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Thematic Differences in Mission Statements Between Four-Year Public Institutions and Two-Year Colleges in Texas

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ABSTRACT: The mission statements of 34 four-year and of 68 two-year colleges in the State of Texas were examined for themes to determine the extent to which their themes were similar or dissimilar in nature. Although previous researchers have attempted to analyze and demonstrate that these mission statements often have reoccurring themes, only limited information is available about the specific thematic differences in the mission statements of two-year community colleges and four-year institutions. In the qualitative analysis, 15 themes were determined to be present among the sample: Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Life-Long Learning, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Academic Achievement, Collaboration and Partnership, Vocational and Technical Skills, Access to Higher Education, Academic Readiness and Skill Development, Student Services, Community Focus, and Technology. Quantitative analyses yielded statistically significant differences in the themes of Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, Academic Achievement, Vocational and Technical Skills, Academic Readiness Skill Development, with more four-year institutions emphasizing Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, and Academic Achievement, and with more two-year colleges emphasizing Vocational and Technical Skills and Academic Readiness Skill Development. The two levels of Texas higher education institutions distinguished themselves by fulfilling their traditional roles, with four-year institutions adhering to their excellence in teaching and research, and providing leadership, and with two-year colleges adhering to their role of open-access and vocational training. On the other hand, four-year institutions also expanded their role to shoulder responsibilities typically fulfilled by the two-year colleges.

Accountability measures and reductions in federal and state funding are pushing institutions of higher learning to define themselves for the purpose of creating their existence and for discerning where to best invest the few resources available. Colleges and universities alike are rushing to serve a niche known as post-secondary education, where in some cases duplication of services exists and overlap of clientele occurs. Important to the existence of institutions of higher learning is the creation of a unifying purpose statement that helps provide the foundation and direction for the institution to base all of its goals upon. Through this study a clearer understanding should emerge of the thematic differences in mission statements between colleges and universities in Texas.

Mission Statements

The mission of institutions in higher education is described through a series of key words or phrases that comprise the institution's mission statement. These descriptions of purposes are often the guiding principles by which that institution will follow in its existence (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). In organizations, both public and private, mission statements are prepared to serve as a point of reference that helps describe the organization's purpose, uniqueness, and methodology (Cox, 1996). The study of mission statements is not new. Previous researchers have attempted to analyze and demonstrate that these mission statements often have reoccurring themes, but little is known about the specific thematic differences in the mission statements of two-year community colleges and four-year public

institutions.

Mission statements are formulated through different processes that vary from institution to institution but one underlying factor influences their formulation. The phrasing and wording of a mission statement is often influenced by the interests of accreditation agencies, alumni, government, business, students, and faculty. Due to these varying interests mission statements often have to be written to reflect that this institution is in agreement with the various interested groups (Berg, Csikszentmihalyi, & Nakamura, 2003).

Moreover, these statements of mission usually provide a glimpse of the final outcome for a student who attends the institution. These outcomes will often reflect the philosophy, values, and methodology of the institution. Other mission statements often mix vision and goals along with mission making it difficult to separate one from the other. But the existence of the mission statement continues, as does its goal which is to convey the interest of specific people (Carver, 2000).

Purpose for the Study

The influence that mission statements have over the existence of an institution leads to the question of whether these statements vary in purpose based on the type of institutions. That is, of the identifiable themes in institutional mission statements, what is the effect of institution level, two-year compared to four-year? The discovery of themes as they exist in mission statements will not only help understand why two-year community colleges and four-year public institutions are distinct but also help understand in what ways they are similar or different. In this study, the researchers attempt to discover and to report similarities and dissimilarities in the mission statement themes of two levels of institutions of higher education in Texas.

Definition of Terms

To delineate how the study was formulated and approached, the following terms and definitions were used:

- Mission statement: "Formal business statement of aims: a formal document that states the objectives of a company or organization" (Mission statement, 2006).
- Theme: "A distinct, recurring, and unifying quality or idea" (Theme, 2006).
- Two-year community college: An institution that meets the definition of a public community college as evidenced by the appearance of the institution's name on the list of public community colleges provided by Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Texas higher education data: Public community college districts, 2006).
- Four-year institution: An institution that meets the definition of a public university as evidenced by the appearance of the institution's name on the list of public universities provided by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (Texas higher education data: Public universities, 2006).

