5.8%)	8,643	-1,086 (-11.16%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	3,036	3,059	-480 (-15.69%)	2,584	-452 (-14.88%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	28,717	31,178	322 (4.24%)	34,407	5,690 (19.81%)
GState/GPC (GState)	55,927	53,927	-1,322 (-1.45%)	52,422	-3,505 (-6.27%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	10,390	10,671	-1,802 (-20.1%)	6,567	-3,823 (-36.79%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	27,700	27,459	-1,041 (-3.83%)	26,231	-1,469 (-5.30%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	5,869	5,140	-849 (-16.52%)	4,109	-1,760 (-29.98%)
Average Across All Consolidated	18,356	18,327	-682 (-7.41%)	17,762	-594 (-9.27%)

Each institution is measured based on enrollment data which is used from year-to-year and compared from fall-to-fall or spring-to-spring to determine how they are performing. So when these nine institutions were each consolidated, the impact to the fall headcount of the institution had an impact on the institution as a whole based on classes to be offered, tuition revenue, services provided, etc. Headcount is the actual number of students taking courses regardless of their status as part-time or full-time so long as the student is enrolled in at least one credit hour. In addition to what the institution must offer, what the state provides in state appropriations to the institution is based off data such as enrollment and credit hour production which can be impacted by a major move of consolidation. While most of the institutions were growing at times in the years prior to consolidation, almost every institution experienced a loss in fall headcount and FTE in the one to two years leading up to consolidation and in the years after consolidation with the exceptions of UNG and KSU who saw steady growth leading into consolidation and post-consolidation.

Table 9 shows the headcount took a drop in seven of the nine institutions consolidated with UNG and KSU as the only two to see an increase in year one and post-consolidation averages. MGA saw a 10.07% drop in year one after consolidation and the average post-consolidation was down 20.9% from the pre-consolidation average of almost 10,000. AUG dropped by 5.8% initially and 11.16% post-consolidation, while SGSC had decreases of 15.69% in year one and 14.88% in the post-consolidation average from just over 3,000 prior to consolidation. UNG managed to have a 2.54% increase in year one after consolidation and gain 22.02% in headcount after consolidation which was one of the two institutions to improve their headcount through the process. KSU also found success through consolidation gaining 4.24% headcount in the year after consolidation and 19.81% growth in headcount after consolidation. GState followed along the lines of the other institutions who dropped with a decrease of 1.45% in the first year after consolidation and an overall 6.27% drop in headcount for the post-consolidation average.

All three of the most recent consolidations experienced decreases in year one after consolidation and in their post-consolidation averages led by ASU with a 20.1% drop in headcount for year one and overall post-consolidation loss of 36.79% which was the largest post-consolidation loss of the nine institutions. ABAC saw a 16.52% loss in year one and 29.98% loss in the post-consolidation average of which both were the second highest losses. GSU had more modest losses at 3.83% in year one and 5.3% in the post-consolidation average, but still showed losses.

The overall impact on headcount at the consolidated institutions showed a 7.41% loss in year one after consolidation representing about 682 students per institution and 9.27% loss across all institutions for the post-consolidation average representing 594 students lost per institution.

The impact to headcount could have been from many issues listed prior but the positive growth at UNG might be attributed to changes in admissions requirements related to the participation in the Army ROTC program on campus by males as a requirement which was lifted at the time of consolidation to reduce the impact on the new campuses added. .

Table 10 – Fall FTE for Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	8,010	7,426	-697 (-9.39%)	6,475	-1,534 (-19.16%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	12,325	13,235	265 (2%)	15,128	2,803 (22.75%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	8,750	8,673	-393 (-4.53%)	8,003	-748 (-8.55%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	2,586	2,696	-364 (-13.5%)	2,263	-323 (-12.48%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	25,580	27,693	1,213 (4.38%)	30,761	5,181 (20.26%)
GState/GPC (GState)	47,530	44,685	-823 (-1.84%)	44,210	-3,320 (-6.99%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	8,636	8,888	-1,572 (-20.88%)	5,658	-2,978 (-34.48%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	25,197	24,969	-882 (-3.53%)	23,919	-1,278 (-5.07%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	4,855	4,272	-620 (-14.51%)	3,494	-1,361 (-28.04%)
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	15,940.80	15,837.44	-430 (-6.87%)	15,545.51	-395 (-7.97%)

The second measure for institutions and enrollment is FTE. FTE is totaled by the number of students enrolled full-time plus the calculated equivalent of the part-time enrollment converted to full-time status. Students enrolled part-time are calculated to a total of how they would add up to reach what is considered a full-time enrolled student, typically 12 credit hours, and added to the enrollment. This number is less than the headcount numbers due to headcount including all students enrolled in any number of hours. For example, MGA has a headcount for FY20 of 8,066 while the FTE for the same year is 6,761 as the part-time students are reduced by the number of hours taken which represents the number of students combined taking what is considered a full load or 12 hours minimum.

Similar to headcount data, Table 10 shows two of the nine institutions experienced an increase in FTE in year one after consolidation and again in the post-consolidation average, UNG and KSU. UNG began post-consolidation with a year one increase of 2% and increased the overall post-consolidation average to 22.75%. KSU gained 4.38% in year one and 20.26% in the post-consolidation average to be the second with an increase. The remaining seven institutions experienced drops in FTE in both year one after consolidation and the post-consolidation average. In the first wave of consolidations, MGA lost 9.39% FTE in year one and 19.16% through the post-consolidation average, AUG lost 4.53% in year one and 8.55% overall, and SGSC saw a drop of 13.5% in year one with a 12.48% overall decrease in FTE. GState was the sixth consolidation and experienced a 1.84% decrease in year one after consolidation with a 6.99% overall drop after consolidation.

ASU, GSU, and ABAC all followed the same trend of drops in FTE even in their shortened time periods. Just like headcount, ASU experienced the largest drop in FTE with year one dropping 20.88% and post-consolidation at 34.48% followed by ABAC at 14.51% in year one and 28.04% from pre- to post-consolidation with both being the largest drops in both measurement points. GSU had mild drops with 3.53% in year one after consolidation and 5.07% in the post-consolidation average.

With large increases at two institutions and larger decreases at two, the other five institutions helped balance out the year one overall average with a decrease of 6.87% in FTE equating to 430 students lost per institution. In the pre- to post-consolidation averages, a decrease of 7.97% was experienced for the average representing 395 students lost per institution. Just as UNG's policy change for the ROTC participation impacted the headcount positively, it appears to have had a similar impact on the FTE while KSU's increases would require more research to determine the reason for increases.

Retention

Retention is an important topic for many institutions as they wish to keep the students recruited to and enrolled in the institution through graduation. Retention rates have increasingly garnered the attention of the media, state legislature, and even the public.

Retention of a student is measured in different formats and is analyzed through the use of freshman cohorts from the given years starting with the cohort of freshmen from 2008, five years prior to four of the consolidations, through the most recent availability of data by the USG with the class of 2018. The data is provided for freshman cohorts who are still at the same institution as well as retained within the USG and is used as one-year, two-year, and four-year retention data for the freshman cohorts. Because of available data, the more recent consolidations of GSU and ABAC only have the consolidation year data for the one-year freshman cohort while data is also limited for ASU (maximum two years post-consolidation), GState (maximum three years), and KSU (maximum four years).

Data for this portion of the study on retention focuses on first-time freshmen cohorts entering the institution for the particular year associated with the fall semester. Numbers are not shown in this portion of the study for actual numbers of students who enter or return but what percentage is returning for the start of the second year, third year, and fifth year at the same institution or within the USG system. Data for the system-wide retention is higher than the individual institutions as the students at the same institution are counted in both sets of data as they are returning to a USG school.

Table 11 – All Degrees One-Year Freshman Cohort Institution Retention Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	55.38%	62.30%	-0.70%	59.20%	3.82%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	65.80%	72.90%	1.10%	72.46%	6.66%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	66.38%	69.60%	5.10%	73.02%	6.64%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	49.40%	48.00%	2.70%	45.82%	-3.58%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	76.52%	77.50%	2.10%	78.82%	2.30%
GState/GPC (GState)	69.43%	71.60%	3.90%	75.90%	6.47%
ASU/DSC (ASU)	57.00%	56.60%	-6.70%	55.80%	-1.20%
GSU/AAU (GSU)	76.45%	77.70%	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	56.35%	57.10%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	63.63%	65.92%	1.07%	65.86%	3.02%

Table 12 – All Degrees One-Year Freshman Cohort System-Wide Retention Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	60.60%	69.60%	-2.30%	65.68%	5.08%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	71.98%	79.10%	0.60%	79.08%	7.10%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	70.28%	77.70%	4.30%	80.52%	10.24%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	58.86%	62.20%	1.70%	63.42%	4.56%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	83.02%	83.00%	2.00%	85.12%	2.10%
GState/GPC (GState)	73.20%	75.50%	3.70%	80.20%	7.00%
ASU/DSC (ASU)	63.40%	62.20%	-5.30%	61.50%	-1.90%
GSU/AAU (GSU)	82.90%	84.00%	N/A	N/A	N/A
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	62.20%	63.90%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	69.60%	73.02%	0.67%	73.65%	4.88%

Beginning with the one-year retention data shown in Table 11, we see an increase in the retention rate at seven of the nine institutions in the year of consolidation with SGSC and ASU experiencing a drop in the year of consolidation as compared to the pre-consolidation average. The other seven institutions experienced increases in the year of consolidation from the pre-consolidation averages showing mostly positive results in the year of consolidation from pre-consolidation averages.

In the year after consolidation, we have data for seven institutions which show increases in five with the exceptions of MGA decreasing by 0.7% and ASU a 6.7% decrease. MGA rebounded with an increase of 3.82% in the overall post-consolidation average while ASU saw a decrease of 1.2% post-consolidation, rebounding but not fully recovering. SGSC experienced a 2.7% increase in the year after consolidation before joining ASU as the only two institutions to have a decrease in retention at 3.58% post-consolidation. UNG at 1.10% in year one and 6.66% in the post-consolidation had the highest post-consolidated average increase of the institutions followed by AUG which increased 5.1% in the year after consolidation and 6.64% post-consolidation. KSU experienced a 2.1% increase in year one and post-consolidation increase of 2.3% for the retention. GState was up 3.9% in the year after consolidation and 6.47% for the post-consolidation average falling right in behind UNG and AUG.

Table 12 provides data for the system-wide retention which is credited to the institutions, and we can see the same trends for each of the institutions with, once again, only ASU showing negative retention impact in all three areas of consolidation year, year after consolidation, and post-consolidation average. MGA experienced a negative impact in year one after consolidation but recovered in the post-consolidation average and SGSC, which was negative in the post-consolidation average (see Table 11), was positive in the system-wide post-consolidation average retention (see Table 12).

The overall average for the institutions was positive at 1.07% in year one after consolidation at the individual institutions and 0.67% in the system-wide retention. The individual institutions averaged 3.02% retention pre- to post-consolidation and 4.88% system-wide showing positive trends in enrollment for the first-year cohorts.

Table 13 – Two-Year Freshmen Cohort Institution Retention

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	33.10%	39.60%	0.20%	39.22%	6.12%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	47.50%	54.80%	1.00%	54.37%	6.87%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	47.68%	52.80%	5.00%	59.10%	11.42%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	23.62%	23.20%	1.00%	24.65%	1.03%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	62.12%	65.10%	0.70%	63.87%	1.75%
GState/GPC (GState)	54.36%	57.40%	1.60%	59.70%	5.34%
ASU/DSC (ASU)	38.00%	39.40%	-6.00%	35.20%	-2.80%
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	43.77%	47.47%	0.50%	48.02%	4.25%

Table 14 – Two-Year Freshmen Cohort System-Wide Retention

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	44.68%	55.90%	-2.40%	52.85%	8.17%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	60.84%	68.40%	1.60%	68.85%	8.01%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	54.72%	66.90%	3.70%	71.55%	16.83%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	43.46%	45.20%	3.40%	48.97%	5.51%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	74.02%	75.20%	1.70%	76.33%	2.31%
GState/GPC (GState)	63.13%	65.90%	2.00%	68.20%	5.07%
ASU/DSC (ASU)	50.00%	49.30%	-4.40%	45.20%	-4.80%
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	55.84%	60.97%	0.80%	61.71%	5.87%

Moving to the two-year retention data for the freshmen cohort at the consolidated institutions, GSU and ABAC have no available data due to the consolidation taking place in

2018. Of the seven other institutions, data is available for at least one year post-consolidation to show the trends or start of trends. As noted in Table 13, six of the seven institutions saw an increase in retention from the year prior to consolidation into the consolidation year and one year after, with SGSC experiencing a decrease of 0.42% from pre-consolidation average into the year of consolidation and ASU dropping 6% in the year after consolidation. Table 14 shows ASU as one of two institutions which experienced a drop in the system-wide numbers with a 4.4% decrease in the year after consolidation, 4.8% drop from pre- to post-consolidation, and were joined by MGA who saw a decrease of 2.4% in the system-wide the first year after consolidation. Despite the decrease in the system-wide retention, MGA did have a growth in the institution retention of 0.2% in the year after consolidation and 6.13% in the post-consolidation averages for the institution and a post-consolidation system-wide increase of 8.17% in retention.