Constructs and Population

For the current study, the construct for qualitative and quantitative analyses is the theme, which indicates the value, characteristic, or element of an institution's purpose, or commitment, or mission. We use theme and thematic purpose alternatively, in the same sense. The population for the current study is the accessible population comprised of all two-year community colleges and four-year public institutions as obtained from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board data Web site. The list presents 77 two-year public colleges (mostly community colleges and a few special purpose public colleges) and 42 four-year public institutions. After deleting organizations that are general governing bodies such as community college districts or university systems, we were left with 68 two-year public colleges and 34 four-year public institutions. All members of this population constituted our sample for the current study.

Review of Literature

What began as a trend in corporate America in the 1970s and 1980s has now become a necessity in institutions of higher education. Some colleges have adopted mission statements because of pressure from accrediting agencies, some colleges assembled mission statements because it was the latest fashion, and some colleges developed mission statements because of the synergy it had with strategic planning. Mission statements have become the marketing poster, the quick sound bite, and the t-shirt logo for some institutions; whereas other institutions have used mission statements as a set of standards, a descriptive picture of their true essence, a collection of all that is good, and a foundation for the school (Morphew & Harley, 2006).

According to Morphew and Hartley (2006), two possible benefits are present in the actual process of developing or revising an institutional mission statement. The first potential benefit illustrates the reason a college or university

exists, to educate, as “A clear mission helps organizational members distinguish between activities that conform to institution imperatives and those that do not” (Morphew & Harley, 2006, p. 457). The mission statement would act as a set of guidelines for administration, staff, and faculty as they set goals, prioritize activities, and delineate resources.

The second prospective benefit is for those persons attending and serving the institution as well as those persons outside the institution in the community and beyond. Morphew and Harley (2006) stated “a shared sense of purpose has the capacity to inspire and motivate those within an institution and to communicate its characteristics, values, and history to key external constituents” (p. 457). Providing information on the school, what the institution believes in, and how the college conducts business may play a role in marketing to future students as the wording in the mission statement could influence their decision in choosing a school. In addition, the information contained in a mission statement could assist the college in attracting businesses to develop partnerships that would enhance the school’s reputation and financial standing.

With the understanding of the importance in the content of a mission statement Meacham and Gaff (2006) stated the school must live up to its prescribed mission. For a college to embody its mission statement requires commitment from all levels in the organization as “educational programs should reflect the institutional mission and enjoy the full and informed support not just of the faculty but also the board of trustees and the president, the primary stewards of the mission” (Meacham & Gaff, 2006, p. 6). Meacham and Gaff (2006) encouraged a top down approach to the creation of and support of the institutional mission statement promoting integrity and sincerity in the workings of the college and of those persons who serve the school and the students.

Students apprehensive of corporate malfeasance, often seen in today’s headlines, scrutinize the wording of cell phone contracts and are willing to hold those persons in authority accountable for promises made. Hara (2005) remarked “A mission/vision statement is the promise of a college” (p. 4) and therefore, it is no surprise savvy students would read the mission statement of the institution of higher education she or he is planning to attend. Each word in a mission statement is important and carries “immense weight and responsibility” (Hara, 2005, p. 4) as the institution is answerable to the student over what it has written.

As society changes so does the mandate of different institutions of higher education. The needs and wants of the populace, along with economic, cultural, and political forces, will reshape the role a school plays in serving students and other constituents. One long standing institution felt the impact of events beyond its control and changed its mission statement only to later change it back to the original wording. The US Military Academy (USMA) at West Point saw the impact of the Vietnam War and the end of the Cold War on retention of soldiers in the United States Army as career officers and graduates of the USMA were affected by reduction in forces for the first time. In 1987 the Academy reworded its mission statement to include the phrase “a lifetime of selfless service to the Nation” (Richardson, 2006, p. 69). Though the change may have been in keeping with the times, Richardson (2006) observed it did not accurately articulate the role and purpose of the institution and in 2005 the Academy returned the mission statement to its original wording in order to reflect the school’s primary role of preparing cadets “for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army” (p. 69).

Societal changes, constituency, and geographical location influence the themes of a school’s mission statement. Ayers (2002) stated that creating a mission for an institution “becomes a daunting task when today’s social, political, economic, and technological revolutions precipitate educational needs that differ greatly from those of the previous age” (para. 1). He went on to acknowledge the mission of community colleges differ from other institutions of higher education as “since their inception, community colleges have existed to identify and respond to the educational needs of adult learners within a specified service area” (Ayers, 2002, para. 1). In his study Ayers reviewed the mission statements of community colleges in the southern region of the United States to determine similarities in themes and “analyze the content of community college strategic documents as they relate to the organizational mission” (Ayers, 2002, para. 11). In his study, Ayers found the presence of seven themes recurring among the colleges: “access, workforce and economic development, comprehensive programming, quality and excellence, responsiveness to needs, specified service area, and diversity” (Ayers, 2002, para. 15). In discussing his findings, Ayers (2002) reported a difference in what he saw as “Comprehensive programming versus the strategic niche” (para. 36) and that “community college leaders must articulate the adaptive challenges ahead if colleges are to respond to learner needs in a rapidly changing environment” (para. 1).

Wording of a mission statement can be as important to the students it serves as to those persons who serve the institution. A debate within an institution can ensue over the content of a mission statement when those persons who serve the college disagree with its goals. It is not just students who have been pushing schools to live up to their mission statements, but it is also the faculty. Small liberal arts colleges, teaching colleges, and universities are likely candidates to have the themes of teaching or excellence in teaching in their mission statements and even put those ideas as center stage. Yet, Krebs (2005) believed that “many colleges could benefit from emphasizing research more” (para. 2) and argued that faculty should not put research and publishing aside. Arguing that teaching and

research do not have to compete with one another she goes on to state "Undergraduate, student-centered colleges and universities work best when they have a solid research culture that puts faculty publishing on the front burner" (Krebs, 2005, para. 2). According to Krebs, (2005) the institution that shows in the wording of its mission statement more balance between teaching and research would then truly be excellent in its teaching and learning and have a genuinely student centered environment.

Research Questions

1. What are the themes that can be identified in the mission statements of two-year community colleges and in the mission statements of four-year public institutions in Texas?
2. What are the similarities and dissimilarities in the themes that can be identified in the mission statements of two-year community colleges and in the mission statements of four-year public institutions in Texas?
3. Are there significant differences in themes reflected by institutions' mission statements between two-year community colleges and four-year public institutions in Texas?
4. Which themes contribute the most to discriminating four-year institutions from two- year colleges in Texas?

Methods and Procedures

Participants

Two-year colleges and four-year public higher education institutions' mission statements in the state of Texas were examined. A list of public community colleges and four-year institutions in the state of Texas was obtained from the Texas Higher Education Coordinator Board (THECB) at www.txhighereddata.org, which is the new site of the THECB Web page, for data and statistics. The list is located at the lower left column under "List of Institutions." When opening the report, at the top of the institutions list page, there is an option to download the report. By clicking on this option, the report may be saved in Excel format.

The list contained 68 community colleges after deleting nine community college districts as governing bodies, and it also had 34 four-year institutions after deleting six university systems as governing bodies. These governing bodies were omitted from the data set because their mission statements were to provide support to the institutions in the district or system and not to provide direct services to faculty, students, and other institutional constituents. The list obtained from the THECB included the Web page addresses for all two-year colleges and four-year public institutions. Utilizing the Internet, we found the institutions' mission statements by typing in the Web page address on the browser's address bar. Once the institutions' Web page opened, we checked in the "about us" section to find the mission statement. If we did not find it there, we did a search on the particular institution's Web page to find the mission statement location. When the mission statement was located, we saved it to include it as a reference. Additionally, we also printed it and kept it in a three-ring binder for further review and documentation. Furthermore, we copied and pasted the mission statements' URL to an excel file along with the institution's name and date of retrieval.