The other five institutions with data for this set each experienced increases in the year of consolidation, year one after consolidation, and in the post-consolidation average comparison for institution and system-wide measurements. UNG increased institutional retention 6.87% in the post-consolidation data, AUG had the largest increase at 11.42%, SGSC 1.03%, KSU 1.75%, and GState had a 5.34% increase. System-wide, AUG led the way with a 16.83% increase in retention for the post-consolidation averages followed by UNG at 8.01%, SGSC at 5.51%, GState at 5.07%, and KSU at 2.31%.

Overall, the institutions averaged a 0.5% increase at the institutions in the year after consolidation and a 4.25% increase post-consolidation. System-wide the averages were higher at 0.8% in the year after consolidation and 5.87% in the post-consolidation averages. These numbers fall in line with the increases seen in the two-year retention rates after consolidation.

Table 15 – Four-Year Freshmen Cohort Institution Retention

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	23.04%	27.10%	2.60%	28.10%	5.06%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	35.76%	42.70%	1.80%	42.55%	6.79%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	41.12%	45.30%	5.20%	52.50%	11.38%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	16.66%	18.50%	1.70%	19.25%	2.59%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	52.80%	55.80%	0.50%	56.05%	3.25%
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	33.88%	37.88%	2.36%	39.69%	5.81%

Table 16 – Four-Year Freshmen Cohort System-Wide Retention

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation % Change	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre- to post-consolidation
MSC/MGA (MGA)	34.52%	42.00%	0.70%	41.50%	6.98%
UNG/GSC (UNG)	50.04%	56.80%	2.90%	57.95%	7.91%
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	46.78%	59.80%	3.80%	66.40%	19.62%
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	32.62%	35.90%	-0.70%	35.60%	2.98%
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	65.84%	67.50%	0.80%	67.90%	2.06%
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	45.96%	52.40%	1.50%	53.87%	7.91%

The final retention comparison providing data for this study is the four-year retention data for the institutions. This considers how many of the students are still enrolled after four years at the institution from the first-time freshmen enrolled four falls prior. The data available for the institutions was reduced to five institutions due to the extended time of the measurement and the limited time since consolidation for the other four institutions. In comparing the data for retention in this cohort shown in Tables 15 and 16, only one negative appeared in the data set with SGSC in the year after consolidation dropping 0.7% for the system-wide rate. All other data was a positive trend for the institutions and the system-wide retention in the year of consolidation, year one after consolidation, and the post-consolidation average. For the year after consolidation, AUG was the highest in both the institution and system-wide rates at 5.2% and 3.8% respectively. MGA came in at 2.6% for institutional retention and 0.7% for system-wide retention, UNG at 1.8% and 2.9%, SGSC at 1.7% and -0.7%, and KSU was at 0.5% and 0.8%. In the comparison of post-consolidation average to pre-consolidation, all five institutions experienced growth in retention with AUG having the highest institutional rate of 11.38% and 19.62% system-wide. UNG came in with 6.79% at the institution and 7.91% system-wide followed by MGA at 5.06% and 6.98%, SGSC at 2.59% and 2.98% and finally KSU at 3.25% and 2.06%.

Taking the overall averages for the institutions, the institutions increased retention overall by 2.36% in the first year after consolidation while averaging a 5.81% increase in the post-consolidation era (see Table 15). System-wide, the consolidation increased retention at these institutions by 1.5% in year one after consolidation and 7.91% in the post-consolidation timeframe (see Table 16).

Cost of Attendance

Cost of Attendance (COA) consists of the costs for two primary areas along with some other costs such as books. The two primary areas which create the calculation for COA are tuition and fees along with room and board. Tuition and fees are the funding sources for portions of the budget at each institution as seen earlier in the chapter for tuition revenues and other areas of the budget which include fee budgets such as student activities. Room and board is the cost of a room in a residence hall on campus along with the cost of a meal plan for the institution. The costs of these items are calculated to determine the overall COA for an institution with certain assumptions made on the room selected, meal plan, number of credit hours per year, etc.

One of the primary areas of the Principles of Consolidation was savings to students in the cost to earn an education which is directly related to tuition and fees charged by the institutions. The rising amount of student debt for graduates became a major concern as it has grown over the years and the USG and USG BOR look to control the charges to students and therefore the amount of debt they are expected to accumulate to earn their degree.

Data was gathered, where available, for the institutions on tuition and fees as well as room and board. Some schools did not have any data to show certain years of these charges but assumptions were not be made and, where possible, averages for pre- and post-consolidation are compared for the study. Data are based on the charges as listed for the fall of the year given and counted for taking 30 semester credit hours per year with fees included for two semesters (fall and spring) and no summer semester hours considered. Room and board is based on the average cost of a room on campus along with the standard meal plan given to a resident on campus for two semesters. KSU and ABAC did not have data available prior to 2017 and 2019, respectively, despite searches of multiple sites and archives and is not included in the data of this portion of the study. The varying charges from the prior two institutions appear to have been removed due to large increases through consolidation.

Table 17 – Tuition and Fees for 30 Hours In-State Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$3,198	$3,910	$162 (4.14%)	$4,452	$1,255 (39.24%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$5,644	$6,692	$124 (1.85%)	$7,179	$1,534 (27.18%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$7,710	$9,536	$350 (3.67%)	$10,456	$2,746 (35.61%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$2,992	$3,562	N/A	$3,620	$629 (21.02%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
GState/GPC (GState)	$9,588	$10,686	$0 (0%)	$10,870	$1,282 (13.37%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$6,134	$6,460	$266 (4.12%)	$6,838	$704 (11.48%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$7,370	$7,422	$134 (1.81%)	$7,556	$186 (2.52%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	$4,097	$4,128	$78 (1.89%)	$4,206	$109 (2.66%)
Average Across All Consolidated	$5,842	$6,550	$159 (2.49%)	$6,897	$1,056 (19.14%)

Beginning with a look at the rate of tuition and fees for the institutions and impact of consolidation to reach the goals set forth in the principles, Table 17 shows all institutions, with available data, saw increases in the tuition and fees after consolidation with some increases larger than others. MGA's costs increased by 4.14% in the first year after consolidation and the post-consolidation increase has come to 39.24% higher than prior to consolidation. AUG saw the second highest increase, though only 3.67% in the year after consolidation, the cost has increased by 35.61% in the post-consolidation era. UNG increased by 27.18% post-consolidation and SGSC by 21.02%. GState saw a more modest increase of 13.37% but the year after consolidation had no increase at the institutions, the only institution to have this occur. ASU raised their cost by 11.48% in the post-consolidation timeframe while GSU and ABAC have had minor increases at 2.52% and 2.66%, respectively.

The overall impact of consolidation on tuition and fees was an increase across the board starting in year one by an average of 2.49% which equaled just over $159 per student. The overall cost increased after consolidation by 19.14% for the eight institutions with available data, which averaged to an increase of $1,056 per year for students taking 30 hours per year over two semesters.

Table 18 – Room and Board for Two Semesters Pre- and Post-Consolidation

Institutions Involved in the Consolidation	Pre-Consolidation Average	Year of Consolidation	Year After Consolidation (% Change)	Post-Consolidation Average	Change from pre-to post-consolidation (% Change)
MSC/MGA (MGA)	$6,934	$7,736	$230 (2.97%)	$8,455	$1,522 (21.95%)
UNG/GSC (UNG)	$6,258	$7,150	$214 (2.99%)	$7,714	$1,456 (23.27%)
AUG/GHSU (AUG)	$3,705	$3,990	$110 (2.76%)	$7,432	$3,727 (100.59%)
SGSC/WC (SGSC)	$7,636	$8,050	N/A	$8,627	$991 (12.97%)
KSU/SPSU (KSU)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
GState/GPC (GState)	$9,657	$10,728	$244 (2.27%)	$11,376	$1,719 (17.80%)
ASU/DSC (ASU)	$6,862	$7,844	$812 (10.35%)	$9,054	$2,192 (31.95%)
GSU/AAU (GSU)	$10,070	$10,070	-$672 (-6.57%)	$9,649	-$421 (-4.18%)
ABAC/BSC (ABAC)	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Average Across All Consolidated Institutions	$7,303	$7,938	$156 (2.46%)	$8,901	$1,598 (29.19%)

In addition to the increase in the tuition and fees, Table 18 shows the cost of room and board has increased at six of the seven institutions used in this portion of the study. KSU and ABAC data were not available for the years covered in the study at the time data was collected and were not included in this portion of the study. GSU was the only institution to lower costs in the year after consolidation, down 6.57%, and in the overall cost after consolidation, down 4.18%. AUG had the largest increase after just 2.76% in the year after consolidation, the costs rose by 100.59% in the post-consolidation average, far more than any other institution. ASU was the second highest with a 31.95% increase with 10.35% of the increase coming in year one after the consolidation. MGA increased just 2.97% in year one but 21.95% overall in room and board in the post-consolidation timeframe while UNG had a 2.99% increase initially followed by 23.27% over the timeframe of the study. SGSC increased by 12.97% post-consolidation and GState 17.8% in the same period.

Overall, the room and board cost increased across the board with significant increases of over 20% at four of the seven institutions. The average increase in year one after consolidation was just 2.46%, representing an increase of $156 per year for a student, while the post-consolidation average increase was 29.19% which averaged out to $1,598 per year for a student.

Combining the increases in the Table 17 and Table 18, the COA for a student in the year after consolidation rose an average of $315 per year while the post-consolidation average increase totaled $2,654 per year per student.

Stage Two: Committee Membership and Survey Data

Committee Membership

Stage two of this study initially assessed the make-up of the consolidation committees from each institutional consolidation for comparison of the membership of the committee and then committee members were surveyed at three selected institutions which had been consolidated choosing a state university (MGA), a comprehensive regional university (GSU), and a research university (AUG).

Using the list of consolidation committee members given by the USG on individual consolidation sites for each institution, an assessment chart was developed to show the breakdown of membership for each committee between senior administration, middle administration, faculty, staff, students, community members, and alumni association members.