Procedures

The data set, comprised of 100% of the two-year community colleges and four-year institutions mission statements in the state of Texas, was purposively selected to include all the two-year and four-year higher education institutions in the state. We analyzed the contents of the 68 two-year community colleges and 34 four-year institutions from the printouts and identified recurrent themes found in the analysis. To finalize the data file we reviewed the themes. We clarified the meaning of the themes and decided that if some themes overlapped, they would be merged. All themes were reviewed, and consensus was reached on 15 themes, which we deemed as representative of the aims and scope presented in the institutions' mission statements. The information was compiled and processed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS Version 13.1).

Results

Qualitative Findings

We analyzed each mission statement published by Texas two-year colleges and four-year public institutions and identified 15 recurrent themes, which included leadership, citizenship, cultural diversity, life-long learning, excellence in teaching and research, creativity, critical thinking, academic achievement, collaboration and partnership, vocational and technical skills, access to higher education, academic readiness and skill development, student services, community focus, and technology. Descriptions of these themes are presented below:

Theme 1: Leadership

The theme of leadership was identified when an institution used the words “leadership” or “leaders” in its mission statement. This theme appeared in two contexts. In one context, the theme indicates that the institutions aim at fostering students’ leadership skills. For example, Texas A&M University’s mission statement specified that the University “prepares students to assume roles in leadership, responsibility, and service to society.” (Texas A&M University, n.d.). For another example, San Jacinto College’s mission statement pointed out that the College prepares students “to assume leadership roles in a culturally and ethnically diverse global community” (San Jacinto College, n.d.).

In the other context, the theme of leadership indicates one of the characteristics ascribed by the institutions. For example, Kilgore College’s mission statement states, “Kilgore College is an open door, student-centered institution characterized by excellence in teaching and learning and by leadership in cultural and economic endeavors” (Kilgore College, n.d.).

Theme 2: Citizenship

The theme of citizenship was identified when institutions’ mission statements included the institutions’ commitment to promoting citizenship. The keywords of “citizenship” and “citizens” were present in the mission statements. For example, Tarleton State University pointed out in its mission statement that the University “enables students to pursue truth and acquire understanding, knowledge, and skills necessary for establishing successful careers and becoming responsible citizens and leaders” (Tarleton State University, 1998). Another institution, Del Mar College asserted that one of its missions is “to provide opportunities to increase intellectual capacities; to develop aesthetic awareness; to expand the dimensions of personal, social, ethical, and cultural development; and to develop civic responsibility and qualities essential to good citizenship” (Del Mar College, 2005).

Theme 3: Cultural Diversity

The theme of cultural diversity was determined to be present when an institution’s mission statement mentioned the words “cultural diversity,” or “culturally diverse,” or sentences that imply cultural diversity. For example, the University of Houston used the wording “culturally diverse” in its mission statement by stating that the University is committed to “provide a range of educational programs that foster an intellectually and culturally diverse environment that enhances individual growth and development” (University of Houston mission, n.d.).

Another institution, San Antonio College, implied its commitment to cultural diversity by using the wording of “cultural awareness and interaction” by stating that its mission included “promotion of cross-cultural understanding and appreciation through instructional and social activities that contribute to cultural awareness and interaction” (San Antonio College mission statement, n.d.).

Theme 4: Life-Long Learning

The theme of life-long learning was deemed present when an institution’s mission statement used the words “life-long learning.” For example, The University of Texas-Pan American’s mission statement reported, “Through teaching, research, creative activity and public service, UTPA prepares students for lifelong learning and leadership roles in the state, nation and world community” (The University of Texas-Pan American mission statement, 2005). For another example, Tyler Junior College’s mission statement stated, “The College is also committed to meeting the needs of business and industry in a changing global environment and to providing opportunities for lifelong learning” (Tyler Junior College, n.d.).

Theme 5: Excellence in Teaching and Research

The theme of excellence in teaching and research was associated with terms such as “excellence,” “quality,” “distinction,” “higher standards,” and “research.” Throughout the mission statements, various words were found to express the mission of the two-year community college or four-year public institutions to uphold excellence in teaching and research. For example, Angelo State University mission statement indicated that the University seeks “to conduct research with the intention of engaging the student in independent study” (Angelo State University, 1998).

Texas Tech University referred to both aspects of the theme by including both descriptors within their mission statement. For example the University mentioned that it was dedicated “to provide the highest quality of education and instruction” while it also wants “to be a recognized research institution of distinction” (Texas Tech University, n.d.).

Two-year community colleges, on the other hand, did not use research as a theme as often but did make excellence part of their mission statement. Words such as “excellent” and “quality” were taken to mean the same, a level of teaching. Midland College, for example, described itself as a “public college dedicated to educational excellence” (Midland College, 2006). Other two-year community colleges also mentioned their commitment to educational excellence as part of their mission statement. Blinn College, for example, had also pledged to have a “commitment to instructional excellence” (Blinn College, n.d.).

Theme 6: Creativity

The theme of creativity was associated with descriptive words such as “innovation,” and “creative activities.” Mission statements from four-year institutions varied in their description of creativity but did have the thematic wording embedded within their mission statements. For example, Midwestern University described creativity as “creative discovery” (Midwestern University, 2006). Other four-year public institutions stated that students will engage in creativity through their participation at the university. Institutions such as The University of Texas at Tyler stated that “creative efforts are made available to students in the classroom” (The University of Texas at Tyler, 2004). The University of North Texas stated something similar. This institution is “committed to excellence in teaching and the discovery and application of knowledge through research and creative activities” (University of North Texas, 2004). Lamar University also referred to “creative activity” as part of the institution’s mission statement (Lamar University, 2006).

One two-year community college used an alternative word to describe this theme. Wharton County Junior College, for example, used “innovation” as a descriptor for creativity (Wharton County Junior College, 2006), whereas Brookhaven College simply stated that it provides the environment for “reflection and creativity” (Brookhaven College, 2006).

Theme 7: Critical Thinking

The critical thinking theme was associated with words that implied mental processes or abilities. These words included “decision making” and “critical thinking skills.” In the case of universities such as Texas A&M University-Kingsville, its stated mission is to develop “critical thinkers” (Texas A&M University-Kingsville, n.d.).

Texas Southern University encompassed more of the mental abilities and described their students as “intellectually gifted” (Texas Southern University, 2003). Other four-year public institutions described critical thinking as part of the development the student undergoes while attending the institution. The University of Houston-Clear Lake mission statement indicated that the University program develops “the critical, creative, quantitative, and communication skills of students” (University of Houston-Clear Lake, 2006).

The two-year community college perspective on critical thinking is described using the same descriptive words such as “critical thinking skills.” Mountain View College described critical thinking by referencing the “intellectual and personal growth” provided by the institution (Mountain View College, n.d.). Another institution stated through its mission statement that it was up to the student to gain the critical thinking skills because the college only “provides opportunities” (Ranger College, 2005).

Theme 8: Academic Achievement

Academic achievement was associated with words such as “academic effectiveness,” “solid academic foundation,” and “strong foundation.” A review of the mission statements for such associations revealed that the community colleges had a clearer description for academic achievement. St. Philip’s College, part of the Alamo Community College District, stated that it seeks “to create an environment fostering excellence in academic and technical achievement” (St. Philip’s College, 2003).

Other institutions made reference to academic achievement using phrases such as “excellence in all academic areas” and “academic achievement.” Tyler Junior College mentioned academic achievement using the term “academic effectiveness” (Tyler Junior College, n.d.). Trinity Valley Community College stated it provided “quality academic” programs (Trinity Valley Community College, n.d.).