Table 19 – Committee Make-up by Member Type and Institution

Institution (Members by Institution)	Senior Administration	Middle Administration	Faculty	Staff	Student	Community Member	Alumni Association	Total
MGA (MSC 6, MGC 6)	4 (20%)	0 (0%)	3 (15%)	2 (10%)	2 (10%)	8 (40%)	1 (5%)	20
UNG (UNG 12, GSC 13)	11 (42.3%)	0 (0%)	5 (19.2%)	2 (7.7%)	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	4 (15.4%)	26
AUG (10 GHSU, 8 ASU)	8 (36.4%)	2 (9.1%)	2 (9.1%)	3 (13.6%)	2 (9.1%)	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	22
SGSC (SGSC 10, WC 8)	7 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.5%)	7 (33.3%)	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)	21
First Four Average	7.5 (33.7%)	0.5 (2.2%)	3 (13.5%)	3.5 (15.7%)	2.25 (10.1%)	3.5 (15.7%)	2 (9%)	22.25
KSU (KSU 14, SPSU 14)	13 (46.4%)	4 (14.3%)	2 (7.1%)	7 (25%)	2 (7.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	28
Gstate (GPC 21, GSU 21)	17 (40.5%)	11 (26.2%)	7 (16.7%)	3 (7.1%)	3 (7.1%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.4%)	42
ASU (ASU 21, DSC 22)	16 (37.2%)	4 (9.3%)	14 (32.6%)	6 (14%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	43
GSU (GSU 20, ASU 20)	25 (61%)	4 (9.8%)	5 (12.2%)	4 (9.8%)	2 (4.9%)	1 (2.4%)	0 (0%)	41
ABAC (ABAC 16, BSC 16)	13 (40.6%)	5 (15.6%)	6 (18.8%)	6 (18.8%)	2 (6.3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	32
Last Five Average	16.8 (45.2%)	5.6 (15.1%)	6.8 (18.3%)	5.2 (14%)	2.4 (6.5%)	0.2 (0.5%)	0.2 (0.5%)	37.2
Total Average	12.7 (41.5%)	3.3 (10.8%)	5.1 (16.7%)	4.4 (14.4%)	2.3 (7.5%)	1.6 (5.2%)	1 (3.3%)	30.6

For the purposes of this study and breakdown of the categories found in Table 19, senior administration is defined as an individual who holds a title of president, vice president, associate vice president, or chief officer (chief information officer, chief business officer, etc.) while also including legal counsel at the institution. Middle administration represents deans and chairs of academic departments. Faculty members includes professors, instructors, and lecturers as listed in the committee except when a title which falls in senior or middle administration moves the individual to the appropriate administrative category. All other employees of an institution were classified as staff. Alumni association members included board members of the foundation and other alumni representatives as named in the committee lists. Any committee member who was not a direct member of the institution as faculty, staff, or student, and not a member of the committee as part of the alumni association was included as a community member.

Findings from this study show a drastic change from the size and make-up of the first five consolidations to the later four consolidations. Table 19 shows the average size of the first set of four consolidations (MGA, UNG, AUG, and SGSC) was 22.25 members with MGA at a low of

20 and UNG at a high of 26. The average number of senior administrators was 7.5 between the four. Middle administration accounted for 0.5 per institution committee, while faculty made up an average of 3 per institution. Staff accounted for an average of 3.5 in these consolidations and students 2.25. The average of 2.25 students was a steady number throughout all nine consolidation committees with six of the institutions including two students and three including three students to stay consistent through the years. MGA had a high for all consolidations of eight community members and for the first four, an average of 3.5 were included on committees. Each committee was represented by alumni with three representatives on the UNG committee and just a single member on the other three. The first four included more senior administration than most other groups represented with the exception of MGA who had eight community members (compared to four senior administrators at MGA) making the community represented more than any other category on the institution's consolidation committee.

The trend changed for the next five consolidations in the make-up from the average of the first four with committee sizes growing by an average of almost 15 members per committee to 37.2 as compared to the 22.25 per committee in the first four. Senior administration averaged 16.8 members per committee and made up, on average, 45.2% of the committees, an increase of 11.5% from the first four. Middle administration was represented more in the last five with 5.6 members per committee representing an increase in representation of 12.9% per committee (2.2% first four vs 15.1% last five). Faculty representation was also up to 6.8 per committee which was 4.8% higher than in the first four. Staff, student, community, and alumni representation all decreased for the last five compared to the first four. Staff representation was down 1.7%, student representation was down 3.6%, and alumni association down 8.5%. The largest decrease in representation was in the community member representation at 15.2% decrease.

KSU was the fifth consolidated institution and adjusted the committee make-up compared to the first four with an increase to the number of senior administration, middle administration, faculty, and staff from the first four with 13 senior administrators, four middle administrators, two faculty, seven staff, and two students while not including any alumni or community members on the committee. The adjustments took KSU's committee to 28 total members, higher than any of the first four. The following year, GState's committee included more overall members than any of the first five upping their number to 42 members on the committee. GState followed the KSU model of no community members but included one alumni association member to go with the 17 senior administrators, 11 middle administrators, seven faculty, three staff, and three students for their committee. This shift showed more importance from the input of administration and faculty in these later consolidations.

ASU had a 43 member committee in 2017 with the largest faculty representation of any committee at 14 (and the highest percentage of any consolidation committee at 32.6%) along with 16 senior administrators and four middle administrators while including just six staff and three students. The make-up of the committee at ASU showed the continued trend in change from the first four consolidations to have more faculty and administration input along with staff and students while shifting away from the community member input. ABAC stayed with this approach by also leaving out community and alumni association members and GSU did not include alumni, but did have one community member. GSU's 41 member committee had the most senior administration input with 25 members making up 61% of the committee. The other 39% was made up of four middle administrators, five faculty, and four staff joined by two students and the one community member. GSU was the only committee of the nine to include an outside member of another institution with the inclusion of the chief of staff from Savannah State University (SSU), who is coded as a community member. This may have been due to the close nature of proximity of SSU to the former Armstrong becoming part of GSU and to help alleviate any issues or redundancies in programs between SSU and the newly formed GSU. ABAC placed emphasis on the senior administration with 11 accompanied by five middle administration, six faculty, six staff, and two students on their committee.

The transition of the make-up of the early consolidation committees to later committees is of importance in the development of the institutions. Earlier consolidations included community members and alumni association representation while later committees tended to leave off these represented areas. MGA focused on having more community member representation than any other committee, while faculty representation became more important in the make-up of the committees in the later committee development. GSU focused more on having administration representation on the committee with 25 of the 41 members being part of the administration of one of the two original institutions. The representation of deans and chairs as middle administration was a change from the in the later consolidations as well with an average of 5.6 per committee including 11 on the GState committee while the first four only had two represented in total, both at AUG. Representation of the different areas varied based on the area and the institutions represented. ASU valued more faculty than most others (one-third of the committee) with GState the second highest in faculty at seven. Senior administration was the highest represented category in eight of the nine though SGSC had an equal number of faculty to senior administration. MGA was the lone exception as the community members made up 40% of the committee and senior administration only 20%.

One final note of interest for the institutional consolidation committee make-up is the representation of each institution on the committee. Table 19 includes the "Members by Institution" in the first column with the newly named institution and shows a change in the make-up of the consolidation committees over time. Except for MGA, the first four each had an unequal representation of the two institutions, one or two members more from one institution, but included community members from each of the represented communities. MGA had six representatives from Macon State College and six from Middle Georgia College for the representation of the institutional member groups adding another eight members from communities in which campuses were located to fill out their committee. UNG had 12 representing the university with 13 representatives from Gainesville State College and the one other member was from the community of Dahlonega which was the location of the campus considered to be the primary campus of UNG. AUG was represented with ten from Georgia Health Sciences University (GHSU) and eight from Augusta State. SGSC also had larger representation with ten compared to two-year Waycross College's eight representatives.

As more committees were formed for the following five consolidations, the representation became more equal with four of the five having equal representation from both institutions involved with 14 each for KSU, 21 each for GState, 20 each for GSU, and 16 each for ABAC while ASU was the one exception to this trend. ASU had 21 representatives from ASU while Darton State College (DSC) had 22 representatives on the committee totaling 43. GSU was the other odd-numbered committee in the last five with 41 members including one member from SSU discussed earlier in this chapter.

Survey Data

The second part of stage two of the study looks at survey responses from members of the consolidation committees at three of the nine consolidated institutions. The three were selected to represent different levels of consolidation: a state university (MGA), a comprehensive regional university (GSU), and a research university (AUG). Surveys were sent to members of the consolidation committee at each of the three institutions using the list provided on the USG web site to identify the members of the original committee. Of the 25 responses received from committee members at the three institutions, six were removed from the study. Of these six, five were submitted incomplete with no more than the institution represented and the position of the individual as administrator or staff included and one did not include the institution, only indicated as a staff member. As stated in the methodology for this study, the goal was to receive a minimum of five responses per institution with representation from all five participant types included among the total responses.

Table 20 – Survey Participants by Institution and Participant Committee Representation

Institution	Senior Admin	Middle Admin	Faculty	Staff	Student	Community	Total
MGA	2	0	2	0	0	3	7
AUG	2	0	1	2	0	0	5
GSU	1	0	3	1	2	1	8
Total	5	0	6	3	2	4	20

The survey consisted of 20 questions in total. Questions one and two are summarized in Table 20 showing MGA with seven valid responses of two administrators, two faculty, and three community members. AUG had a total of five responses of which two were administrators, one faculty, and two staff. GSU had ten total responses of which one was administration, three faculty, one staff, and two students. The overall responses came from five administrators, six faculty, three staff, two students, and three community members to give a representative example from the five participant types for the committees.

Questions three and four asked about the start of time and length of time an individual was a member of the consolidation committee at their respective institution. Of the 19 responses for question three ("were you an original member of the consolidation committee?") 18 answered "yes" with one community member from MGA indicating "no" to being an original member. Question four asked "did you remain on the consolidation committee through the entirety of the process?" 16 of the 19 answered yes to being a member of the committee throughout the process with the same MGA community member, one faculty member from MGA, and one student from GSU answering "no." The student from GSU provided additional text to question four indicating the time on the committee from January to May of 2017.

With questions one through four set to identify the institution, participant type, and time served on the committee, question five begins to gather insight from those surveyed about the work, directives, direction, issues, and other items the committee observed. Data from this point forward is separated by institutional responses. As AUG and MGA were part of the first round of consolidations in FY13 and GSU part of the FY18 consolidations, data is presented for AUG followed by MGA and then GSU.

Table 21 –Charge Given To Committee – Themes Across All Three Case Studies

Question 5: What charge was the committee given?
1. Develop the processes for successful merger (Appeared 10 times in responses)
2. Implement the merger of the two institutions (5)
3. Branding of the new institution to include name, colors, mascot, etc. (3)
4. New name of the institutions (2)

Table 21 provides the top four themes as gathered in the responses from the committee members of the survey. While committee membership varied across institutions, certain themes did appear. The most common theme in answers was to develop the process for a successful merger which appeared in more than half (10) of the responses in some form. Separate from developing processes, the general answer of implementing the merger appeared in responses often, appearing five times throughout the responses. With three mentions, branding of the newly formed institution was the third most common theme regarding the community view of the name, colors, mascot, and other logos and information for the new institution. Separate from the actual branding, the fourth most common theme was the name for the new institution.

For question five, AUG respondents had five responses to the charges given to the committee. The general consensus stated the charge was to merge the two institutions of Georgia Health Sciences University and Augusta State University. The overall charge appeared to be to merge the two institutions without much direction and in question six, all five respondents indicated there was no change through the process to the charge provided.

The MGA responses provided similar responses with five of the seven who completed the survey providing answers to the question. Responses included changing of the name, mascot, school colors, merging foundations, and involving the community. Four of these five indicated the charge did not change but one indicated it did change with no further detail on what actually changed.

GSU's responses came back with similar responses from the seven respondents as the AUG and MGA respondents answering, "oversight and approval of the consolidation plan," and the general consensus was to merge the two bringing together parts from both institutions to create the new institution. Of the seven, only one indicated a change from the initial charge, stating it may have changed after he/she left the committee.

Table 22 –Top Priorities of the Committee – Themes Across All Three Case Studies

Question 7: What was the top priority of the committee after being formed?
1. Successfully merge the two institutions into one (Appeared in 7 responses)
2. Minimal impact to faculty, staff, and students of the two institutions. (6)
3. Representation for both institutions and fairness to faculty, staff, and students (4)
4. Find commonalities between the institutions procedures, policies, bylaws, etc. (3)
5. Develop a new mission for the new institution (2)
6. Name the new institution (2)

After addressing the charge to the committees, the next portion of the survey sought to find the top priorities as seen by the committee members, most likely as gained from the charge or direction provided to the committee. Table 22 provides the top six themes provided in answers from respondents in the order of which appeared most. Successfully merging the institutions came up regularly as the answer (appeared seven times), while the impact to faculty, staff, and students appeared second most (six times) in the form of unity and minimizing the impact to the three groups. Representation of both institutions and fairness to the faculty, staff, and students through the process appeared four times. Finding commonalities of the two institutions to create the new procedures, policies, bylaws, etc. came up three times in answers. A new mission statement for the new institution was found to be important to committee members appearing twice in the comments. Naming the new institution, at least the suggestions to the BOR, was another common theme found as important to the committees at AUG and MGA.

AUG responses included a general consensus of input from all areas to promote fairness to those impacted. Six of seven MGA respondents answered the question giving answers which included the mission statement, a smooth consolidation to reduce tension, and creation of unity.

The top priority at MGA appeared as satisfying the students and faculty through a smooth transition with the development of the unity through establishing the proper leadership for the new institution and operations.

GSU emphasized a successful merger and fairness to both campuses to include faculty, staff, and students. Bringing together policies which appeared to be different at various campuses to have consistency in the new institution was an important factor as well to ensure fairness.

Table 23 – Where Did the Charge Come From?

Institution	BOR	Chancellor	University Leaders	Other
AUG	5	3	2	1
MGA	3	4	6	1
GSU	2	4	4	2
Total	10	11	12	4

In questions eight and nine, the focus turned to where directives came from before and during consolidation. The respondents were given the opportunity to select from the BOR, Chancellor of the USG, University Leadership, or "Other" and if "Other" was chosen, provide from where it came. Respondents were able to indicate more than one of the answers as the source of directives. As shown in Table 23, respondents indicated different and multiple areas for directives received.

For AUG, all respondents listed the BOR with the Chancellor mentioned by three and University Leadership noted by two. One respondent indicated directive was also given by the community which was a response provided by an administrator.

MGA respondents indicated the BOR (3 responses) and Chancellor (4 responses) with six of the seven also indicating University Leadership providing the directive with two respondents noting this as the only source of directive. One respondent indicated the Faculty Senate as the "Other" answer for directives.

GSU had a variation of answers as two of seven indicated directives from the BOR, four indicated the Chancellor, and four University Leadership. Two selected the "Other" option providing "Various USG Vice Chancellors" and "Chancellor's Staff" for their answers. The responses indicate that a variety of members outside and inside the institutions provided directives for the committee throughout the process.

Table 24 – Should Direction be from a Single Entity?

Institution	Yes	No	Not clear
AUG	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
MGA	1 (14.3%)	5 (71.4%)	1 (14.3%)
GSU	4 (57.1%)	2 (28.6%)	1 (14.3%)
Total	8 (42.1%)	8 (42.1%)	3 (15.8%)

Following up to question 8, question 9 asked respondents, "If multiple, would the committee have been better served with direction from a single entity?" Table 24 indicates a balance overall of whether one or multiple directives would have been helpful with eight feeling a single entity for directive would have helped and eight disagreeing.

AUG respondents gave three "yes", one "no", and one "not clear." MGA respondents had five responses of "no" and one "yes" indicating most believed the multiple entities providing direction was helpful. GSU provided a mixed response from individuals with some believing the single entity would have been better (57.1%) and others rejecting a charge from a single entity

(28.6%). GSU's experience was more mixed than AUG and MGA in the ideas of where direction should come from and what direction was actually given.

Table 25 –Make-up of the Committee

Q10: Was the make-up of the committee between administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members appropriate to the work done for the committee?			
Institution	Yes	No	Unsure
AUG	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
MGA	5 (71.4%)	1 (14.3%)	1 (14.3%)
GSU	3 (42.9%)	3 (42.9%)	1 (14.3%)
Total	13 (68.4%)	4 (21.1%)	2 (10.5%)

Question ten asked the committee members about the make-up of the committee, which was assessed earlier in this chapter, inquiring if the make-up of the committee was appropriate between administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members. This answer was interesting in the responses broken up by institutions but also by member type: faculty, staff, administration, student, and community member. In Table 25, the responses reveal all members of AUG felt it to be an appropriate mix for the members, while MGA and GSU had a mixed response. MGA had five "yes", one "no", and one "unsure" with GSU giving three "yes", three "no", and one "unsure." What is most interesting is the respondents who gave a "no" response to the make-up of the committee. Of 19 respondents who answered the question, 13 (68.4%) answered "yes", four "no" (21.1%), and two "unsure" (10.5%). One administrator provided a "no" while the other three came from faculty members. One faculty and one administrator felt "unsure" if the make-up was appropriate. The students, staff, and community members all felt the make-up of the committee was appropriate for the work. The interesting piece of this data is the response rate of 50% “no” for faculty and 20% “no” for administration who typically take the lead in the university level work.

Figure 3 – Major Issues During the Process

In question eleven, the respondents were asked to give three major issues from the perspective of the committee in order to determine what factors may have been issues for multiple consolidation committees. Figure 3 shows us the top ten common issues as revealed in the responses based on the Qualtrics creation of the word cloud. In creating the word cloud through Qualtrics, common words such as “the”, “and”, etc. were removed to find themes. Other common words were removed such as “institution”, “consolidation”, and “merger” to find the primary themes as these words are not the descriptive words which explain the major issues but common words which appeared in answers explaining the issues. For the word cloud, the larger the size of the word, the more often it appeared in responses.

Culture was a common theme between committee members relating to the campus culture and what the new institution could expect. Change related mostly to the change of the institutions and administration which many individual committee members indicated caused a lack of trust. Lack of representation by members of the committees in the support of one institution or another was another common theme. Leadership was found with the issues of change and culture as the differences in leadership from the consolidating institutions resulted in one of the two institutions receiving new leadership. Student appeared in several responses based on the negative impact the consolidations caused for students with uncertainty about the institution and ability to get help with their needs when services are changed at the newly formed institution. Communication was another important theme in this response which reflected how important communicating with the committee, faculty, staff, students, and community was and how the lack of communication created other issues listed in Figure 3. Equity relates to the culture, change, lack of representation, and leadership as the individuals felt there was no equity between the institutions causing members of the different campus communities to feel negatively towards the process. Mission arose from the difference in the missions of the institutions consolidated which created uncertainty in the process. Decision arose multiple times from the responses feeling the decisions were made without full regard to the campus community related to the consolidation as well as the impact it would have on all involved. Finally, pay came up as the tenth most common theme as there was a question of equity in pay for the two institutions which had to be rectified to fix other issues related to leadership, culture, and change.

AUG provided several answers to include mission, communication, and decision making along with services, leadership, and name change. Others saw the issues as culture and talking past one another as well as how to consolidate, what to keep for the "new" university, and how to keep communication open to all. AUG's main issues were viewed differently by each member but culture and communication were common themes along with naming of the institution.

For MGA, the primary issues provided were culture, leadership, and decision making. Several respondents provided these three along with pay, satisfaction of students and faculty, and providing the needed classes with multiple campuses now offering multiple programs. An additional theme raised was the uncertainty faculty and staff felt with regards to jobs, campuses remaining open, and having to wait for answers.

GSU listed similar issues with the main issue being lack of "trust between committee representatives." Equity between the institutions was another theme for the committee responses with GSU being seen as getting "its way most of the time." Leadership, mission, and communication were all repeated points given for the consolidation committee.

Table 26 – Leadership Change and Impact

Institution	Did senior leadership (president and provost) change during the consolidation process?				If changes did occur in the senior leadership, did the change help or hinder the efforts of consolidation?			
Responses	No change	President Only	Provost Only	Both	Help	Hindered	Unsure	No Response
AUG	3	0	0	2	0	2	1	2
GSU	2	0	1	4	0	4	2	1
MGA	0	6	0	1	0	3	4	0
Total	5	6	1	7	0	9	7	3

Question twelve asked if leadership changed, while thirteen asked, if the change did occur, did it help or hinder the process of consolidation for the committee and institution. Table 26 shows the results of these two questions with five of the 19 respondents indicating no change occurred in their consolidation, six (all at MGA) indicating the President only changed, one indicated a Provost only change, and seven answered both positions changed during the consolidation. Of the nineteen respondents, none of the respondents indicated the changes helped while nine (47%) felt as though the change hindered the progress of consolidation, seven (37%) were unsure, and three (16%) did not respond.

AUG had varied responses with two stating the President and Provost both changed while the others indicated no change. This could be an issue with the wording as the Augusta State individuals would have considered a change to have occurred while the GHSU individuals would have felt they kept their leadership so no change occurred. The two who indicated a change both felt it hindered the process while the rest were unsure/no response if it had an effect.

MGA had six indicate a change in President but not Provost with one indicating both changed. The change in Provost did occur but after consolidation was complete. Of the responses from MGA, four were unsure if it helped or hindered while three indicated it did hinder the process.

GSU had four indicate both changed, one noted provost only, and two no leadership change. Once again this could be related to the campus the individual was on and referring to a change from Armstrong's leadership to GSU's leadership but is unclear. Question thirteen did indicate four of the seven felt as though the change experienced was a hindrance while two indicated unsure and one did not answer after indicating no change. The resounding finding in this two question set was that a change in senior leadership came to be viewed as a hindrance with nine responses supporting this fact and the remainder unsure/no response if there was an impact from the change.

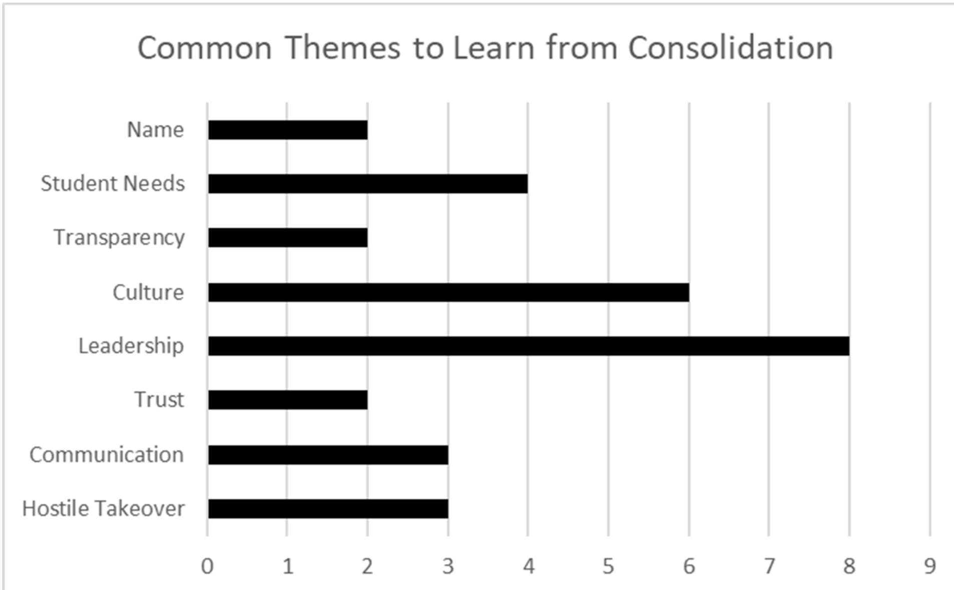
Table 27 – Was the Consolidation Successful?

Q14: How would you evaluate the success of the consolidation?					
Institution	Very Successful	Successful	Unsuccessful	Very Unsuccessful	Totals
AUG	0 (0%)	4 (80%)	1 (20%)	0 (0%)	5
MGA	1 (14.2%)	6 (85.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	7
GSU	0 (0%)	3 (42.9%)	2 (28.6%)	2 (28.6%)	7
Total	1 (5.3%)	13 (68.4%)	3 (15.8%)	2 (10.5%)	19

Question fourteen asks the respondents to evaluate the success from their view of the consolidation with a choice of answers from very unsuccessful to very successful. Table 27 provides the breakdown of the respondents' thoughts on success of the consolidations. Of the 19 respondents, one (from MGA) expressed the thought the consolidation was very successful while 13 (68.4% of respondents) felt the consolidation was a success at their institution. While 14 of the 19 felt their consolidation was very successful/successful, five total felt it was unsuccessful or very unsuccessful representing 26.3% expressing the feeling the consolidation was not a success at their given institutions.

AUG respondents provided successful in four of the five responses with the one unsuccessful coming from an administrator. MGA had six of seven indicate successful with the seventh indicating very successful as all members of the committee felt the work they did was successful in moving MGA to a consolidated institution. Of the seven respondents at GSU, three answered successful with the remaining four indicated unsuccessful or very unsuccessful. These sentiments could be related to the newness of the consolidation occurring within the last three years and may require follow up for the thoughts of the committee further out such as the AUG and MGA consolidations.

Figure 4 – Lessons Learned



Question fifteen comes to the lessons learned from the consolidation by the members. Figure 4 provides a look at the most common themes and how often these eight themes appeared in comments from respondents. The most common theme was leadership which appeared eight times with references to good leadership, as well as protecting and retaining the leadership at the institutions as important notes. Protecting the culture of each institution was another important theme which appeared second most (six times) in the responses referencing protecting the culture and history of the different campuses and gathering input from the campus community on these items. Student needs appeared four times in the responses indicating the lesson learned was the importance of making sure the students are aware of what is going on, which leads to another theme of communication. Communication appeared as many times as references to "hostile takeovers." The importance of the new name, trust between campuses, and transparency in the process all were mentioned a couple of times each.