Some four-year institutions made reference to academic achievement through the use of the words such as “strength” and “foundations.” Texas A&M International University referenced academic achievement as a “solid academic foundation” (Texas A&M University, n.d.). The mission statement for Angelo State University stated that the institution will “supplement students’ general education” (Angelo State University, 1998). West Texas A&M University, a four-year public institution, made references to the word “foundation” through its mission statement which states “all programs shall be built upon a solid foundation of required courses in communication, history and political science,

and studies which develop strong critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as an understanding of cultural diversity and an appreciation for the fine arts and humanities” (West Texas A&M University, n.d.).

Theme 9: Collaboration

The theme of collaboration was identified when an institution used the words “collaboration” or “collaborative” in its mission statement. Some institutions used the theme of collaboration to mean a partnership with businesses, institutions of higher education and other organizations in the community and surrounding region. For example, The University of Texas at El Paso’s mission statement specified that the University “envision[s] capitalizing on its bi-national location to create and maintain multicultural, inter-American educational and research collaborations among students, faculty, institutions, and industries, especially in northern Mexico” (The University of Texas at El Paso, 2004). There are some institutions that used the theme of collaboration to show teamwork and cooperation within the college or university itself. For example, the University at Houston–Clear Lake’s mission statement affirmed “The University emphasizes high standards for teaching and learning in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, as well as in collaboration in any doctoral programs” (University at Houston–Clear Lake, 2004).

Theme 10: Vocational/Technical Skills

The theme of vocational/technical skills was identified from institutions using the terms “vocational” or “technical” or a combination of the two in its mission statements. Some institutions made use of the words to promote a particular certificate or degree program. For example, Angelina College’s mission statement cited “The College mission is realized in ...technical programs leading to associate degrees or certificates” (Angelina College, n.d.). Other schools use the theme of vocational/technical skills to promote life long learning. An example of such use of this theme is from Del Mar College’s mission statement stating the purpose of the institution includes providing “opportunities for lifelong learning in occupational and vocational pursuits, personal enrichment, and general education based on a liberal arts curriculum” (Del Mar College, 2005). In addition, some institutions use the mention of vocational/technical skills in cementing the partnership higher education and an educated citizenry has with a successful and prosperous community. An example of such a connection is from Hill College’s mission statement asserting that “Through comprehensive educational programs and services, which include technical, occupational, general educational, and college transfer curricula, the college strives to enhance the educational, cultural and economic development of our service area and to assist both individuals and groups to prepare themselves for a more responsible and productive life” (Hill College, 2005).

Theme 11: Higher Education Access

The theme of higher education access was identified when an institution used the wording of “higher education access,” “access to higher education,” or “access” in its mission statement. Some institutions used the theme of higher education access to mean that they aim at providing educational opportunities to the community and its population. An example of such an institution is St. Philip’s College with a mission statement that includes the wording “St. Philip’s College strives to be an important force in the community, responsive to the needs of a population rich in its ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic diversity...while expanding its commitment to opportunity and access” (St. Philip’s College, 2003).

Access to higher education, as a theme in mission statements, can also provide insight into how a college or university is organized to better serve the student. The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College provide an example of this in its mission statement: “The mission of The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College (UTB/TSC) Partnership is to provide accessible, affordable, postsecondary education of high quality....the partnership combines the strengths of the community college and those of a university by increasing student access and eliminating inter-institutional barriers” (The University of Texas at Brownsville and Texas Southmost College, 2006).

Theme 12: Academic Readiness/Skill Development

The theme of academic readiness/skill development was identified when an institution of higher education uses the wording “academic readiness,” “skill development,” “developing skills,” “develop skills,” “basic skills,” “skills,” or listing skills the institution can train or educate the student in such as corporate training, adult education, and literacy programs. An example of an institution with the theme of academic readiness in its mission statement is Angelina College. This institution’s mission statement maintained that “The College mission is realized in the statutory purpose as follows...Academic readiness services designed to fulfill the commitment of an admissions policy allowing the enrollment of disadvantaged students” (Angelina College, n.d.).

Collin County Community College’s mission statement provides an example of the theme of academic readiness/skill

development in its mission statement. The mission statement stated that “Collin County Community College District is a student and community centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect” (Collin County Community College, n.d.).