AUG's responses focused mostly upon concerns that "it doesn't become a hostile takeover." Earlier questions highlighted the issue of culture for this consolidation and it shows in the response to this question. Naming issues came up in several responses along with what was considered a forced consolidation. Recommendations to pick the name before the announcement of consolidation, keeping leaders from both institutions to help with culture, and identify necessary resources were also important. A final suggestion of listening "to the community/communities affected more" was provided as a way to help with issues over naming. One comment which struck the author of this study as interesting was to "highlight the impact on student success and diminish the emphasis on financial gains." This statement provides a guiding idea towards future consolidations.

MGA responses provided good insight which can assist future consolidations. One theme from the MGA responses was the importance of communication between the leadership, committee, and the faculty and staff. MGA's responses alluded to the importance of communication but, more importantly, the time it takes to make the consolidation successful.

GSU's more recent consolidation provides extended feedback from the committee. One of the themes mentioned earlier in this study appears again with "trust between committee members" being important along with "communication and collaboration." Themes along with trust which were shown in the responses here included impact to enrollment, the difference in missions of the institutions prior to consolidation, and the ability to bring together such different missions to form one institution. Resentment from institutions which felt taken over was a major theme throughout all three groups of responses as several at institutions such as the former Armstrong and Middle Georgia College felt they were "taken over" by the other institution with less input than what should have been allowed by the consolidation process.

Figure 5 – Most Difficult Obstacles of Committee Themes

Q16: What do you consider to be the most difficult obstacle to the work of your committee?

Similar to other questions, but a more direct question of a most difficult issue, question sixteen asked respondents to consider the most difficult obstacle for the committee. Figure 5 provides the top ten themes from respondents identifying the most difficult obstacles to the consolidation process and committees. Themes found in the responses are based on the Qualtrics creation of the word cloud. In creating the word cloud through Qualtrics, common words such as “the”, “and”, etc. were removed to find themes. Other common words were removed such as “institution”, “consolidation”, and “merger” to find the primary themes as these words are not the descriptive words which explain the major issues but common words which appeared in answers explaining the issues. For the word cloud, the larger the size of the word, the more often it appeared in responses.

The most common theme in answers was faculty. Faculty was referred to in the lack of representation and impact to faculty showing the respondents understanding of the impact the consolidation had on faculty. Community related to both the impact to the campus community and the local community being an issue for the consolidation as both felt there was a lack of understanding for these groups at times. A lesser theme showing, but appropriate with community, is culture which relates to the feel and nostalgia on campus and the surrounding community which existed with the institutions separately. Consensus related to the need for consensus in the consolidation between the committee members and therefore the institutions to reach agreements on certain aspects of the process, to avoid making the process more difficult. BOR appears in responses with a couple of points of lack of direction from the BOR causing obstacles for the process as well as changes directed which became problems to the working committee. Clear and lack appear as consistent themes with members indicated lack of clear direction for the committee. The word partner showed up consistently in the theme of answers relating to the partner institution to give light to being partners in the consolidation. Along with partners, trust appeared often and mostly referenced a lack of trust and creating an obstacle rather than benefit. Finally, adjust appears in these responses as the members indicated the need to often adjust the direction of the committee to make other aspects work such as with the community, BOR, and partners at the other institution.

These ten themes can be summarized into three major points to which the respondents alluded: faculty, community, and consensus.

AUG respondents competing interests, community impact, and bringing together the policies of the two institutions where there are major differences, i.e. faculty teaching loads. The one that resounded with AUG in this question as well was the naming of the new consolidated institution which created backlash from the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community.

MGA respondents listed several different obstacles with faculty and community trust between campuses coming in as a repeating issue. Trust with the leadership was another constant theme. A key issue listed was the history of the schools as MGC had a long history dating back to the late 1800s and the impact consolidation would have on this history was expressed by the faculty, staff, and community leaders of the Cochran campus.

For GSU, consensus was the first issue to arise with the response of "attitude from the merger partners" and responses also repeated the theme of culture issues for community. Lack of control, guidance, and trust were all issues brought forth in the obstacles for this merger. Finally, speed of the consolidation was brought up which may provide an explanation those who viewed the consolidation as unsuccessful based on the BOR forcing a quick process.

Table 28 – Culture Adoption and Take-Over

Q17: How did the cultures of the two organizations come together?						
Q18: In your view, did the consolidation essentially become one institution taking over the other?						
	Q17			Q18		
Institutions	Some came together, but not all	Each maintained	Meshed well	Yes	No	Unsure
AUG	5 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (60%)	1 (20%)	1 (20%)
MGA	4 (57.1%)	1 (14.3%)	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
GSU	6 (85.7%)	1 (14.3%)	0 (0%)	5 (71.4%)	2 (28.6%)	0 (0%)
Total	15 (78.9%)	2 (10.5%)	2 (10.5%)	12 (63.2%)	6 (31.6%)	1 (5.3%)

Question seventeen moves to the question of culture and is followed by question eighteen asking if the consolidation became a take-over of one institution by the other. As seen in Table

28, 78.9% (15 of 19) of the respondents felt some of the campuses came together but not all with 10.5% (2) feeling each maintained its own culture, and 10.5% (2) feeling the campuses meshed well together. In the question of “taking over,” Table 28 also shows that 12 of the 19 (63.2%) felt the consolidation was one institution taking over another as the themes in prior questions would indicate. Six respondents felt there was not a sense of a takeover and one was unsure.

AUG unanimously answered “some campuses took on the culture of the others but not all came together.” This leads to question eighteen which was yes for three of the five respondents indicating it seemed like a take-over by one school of the other rather than a consolidation and coming together of the institutions. The other responses were a no by one member and the fifth response was unsure. MGA had a variation in the responses with four indicating “some campuses took on the culture of the others but not all came together,” two felt the campuses and institutions “meshed well for one culture of the new institution” while the last response was “each campus maintained its own identity and culture.” This variation in differences could be based on time as well and where these individuals are at the point they responded to the survey. MGA’s view of a take-over by one institution had five “yes” and two “no” responses. One “no” was from a community member and one from an administrator. This question could be asked with more specificity of which campus were you a part of prior to the merger to get a better sense of the response.

GSU had six responses of “some campuses took on the culture of others but not all came together” and one selected “each campus maintained their own identity and culture.” To go with these responses, five of the seven respondents saw the consolidation as a take-over while the other two did not see it as a take-over. This would be another time when knowing which campus the answers came from on the pre-consolidation institution would be enlightening. Those at the

GSU Statesboro campus would most likely view this differently from the Savannah campus which was originally Armstrong.

Table 29 – Current Relationship to the Institution

Q19: Are you still in the same capacity with the institution as you were prior to the consolidation?			
	Yes	Yes, but different position	No
AUG	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)
MGA	0 (0%)	2 (28.6%)	5 (71.4%)
GSU	4 (57.1%)	1 (14.3%))	2 28.6%)
Totals	6 (31.6%)	4 (21%)	9 (47.4%)

The final question asks the respondents to indicate their current status with the institution which could provide some more detail to the prior questions and how they answered success of the consolidation or how the cultures came together. The question asked if the individual is still in the same capacity with the institution as they were prior to consolidation. Answer options were "Yes; Yes, but in a different role now; No, I am no longer a part of the consolidated institution." This was to get a sense of where the individual is now as the answers came through. In Table 29, the responses of the 19 respondents are found with six of the 19 (31.6%) still with the institution in the same role and just four (21%) are with the same institution but in a different role. Nine (47.5%) of the respondents no longer work for the institution.

At AUG, two were still with the institution in the same role, one still at the institution but in a new role, and two had left the institution. MGA had two still at the institution in different roles, while the other five were no longer a part of MGA. GSU's seven responses included four yes in the same role, one yes but in a different role, and two who were no longer a part of the institution.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Consolidation has been a part of government, business, school districts, and higher education for many years. Success is determined in many different ways for the various groups with most focusing on saving money while the overall impact to the consolidated unit is a secondary component. In the USG consolidations, the six key principles were laid out by the Chancellor in 2011 and approved by the BOR to help direct the efforts of the consolidations in the system.

The six principles approved were crafted to provide a rationale for the consolidation of institutions in the USG. The principles, as outlined in Chapter 1 of this study, are:

1. Increase opportunities to raise education attainment levels.
2. Improve accessibility, regional identity, and compatibility.
3. Avoid duplication of academic programs while optimizing access to instruction.
4. Create significant potential for economies of scale and scope.
5. Enhance regional economic development.
6. Streamline administrative services while maintaining or improving service level and quality. (Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, n.d.)

Ten hypotheses were developed for the assessment of the principles using the multiple areas within this study and are found in Table 30 (page 109) providing the hypotheses, acceptance, rejection, or mixed results of each, and a rationale for each decision to accept, reject, or mixed results.

Budget

From these six principles, economies of scale is one of the top priorities to create savings to the budget at the institutions along with the streamlining of administrative services. While the first two hypotheses focus on specific areas of the budget, the initial data analysis started with the total budget and also included specifics in other areas of the budget such as student activities and travel.

The total budget is made up of all the smaller budgets and the largest of those other budgets is the Education and General (E&G) which is split into two primary areas of personal services and operating expenses. While the principles focus on savings, the question is where the savings can be seen in the budget. Total budget showed an average savings in the first year after consolidation across the institutions of 0.83% but post-consolidation averages showed an increase in total budget of 12.24% across the institutional averages. The first hypothesis of this study declares:

H1: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in personal services.

H1 is rejected as six of the institutions have seen increases in personal services since consolidation. SGSC is the only institution with more than four years after consolidation which has experienced savings in this area. ASU has experienced losses in many areas to go with personal services losses and ABAC is in year two which is the expected time for decreases in this budget due to losses in larger salaries, however, most institutions have rebounded with increases in years three to five. Following the trends of the post-consolidation averages, the personal services budget tends to show the consolidation does not sustain savings in this area. This trend for personal services was similar to the literature found in Chapter 2 for government and school district consolidations in that long term savings were not sustainable in personal services. Overall, personal services provided an initial savings in year one at the majority of institutions, averaging 0.58% savings but the post-consolidation average was an increase of 15.46% for the average of institutions (see Table 30). While savings were not found to be sustainable in personal services, this matches the studies for consolidation efforts in other areas and leads to the second hypothesis which proposes:

H2: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in operating expenses.

Based on the data, H2 is rejected as the overall average in year one experienced a savings of 1.34%, however, the post-consolidation average was 11.62% higher in the average than the pre-consolidation averages (see Table 30). While the three most recent consolidations of ASU, GSU, and ABAC have all experienced savings in operating expenses in the time since consolidation, only one (SGSC) of the six with at least five years of post-consolidation data experienced a decrease in operating expenses in the pre- to post-consolidation averages. A review of the literature on consolidations in government, business, school districts, and higher education revealed that sustainable savings are found in the successful reductions of operating expenses. These savings are recognized with a reduction of duplication of services in government and school districts. In business, savings in operating expenses are realized to be sustainable as redundancy is removed from work, facilities, utilities, and other areas.

Savings in operating expenses have proven to be more sustainable through the literature, yet the expected savings did not materialize in the consolidations past year one for the majority of the institutions and for only five of the nine in the first year where more savings would have been expected.

Savings in operating expenses has shown to be the most sustainable opportunity for cost reduction in consolidations, according to the literature. Business and government often consolidate in order to reduce the redundancy of services realizing their savings in operations and personnel, however, the operating expense savings prove to be the longer lasting. Higher education and school districts have found similar success in operating expense savings, yet the savings have not been as successful at the majority of the consolidated institutions.

Enrollment

Principles one, two, and three focus on the opportunities of education, accessibility of education, and avoiding duplication in order to optimize the education opportunities for students. To measure the impact of these items, enrollment is an important aspect to show the institutions are providing the educational opportunities to the students. For enrollment comparison, this study used the areas of fall headcount and fall FTE. Headcount being the number of individuals attending the institution regardless of load with a minimum of one hour enrolled and no maximum hours. FTE combines part-time enrolled students to create a number of students who are enrolled full-time based on the number of credit hours. Any student enrolled in less than 12 credit hours is combined with other students enrolled in less than 12 credit hours in order to create one full-time enrolled student, therefore, the number of FTE is lower than that of headcount. Comparing these two for the impact on enrollment by consolidation provides the information for the third hypothesis:

H3: Consolidation has a negative impact on enrollment initially.

H3 is accepted as consolidation impacted seven of the nine institutions negatively in both fall headcount and fall FTE in year one after consolidation and in the post-consolidation averages. With the exceptions of UNG and KSU who each saw an increase each year, institutions who were consolidated in the USG saw a decrease in both the headcount (-9.27%) and FTE (-7.97%) in the post-consolidation averages. While UNG was not impacted negatively through consolidation in enrollment, the institution made changes to their requirements for male students being required to enroll in the Senior ROTC program in order to live on campus around the same time as consolidation which increased the pool of applicants to the institution. Prior to this change, all male students who lived on campus had to be a member of the Senior ROTC which limited the candidate pool for students to those interested in this program. KSU is in the northeast metro Atlanta area and was able to benefit from the large population to avoid enrollment losses.

Retention

Retention is the ability to keep a student at the institution or within the USG system for their education. Principles one, two, and six are measured partially by this effort for consolidation. Principle one emphasizes opportunities for education and principle two notes accessibility to education, while principle six addresses maintaining or improving service level and quality to students. Retention becomes a key measure of the satisfaction of students with their chosen institution.

Retention rates are the percentage of students who remain at the institution from one year to the next and are measured by the percentage of students in a freshmen cohort who return the following year. The USG measures this data in several different ways using the one-year, two-year, and four-year retention rates with data looking at both the institutional retention and retention within the USG. The fourth hypothesis of this study stipulates:

H4: There is a negative effect on student retention following consolidation.

H4 is rejected as a comparison of the one-year, two-year, and four-year retention rates provided mostly increases in retention across the institutions. The institutions averaged a 2.36% increase in the first year after consolidation for the four-year retention rates and 5.81% in the post-consolidation averages. The two-year rates showed increases on average as well of 0.5% in year after consolidation with a 4.25% increase in the post-consolidation averages. The one-year rates were also positive with a 1.07% increase in the first year after consolidation and 3.02% increase in the post-consolidation averages. The MIT study of the first four consolidations (MGA, UNG, AUG, and SGSC) showed a higher retention rate was one positive outcome of consolidation from the initial four, specifically for the one-year retention rates (Downey, 2017; Quinton, 2017).

Retention numbers showed as the most consistent beneficiary of consolidation for the institutions. An increase post-consolidation for the averages of 5.81%, as compared to the pre-consolidation numbers, is important to the initiatives of graduation as it show the students are remaining at the institutions as well as remaining in the USG as shown by the 7.91% increase in retention rates system-wide for the four-year cohort. The ability to retain more students in the one-year and two-year cohorts makes the ability to have a higher four-year rate more possible. Including ASU who experienced a loss of retention in all three cohorts, only three institutions (ASU, MGA, and SGSC) experienced a drop in retention in the first-year after consolidation or post-consolidation averages in any of the cohorts for the institution or system-wide retention.

While no specific answer can be given to the reason for the increased retention rates, the consolidation of state colleges with universities allows students to be counted at retained at the institution when prior to consolidation, the same student may have started at the state college for two years then transferred to the university. For example, students who attended GSC for two years would transfer to UNG to complete their degree but with the two institutions consolidated into a single institution, changing campuses for a program did not mean changing schools. The same situation applied to GPC and GState, WC and SGSC, MGC and MSC, and DSC and ASU. This removal of a need to change institution, and simply to change campuses, could have encouraged students to remain at the institution rather than exploring other institutions for options. Seamless transition of programs and reduction of the need to apply to other institutions can entice students to remain at the institution and not seek to transfer.

Cost of Attendance

Of the six principles of consolidation from the USG, principles one, two, three, and four drive the point of opportunities, accessibility, limitation of duplication of programs, and economies of scale. Adding in principle six which focuses on streamlining the administration services without reducing service levels or quality, tuition and fees become important to the consolidation process. With savings the key to the economies of scale, Chapter 1 noted the efforts of the USG BOR to save money to students in order to reduce the cost of earning a degree and reduce student debt. The method of saving money for students would be through the cost of attendance, which is a combination of tuition and fees and room and board along with other costs such as books and miscellaneous items related to education. The expectation is there is an increase in these areas rather than savings to the students. This study tested the following hypothesis:

H5: There is an increase in tuition and fees after consolidation.

H5 is accepted as the post-consolidation tuition and fees for the cost of attending 30 semester hours per year steadily increased for the seven institutions available from the year of consolidation until the current year. Tuition and fees were calculated for the cost of attending 30 undergraduate semester credit hours per year with fees charged for two semesters (fall and spring) added to the 30 credit hours to determine the cost. Tuition and fees showed an increase of 2.49% in the first year after consolidation and 19.14% in the post-consolidation average over the pre-consolidation average. Russell's study showed an average increase of 7% for tuition alone when studying the first four (MGA, UNG, AUG, and SGSC) (Quinton, 2017) finding this study to be in line with the expectation of the prior literature. Cost of attendance includes tuition and fees as well as room and board which provided the need to test the following hypothesis:

H6: Cost of attendance at consolidated institutions increases after consolidation.

H6 is accepted as the cost of tuition and fees went up, so did the cost of room and board at the consolidated institutions. Room and board increased at six of the seven institutions with available data pre- and post-consolidation with the exception of GSU which had a reduction of $421 (4.18%) after consolidation. Despite the principles aimed at saving students money, tuition and fees increased across the board for the institutions as did room and board further increasing the cost of attendance to the students and raising their student debt. Based on these findings, the USG BOR's principles of consolidation did not assist the students in reducing their cost or debts.

One shortfall in this area as well as the tuition and fees portion would be the comparison to increases at non-consolidated institutions over the same period. The USG regulates who can increase tuition, fees, and other costs of attendance and the comparison to other institutions who

Table 30 – Evaluation of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Accept/Reject	Rationale
H1: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in personal services.	Reject	Personal services experienced savings in the first year after consolidation but in the post-consolidation average experienced a 15.46% growth across the institutional averages (Table 4).
H2: Consolidation positively impacts the budget with savings in operating expenses.	Reject	Operating expenses experienced an initial savings in the first year of 1.34%, however, the post-consolidation average was 11.62% for the institutional averages (Table 5).
H3: Consolidation has a negative impact on enrollment initially.	Accept	Fall headcount (Table 9) and FTE (Table 10) were down in the first year after consolidation and in the post- consolidation average.
H4: There is a negative effect on student retention following consolidation.	Reject	Retention showed positive increases in the first year after and post-consolidation averages for the 1st year (Table 11), 2nd year (Table 13), and 4th year (Table 15) rates.
H5: There is an increase in tuition and fees after consolidation.	Accept	Tuition and fees increased at all institutions post-consolidation including in the first year after consolidation (Table 17).
H6: Cost of attendance at consolidated institutions increases after consolidation.	Accept	Room and board increased in the first year and by 29.19% in the post-consolidation average (Table 18).
H7: Each institution encountered similar obstacles in the consolidation process.	Accept	Common themes included faculty, community, consensus, clear direction, BOR, and culture (Figure 5)
H8: Changes in leadership during the consolidation negatively impacted the consolidation process.	Accept	Leadership change resulted in somewhat mixed results with 9 (47.4%) respondents feeling it "hindered", 7 (36.8%) unsure, and 3 with no answer, but the most important result to determine this as accepting the hypothesis is the zero who saw a change as having "helped" (Table 26).
H9: Multiple charges to the committee negatively impacted the consolidation process.	Mixed Results	Responses were split with 8 answering "yes" to a single entity, 8 answering "no", and 3 were "not clear" (Table 24).
H10: The charge was the same for each institution.	Mixed Results	Developing processes and implementation of the merger were common themes for the charge (Table 21), but a variety of charges provided were varied by institution.

did not go through the process of consolidation would provide a benchmark for comparison. This comparison would help to determine if the USG approved increases for consolidated institutions only or other institutions were allowed to increase the cost of attendance over the same time period.

Consolidation Committees

The final four hypotheses focus on the consolidation committees related to the challenges, leadership provided, and charges given to the committee for the process of consolidation. The Chancellor and USG BOR developed the six principles of consolidation and confirmed the principles to develop the overall process of consolidation. Once the USG BOR and Chancellor decided upon and approved the consolidation, the committees formed and provided a charge to consolidate the institution and create the new institution. This process provided new developments, opportunities, and obstacles for the institutional committees but what were these challenges, charges, and who provided the leadership through the process?

Survey data collected asked committee members to provide information regarding the charge to the committee and from which leadership (BOR, USG, school, or other) the charge was delivered. The first area considered was the obstacles experienced by the committee. Were similar challenges seen by each committee? Did some challenges only impact a portion of the committees? Were some harder to work through than others? What appeared to be the biggest obstacle which the committee felt others could benefit from knowing? This study proposed that:

H7: Each institution encountered similar obstacles in the consolidation process.

H7 is accepted as respondents at each institution provided similar issues in the question related to the major issues with the process and regarding the most difficult obstacles for the committee. The most common issues and challenges which appeared as themes in responses were faculty, community, and consensus. Each appeared regularly in responses with faculty appearing the most referencing the lack of representation by faculty on committees and lack of trust among faculty with the process and between institutional representatives. Community appeared second most referencing the campus and local community related to the impact consolidation had on each. Campus community impact was related through the campus culture and local community impact based on name changes and how the community felt about the consolidation of the institutions. Consensus was another common theme in the responses as it related to the two institutions looking for consensus in the consolidation process for policies, leadership, and processes for which the new institution would follow. These appeared from respondents at all three institutions (MGA, AUG, and GSU), though more at some than others.

Clear direction appeared in as an issue for multiple respondents at each institution as the references to both the BOR and institutional leadership in providing clear direction past “consolidation the institutions” and “consolidate the policies” was an obstacle provided. Lack and trust appeared in the themes as well relating to lack of leadership and trust between members from different campuses became one of the an apparent issue for the majority of the respondents as each member wanted to be sure to represent their campus yet felt they were not able to in many instances. Culture was another large issue all committee members listed as problematic in one either issues or obstacles faced. With campuses coming together with different backgrounds such as AUG having a medical campus (GHSU) and mostly undergraduate campus (Augusta State University), meshing of the two campuses was not as easily completed, but the two campuses being in the same vicinity was helpful. MGA experienced a larger gap with five campuses and different backgrounds to each which created mistrust between members from

MSC and MGC. GSU and Armstrong experienced a large distance between campuses and different cultures including athletics on both campuses of which many had to be eliminated, creating a large reduction of activity on a campus with a history of athletic events.

An issue which did not appear in the main themes for all three institutions but was an issue at MGA and AUG, was name change. The name for MGA was settled early and stayed with little issue as Middle Georgia State College. AUG was a larger issue for the committee, institution, and USG overall. The community, alumni, students, faculty, and staff at both institutions coming together voiced their opinion along with one lawsuit from another institution resulting in multiple name changes for the institution before landing on Augusta University. Though GSU was the only other committee surveyed, none of the other institutions changed the name to be different from one of the original institutions making the name change a non-issue for the most part in the other processes.

Each of the challenges and obstacles given by survey respondents at least showed up at two of the three institutions involved, giving the general understanding that there were similarities in the consolidations. While an issue such as name change was a much bigger deal to the members of AUG, the issue still existed with the respondents at MGA. After determining what issues existed, the study next wanted to determine where the charge for these committees came from leading to the next hypothesis:

H8: Changes in leadership during the consolidation negatively impacted the consolidation process.

H8 is accepted based on responses from questions twelve and thirteen regarding the leadership changes. As seen in question twelve, which asked respondents if changes occurred in senior leadership of the President and Provost, fourteen of the nineteen respondents indicated a change did occur. Following up, question thirteen asked if a change "helped" or "hindered" the process of consolidation, to which, none of the nineteen respondents felt the changes helped and nine respondents said it hindered while seven were unsure (three did not respond). This led to the decision to accept the negative impact from leadership change in consolidation as no respondent saw a change helped but the nine felt the change was enough to hinder the process. Though ten were unsure or did not answer, the fact that no respondent was sure it helped allowed the conclusion of accepting this hypothesis.

Using both question twelve and thirteen, the changes to a leadership position of President or Provost during the process of consolidation did hinder the process of consolidation for the committee. One way the USG BOR could help to provide a more streamlined process to help make consolidation successful is limiting leadership changes through the process. The idea is not the need for a new outside person to be brought in, but keeping the President and Provost from a single institution or one of each position to represent each institution and insuring they remain through the process could help strengthen the consolidation process.

Based on the responses, some viewed the change as their particular institution going under the leadership of the other, for example, Armstrong Atlantic University faculty and staff now having GSU leadership, however, this was not the idea of the question. At MGA, the consolidation committee was formed and announced with a President in place from MSC to be the new President over the institution, however, after consolidation began, he left for another institution and an interim President was brought in to take his place during the process which respondents indicated was an issue in the change. While the overall understanding showed there was a hindrance to the process for the committee with a change in leadership, this question and results may have been misunderstood by a portion of respondents which created a difference in opinion between respondents who should have had the same answer.

After reviewing leadership changes, the next step in the study was to determine what charges were given to the committees. Senior leadership were members of the committees but also could provide a charge to the committee so determining what charge(s) the committees received was important. With multiple groups and individuals able to provide a charge to the committee, the next hypothesis sought to determine if:

H9: Multiple charges to the committee negatively impacted the consolidation process.

H9 provided mixed results as the committees provided an equally split “yes” and “no” regarding multiple charges and the impact on the committee work (42.1% in each with the other 15.8% “not clear” on whether they thought it helped or not). These responses were split by institution as well with both AUG (3 “yes”/1 “no”) and GSU (4/2) respondents indicating multiple charges from a single entity would have been better while MGA (1/5) respondents felt it would have been better from multiple entities with one from each institution “not clear.” Overall, the BOR or chancellor was given as a response in sixteen of the nineteen responses by respondents indicating they did realize the BOR and chancellor were the primary guides for the charges of consolidation provided which came through other leaders at the university and giving some regularity to the directives for the committees.

After determining from which leaders the charges were provided or received, the charges to the committee were of next importance to find similarities in the processes of consolidation. The actual charge to the committees are the direction of the next hypothesis which states:

H10: The charge was the same for each institution.

H10 was mixed results. Though the general charge of "develop the processes for a successful merger" was prevalent among the committee responses, appearing ten times, and five other times the charge of "implement the merger of the two institutions," was given these were general charges and many other points varied in responses by institution. With the needed activities varying within the charge, some institutions had more work to do than others and some gave the indication some tasks were included for one but not another, the overall response provided the charge did differ past the generic directions. Interpretations were required at different points and institutions throughout the process in order to complete tasks and required additional charges to be gathered from different variations of leadership at the BOR, USG, and university levels.

UNG, KSU, and GState Outliers

Throughout the data sets, UNG, KSU, and sometimes GState are the major outliers of this study. The locations of each provide for large growth which results in many more students. UNG is not far north of Atlanta and serves a large area, however, the largest impact to their enrollment was the aforementioned change in policy for on-campus males being required to participate in the Senior ROTC program. Removing this policy opened admission to more students who wanted to live on campus but not participate in the program. Growth in enrollment at KSU can possibly be attributed to the large growth of population in the area including Kennesaw and Marietta where the two campuses of the consolidated institution are located. KSU's main campus in Kennesaw had a population increase of 4,910 from 2011 to 2019 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). Adding the Marietta campus through consolidation, KSU had a campus in an area with a population of 60,544 (United States Census Bureau, 2019). The change in admissions and degrees offered in the expanded area of Marietta as compared to the offerings of the prior SPSU could explain the large increase in enrollment for KSU as well. Despite having a much larger footprint with the addition of the GPC campuses, GState had a decline in enrollment as GState admissions were higher than GPC requirements which could have been a hindrance to many who would have otherwise attended these campuses and chose other options in the Atlanta metro area.

With large enrollment increases, large budget increases are expected. These three institutions had the three largest increases percentage-wise in total budget pre- to post-consolidation: UNG at 51.07% equaling just over $67 million, KSU at 40.33% equaling just over $146 million, and GState at 24.18% equaling over $207 million. These large increases offset the savings which could be seen by the other six institutions which are found in Table 31.

Table 31 – UNG/KSU/GState Compared to the Other Six Institutions

Categories	KSU/UNG/GState	Other 6	Combined
Total Budget	38.53%	-0.90%	12.24%
Personal Services	40.35%	3.02%	15.46%
Operating Expenses	51.78%	-8.45%	11.62%
Enrollment	11.86%	-19.84%	-9.27%
Retention 1-Year	5.14%	2.43%	3.02%
Retention 2-Year	3.22%	4.22%	4.25%
Retention 4-Year	5.02%	6.34%	5.81%
Tuition & Fees	20.28%	18.76%	19.14%
Room & Board	20.53%	32.66%	29.19%

By separating out the three largest institutions of UNG, KSU, and GState as outliers, the data set shows a different story for the other six institutions which each match the findings for the hypotheses found in Table 30 with the exception of H2 which found a savings in operating expenses of 8.45% in the other six institutions with KSU, UNG, and GState removed. Table 31 illustrates the differences in the three outliers as compared to the averages at the other six and compared to the combined averages for all nine institutions and shows the large impact of the three outliers in total budget, personal services, operating expenses, and enrollment for the impact on the overall averages. While the three had an average increase of 38.53% in their total budget, the remaining six actually saved 0.90% for the average. Personal services saw a 40.35% in the three outliers while the other six only experienced a 3.02% average increase and saved 8.45% in operating expenses as compared to an average increase of 51.78% for the three larger universities in the Atlanta metro area. Enrollment was another area impacted significantly by the three outliers, even with GState losing enrollment, as the other six showed an average more than double the loss of the nine combined institutions which falls in line with the decision to accept H3 with or without the outliers and the negative impact to enrollment. The other six institutions had better retention numbers in the two-year and four-year ranges for post-consolidation to pre-consolidation data but the three outlier institutions experienced a higher rate in the one-year retention rates. The cost of attendance was one area where the three outlier universities showed to be a little better than the other six as tuition and fees were slightly higher for the three, yet the cost of room and board was 12.13% lower on average than the other six institutions. Overall, the three larger universities offset the data significantly in budget and enrollment. While the other data was closer to the overall average, budgets and enrollment were significantly skewed by the larger universities.

Additional Research

While this study covered many comparisons in the impacted areas for the consolidated institutions, one shortfall of the study was the comparison data for non-consolidated schools in the areas of budget, enrollment, retention, tuition and fees, and cost of attendance. Each area could be examined to compare the consolidated institutions and the effectiveness of consolidation principles to the non-consolidated institutions of similar size in the USG. For the purpose of this study, the comparison is made by pre- and post-2013 data as 2013 was the first year of consolidations.

Table 32 – Personal Services Budget Averages for Consolidated and Non-Consolidated Comparison

	Consolidated	Non-Consolidated
FY08-FY12	$167,334,752	$99,119,449
FY13	$188,538,907	$105,755,517
FY14-FY19	$216,681,969	$132,174,569
Difference Pre-FY13 to Post- FY13	$49,347,217 (29.49%)	$33,055,121 (33.35%)

Table 33 – Operating Expenses Budget Averages for Consolidated and Non-Consolidated Comparison

	Consolidated	Non-Consolidated
FY08-FY12	$73,896,348	$48,153,626
FY13	$92,641,083	$65,245,581
FY14-FY19	$100,823,537	$62,763,016
Difference Pre-FY13 to Post- FY13	$26,927,189 (36.44%)	$14,609,390 (30.34%)

For the area of budget, comparison of the increase or decrease in total budget, E&G, personal services, operating expenses, student activities, and travel for non-consolidated institutions could provide a benchmark for comparison over the same periods. Looking primarily at the personal services and operating expenses, the data in Table 32 shows during the timeframes of FY14-FY19, costs for personal services increased 3.86% more at non-consolidated institutions as compared to consolidated institutions. Further detail in the research of these costs should be reviewed to determine if this was result of consolidation or not. In operating expenses, Table 34 shows the opposite was found as the consolidated institutions had an increase in operating expenses over the same period of 6.1% more than the non-consolidated. Reasons should be reviewed and considered for why this may have occurred as well. Breakdowns in comparison for budget in different levels of institutions (i.e. research, state university, etc.) could provide more clarity on this data for comparison as well.

Additional areas of comparison in budget could include Athletics. Using these budgets with benchmarks for increases and decreases can show whether the changes at consolidated institutions correlate with consolidation or if there were trends across the entire USG for change at the same time. Data was considered with the outliers of the University of Georgia (UGA) and Georgia Tech (GT) as larger budgets and potentially creating skewed data, however, the personal services budget without the UGA and GT data saw an increase of 35.47% or just 2.12% different. Additionally, operating expenses was actually far higher at 46.96% increase when these two outliers were excluded from non-consolidated averages.

Table 34 – Fall Headcount Averages for Consolidated and Non-Consolidated Comparison

	Consolidated	Non-Consolidated
2008-12	17886	7994
2013	18660	8613
2014-2019	18248	9040
Difference pre-2013 to post-2013	362 (2.02%)	1046 (17.50%)

Comparing enrollment trends would provide additional areas of benchmarking for the non-consolidated institutions to those consolidated. The expectation would be to see the trends in enrollment increasing at other institutions if decreasing at consolidated institutions, which was experienced with a 17.5% increase in enrollment for non-consolidated institutions while consolidated institutions had a 2.02% increase in the timeframes compared in Table 34. Another area of impact on enrollment which could be studied to provide direct correlation between enrollment and consolidation is to compare pre- and post-consolidation numbers by campus. MGA had five campuses after consolidation, but did enrollment change at any of the institutions differently than in the past? Breaking down enrollment by campus can provide better insight to the direct impact to campuses such as SGSC's Waycross campus, ABAC's Bainbridge campus, and GSU's Savannah campus. GState would be the largest comparison with adding multiple other campuses to the much larger institution, considering the impact on each campus for an increase or decrease of enrollment based on new offerings or change of program location could have impacted their enrollment on a campus-by-campus basis. Regarding UGA and GT as outliers for enrollment, enrollment at the other non-consolidated institutions was an average of 17.74% increase, virtually no difference from the 17.5% when the two were included.

One final point to enrollment and retention comes from the area of financial aid impact to the institutions. Institutions which were consolidated had to combine many areas including the financial aid system and change to one single reference number for reporting in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) system creating confusion for students selecting a particular campus to attend which did not have a financial aid number at that point. MGA, for example, kept the financial aid number of the former MGC so students who chose the old Macon State College number, as they were attending the Macon campus, got lost in the system creating issues for the students filing financial aid. Enrollment and retention could have been impacted through this issue at any school in which the two numbers remained and an incorrect selection was made by a potential student causing them to select another institution for enrollment due to difficulties with financial aid at the consolidated institution. A study of the processes of FAFSA reporting through the consolidation process in conjunction with the institution could provide additional areas of study related to FAFSA policies.

Table 35 – Retention Averages for Consolidated and Non-Consolidated Comparison

	Consolidated	Non-Consolidated
2008-12	63.8	65.7
2013	62.7	68.0
2014-2019	66.2	67.8
Difference pre-2013 to post-2013	2.4	2.1

Retention is another area of importance for additional research. Specifically comparing these timeframes to those at other non-consolidated institutions will provide better insight to the impact of consolidation on retention rates. In Table 32, a comparison of the one-year retention rates across all institutions in the USG is provided separating the consolidated from non-consolidated institutions and averaging the retention rates for 2008-12, the year of the first consolidation of 2013, and 2014-2018. Using 2013 as the mid-point for this data, we see the averages for the five years prior to compared to the five years after the first consolidations occurred. This comparison shows the consolidated institutions saw an average increase of 2.4% in retention as compared to the 2.1% increase for non-consolidated institutions. Based on this information, consolidation provided for a 0.3% increase in retention over the same period at non-consolidated institutions. Even when removing the outliers of non-consolidated institutions, UGA and GT, the retention rate for the remaining non-consolidated institutions remained at 2.0%. While this particular comparison was provided with minimal data for the one-year averages, further study and comparison over the period in more than just the one-year retention numbers as well as incorporating system-wide retention rates can provide a better picture of the impact of consolidation on retention.

Tracking the system-wide consolidation rates provides more data sets which could be studied in comparison to pre-consolidation rates between the consolidated institutions. Separating the pre-consolidation data and comparing the information to post-consolidation data by campus could provide insight to the actual attrition to the institution. Increases in institutional retention rates could be a result of students who attend MGC and transferred to MSC which would now be simply a campus change within MGA. Similarly, students at Georgia Perimeter who would have transferred to GState are only making a campus change instead of institutional change.

Tuition and fees along with cost of attendance could benefit from comparison to non-consolidated institutions over the same period? Using the idea, the USG BOR sought to keep costs down for students, did the consolidation create the increase and need for increase or did the entire system have increases over the same time period? Tuition and fees have steadily increased for the past almost 30 years, according to the literature covered in Chapter 2, but were increases any different in consolidated institutions as compared to others at the same period? The same measure should be considered for overall cost of attendance changes during the time period for increases to room and board at the consolidated and non-consolidated institutions. Determining if the USG BOR provided increases to both groups would show the point of consolidation did not provide for any reduction in costs, yet neither did non-consolidation.

Finally, a deeper dive into consolidation committees, the make-up, charge, leadership, pitfalls, and other experiences should be conducted during the process of consolidation and soon after completion. Further qualitative analysis on the make-up of committees for consolidation would also help to determine the reasoning behind the shift away from community involvement for the consolidation committees. With the first four including 14 community members and only one in the next five, a reasoning for a shift away from community member involvement in committees would provide insight to the make-up and change in make-up of committees and the impact on the process. Two selected institutions, MGA and AUG, were over seven years from the start of consolidation when surveys were completed. GSU and ABAC are much more recent and could possibly provide more relative feedback than the consolidations from prior years. The issues and thoughts have been overcome and provide change to the view of the consolidation. A survey early on, such as the timing of the GSU consolidation for this study, and a period of 3-5 years after, could provide a better assessment of the committee work for comparison. Locating committee members and getting responses was found to be an easier task for the more recent GSU consolidation as compared to AUG. Considering whether the view of a take-over, merger, or consolidation occurred; how campus cultures changed; trust between campuses, faculty, and staff; and even the view of success or not by the committee members could continue to be explored.

Conclusion

This study was able to analyze the data related to the principles of consolidation for the USG which provided statistical measurements for the processes of consolidation related to budgets, enrollment, retention, and cost of attendance. One of the issues and limitations of this study was the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic which had an impact on the FY20 budgets for the institutions. Savings could show large in the operating expenses because of campus shutdowns during parts of the budget which kept the use of the FY21 budgets and data from being used in the study along with the timing of the reports being released.

Despite the pandemic's impact on the most recent budget years, the data provided trends in the studied areas as discussed. Budgets did not provide savings in the area of operating for the consolidation averages for all institutions which the literature shows to be the most sustainable area for savings, but when separating the three outliers as in Table 31, a savings of almost 9% is found in the operating for the remaining six institutions and total budget savings 0.9% for the same six as compared to the three outliers defined above. While minor savings were found in some cases, an overall increase was seen in total budgets across all consolidations of 12.24%, again offset by the three outliers who experienced an average of 38.53%. Government and business consolidations provided literature to show savings come from operating expenses being reduced in order to be sustainable, however, despite the findings in the literature, the initial savings in several institutions were not sustainable. Personal services experienced savings immediately (-0.58% in year one) following consolidation for some institutions but those rebounded over time to go higher than the pre-consolidation numbers with an average 15.46% increase for all nine (40.35% at UNG/KSU/GState, 3.02% at the other six).

Enrollment impact was found to be down post-consolidation at most institutions, but recovery showed, not to pre-consolidation levels, beginning in years four through six at most institutions, save UNG and KSU which did not experience a drop off of enrollment at all. Retention did not take the immediate decline at all institutions expected for the study, but six of the seven institutions experienced an overall increase in retention in the pre- to post-consolidation averages. Though only two years of the four-year post consolidation data were available, almost all institutions saw an initial increase.

The overall cost of attendance was found to increase over time even with consolidation. The BOR of the USG would want to consider this information to look further at how to save money to the system and the students in the future.

The surveys provided good information for the study which led the author to understand the charge provided to the committees was to create the processes for consolidation and implement the consolidation. This charge left it up to the institutions to learn how this was to occur in the best way for each institution. The USG provided guidelines but allowed the institutions to govern themselves for the most part which provided the institutional committees and the leaders of the institution the opportunity to complete the task as best fits their institution. While name selection became an issue at one institution surveyed, and it was in the news as a large issue, most other institutions did not struggle through this portion as the name of one of the two institutions was retained in almost every other situation. The overall consensus of the respondents from the survey was the consolidation was a success with fourteen of the nineteen (73.7%) responding as successful (13) or very successful (1).

Overall, the consolidations were set to follow six principles established in 2011 by Chancellor Huckaby and the USG BOR. These six principles provided the USG BOR with the recommend means to find the proper institutions to consolidate through the development of providing better opportunities to raise education levels, accessibility to individuals who wish to attain an education, removing duplication in close proximity, and regional impact on education and workforces. These principles appeared to be met through the development of larger institutions with more streamlined opportunities for progressing from an associate's degree into bachelor's programs with larger institutions consolidating with smaller institutions, yet the dips in enrollment showed the opportunities were not fully recognized initially in the consolidations and take time for these principles to come to fruition.

Even further, the streamlining of administrative services was focused upon providing the economies of scope and scale which removed higher level redundancy of positions such as President, Provost, and some other positions when bringing institutions together. Despite the redundancy of positions, the economies of scale did not materialize as personal services and operating expenses both increased from pre-to post-consolidation in the overall average of the institutions. Operations skyrocketed at some institutions even with the combining of services, showing an overall average increase, though savings were recognized at other institutions.

The final principle of consolidation focuses on maintaining or improving service levels and quality for the students of the USG and these institutions. While budget, enrollment, and retention issues are all key items dealt with by the institutional leaders, students want to have the opportunity to earn an education which will make them more marketable for whatever area they seek employment. Students want to do this with lower cost, but the changes which occurred through consolidation provided roadblocks at times for the students as seen by the dips in enrollment driving students to other institutions, though the institutions were able to retain more of their current students for one-, two-, and four-year periods to move towards graduation. Learning from the initial consolidations for problems, roadblocks, trouble areas, and general issues can help the USG BOR develop and adapt updated principles based off the experiences and provide better charges and guidance to future consolidations. Learning from these first nine consolidations, the principles can be adapted to provide more direct guidelines which maintain the service levels, quality of education, and opportunities for students involved in future consolidations.

Recommendations for Future Consolidations

1. Focus on the student needs in consolidation and not the savings. Budgets and cost of attendance go up but retaining the students will help institutions from requiring large increases in cost of attendance for the students. The institutions with the increases in enrollment and smallest loss were able to keep cost of attendance lower in the post-consolidation than those who lost more students.
2. Find the right leadership for senior leadership before the consolidation and find ways to maintain that same leadership throughout the process. Consideration of bringing in a new leader who is not a part of either institution prior to the consolidation could establish even footing for all involved and make the process seem like less of a "take-over" by one institution. To avoid the mistrust between groups as seen in the survey data, naming the president and provost early who will lead the new institution can help make the transition successful. Almost each case involved the president and provost of one institution remaining in place but the consideration of taking one of the positions from each institution could also assist in developing better working relationships with all.
3. Focus savings on operating expenses and consolidation of services, not personal services. Prior research in government, business, and school districts show initial savings may come in the form of personal services with reduction of positions, but sustainable saving are found in the reduction of costs found through operating expenses.
4. Provide more guidance to assist the committees, senior administrators, middle administrators, faculty, staff, and students in what to expect through the process of consolidation. Guidance for the committee is good but each consolidation can be different and having the guides in place with the flexibility to make the consolidation fit

the desired needs of the two prior institutions is important to the success for all parties involved.

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APPENDIX A

IRB PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT APPROVED

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

PROTOCOL EXEMPTION REPORT

Protocol Number: 04046-2020 **Responsible Researcher:** Mr. James Hagler

Supervising Faculty: Dr. James LaPlant

Project Title: *A Success Story? An Exploration of the Consolidations in the University System of Georgia.*

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION:

This research protocol is **Exempt** from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight under Exemption **Category 2**. Your research study may begin immediately. If the nature of the research project changes such that exemption criteria may no longer apply, please consult with the IRB Administrator (irb@valdosta.edu) before continuing your research.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- *Upon completion of this research study all data (email correspondence, survey data, participant name lists, etc.) must be securely maintained (locked file cabinet, password protected computer, etc.) and accessible only by the researcher for a minimum of 3 years.*

☒ ***If this box is checked, please submit any documents you revise to the IRB Administrator at irb@valdosta.edu to ensure an updated record of your exemption.***

Elizabeth Ann Olphie *07.08.2020*
Elizabeth Ann Olphie, IRB Administrator

Thank you for submitting an IRB application.
Please direct questions to irb@valdosta.edu or 229-253-2947.

Revised: 06.02.16

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

IRB statement with survey

You are being asked to participate in a survey research project entitled “A Success Story? An Exploration of the Consolidations in the University System of Georgia,” which is being conducted by James R. Hagler, Jr., a student at Valdosta State University. The purpose of the study is to **review the process of consolidation in the University System of Georgia to determine best practices, successes, and areas in need of review**. You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about the process of consolidation committees to include best practices for make up of the committee, leadership and charge changes, and determine success factors**.** There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. Participation should take approximately **10-20 minutes** to complete. This survey is anonymous**.** No one, including the researcher, will be able to associate your responses with your identity. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to take the survey, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. Participants must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the survey serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may print a copy of this statement for your records.

Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to James R. Hagler, Jr. at jrhagler@valdosta.edu. This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-253-2947 or irb@valdosta.edu.

1. For what institution did you serve on the consolidation committee?
    a. ____
2. What group did you represent on the committee?
    a. Administrator
    b. Faculty
    c. Staff
    d. Student
    e. Community Member
3. Were you an original member of the consolidation committee?
    a. Yes
    b. No
4. Did you remain on the consolidation committee through the entirety of the process?
    a. Yes
    b. No, how long did you serve? _____________
5. What charge was the committee given?
    a. _________________________________

6. Did this charge change through the process? If so, how often?

   a. Yes, how often? ________________
   b. No

7. What was the top priority of the committee after being formed?

   a. ____________________________

8. Which of the following provided directives on consolidation?

   a. Board of Regents Yes or No
   b. Chancellor Yes or No
   c. University leadership Yes or No
   d. Other (please specify)_____________________________

9. If multiple, would the committee have been better served with direction from a single position?

   a. __________________________________

10. Was the make-up of the committee between administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members appropriate to the work done for the committee?

    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. Unsure

11. What were the three major issues for the committee during the consolidation process?

    a. _____________________________________

12. Did senior leadership (president and provost) change during the consolidation process?

    a. No change in senior leadership
    b. President changed but Provost did not
    c. Provost changed but President did not
    d. President and Provost both changed

13. If changes did occur, did the change help or hinder the efforts of consolidation?

    a. Helped
    b. Hindered
    c. Unsure

14. How would you evaluate the success of the consolidation?

   a. Very successful
   b. Successful
   c. No opinion
   d. Unsuccessful
   e. Very Unsuccessful

15. What lessons were learned from consolidation?

   a. ____

16. What do you consider to be the most difficult obstacle to the work of your committee?

   a. ____

17. How did the cultures of the two organizations come together?

   a. Meshed well for one culture of the new institution
   b. Each campus maintained its own identity and culture
   c. Some campuses took on the culture of the others but not all came together

18. In your view, did the institutions consolidate or did one institution take over the other?

   a. The two institutions were equally represented in the consolidation
   b. The larger institution took over the smaller institution

19. Are you still in the same capacity with the institution as you were prior to consolidation?

   a. Yes: Please choose which: Administrator, Faculty, Staff, Student, Community Member
   b. Yes, but in a different role now: Please choose which: Administrator, Faculty, Staff, Student, Community Member
   c. No, I am no longer a part of the consolidated institution