Academic readiness and skill development as a theme also include the desire of an institution to educate students in need of developmental coursework. San Antonio College provided in its mission statement an example of this theme in the wording “San Antonio College is committed to excellence in helping students reach their full potential by developing their academic competencies” (San Antonio College, n.d.) and further “San Antonio College fulfills its mission by offering the following:…Developmental studies for students needing to bring their basic skills to a level appropriate for college work” (San Antonio College, n.d.).

Theme 13: Student Services

The theme student service was identified when an institution used the phrases “student support services” or “educational services” in its mission statement. Most institutions used the theme of student support service or educational services to describe the services the institutions provide to their students to assist them to enroll in college and succeed in their educational goals. As an example, Angelo State University’s mission statement stated that “Students are offered encouragement in their university lives through a variety of support services, such as financial aid, residence life, social and career development, and counseling” (Angelo State University, 1998). For another example, Alvin Community College mission’s statement described that the institution is committed to “provide accessible educational services, through varied formats and schedules and full-and part-time programs, which address a wide spectrum of individual needs and abilities” (Alvin Community College, n.d.). Additionally, North Harris College mentioned that the college offers “the program of student support services, including counseling and learning resources, designed to assist individuals in achieving their educational and career goals” (North Harris College, n.d.).

Theme 14: Community Focus

The theme of community focus was identified when an institution included the phrases “community service(s)” or “community involvement” in its mission statement. To exemplify the theme The University of Texas at Arlington’s mission statement referred to “the formation of good citizenship through its community service learning programs” (The University of Texas at Arlington, 2003). In another example, The University of Houston-Downtown mission statement asserted that “In its public service and outreach activities, the university offers numerous pre-collegiate programs as well as continuing education programs that maintain and upgrade specialized skills of professionals employed in the Houston area” (University of Houston-Downtown, 2003).

Some institutions used the theme of community involvement to describe the role of the institution in the economic, social, and cultural development of the area. For instance, Del Mar College’s mission statement pointed out that the College aims at providing “educational activities for work force and economic development, and for community and academic initiatives in cooperation with area independent school districts, other institutions of higher education, area industries, and area military bases; and to encourage and provide cultural activities, both independent of, and in cooperation with, organizations and groups in the community” (Del Mar College, 2005).

Theme 15: Technology

The theme of technology was identified when an institution used the word “technology,” “technological,” or “online.” In some cases the theme technology in the institutions’ mission statements referred to the delivery of education or services, using technology. In other instances, technology is presented as a content area. For example, University of North Texas listed “understanding and appreciation of the historical, intellectual, technological, scientific, and cultural nature of the search for knowledge” (University of North Texas, 2004). Some other institutions, such as the University of Houston-Victoria, acknowledged the theme in its mission statement and defined its role as providing “extensive course offerings, selected degree programs learning support, and many student services entirely online” (University of Houston-Victoria, 2005).

Other universities utilized the technology theme to demonstrate that technology is an important aspect of their educational goals. A descriptive example can be seen in The University of Texas at Dallas’s mission statement, which clearly stated that the institution is committed to developing programs that “address the multi-dimensional needs of a dynamic, modern society driven by the development, diffusion, understanding and management of advanced technology” (The University of Texas at Dallas, 2005).

Quantitative Findings

Research Question 1

The identification of the themes was discussed in the qualitative findings section. To determine the similarities and dissimilarities in themes, the themes were coded into SPSS-PC Version 13.1. Initially, frequencies were calculated for all themes and are displayed in Table 1. As can be seen in Table 1, the theme of Excellence in Teaching and Research was present most often, 66.3%. Only two more themes, Cultural Diversity at 52.9% and Community Focused at 54.8%, were found in more than half of the institutions.

Table 1

Themes Identified by Percentages in Mission Statements

Theme	Theme Present	Theme Not Present
Leadership	21.2	78.8
Citizenship	29.8	70.2
Cultural Diversity	52.9	47.1
Life-long Learning	44.2	55.8
Excellence in Teaching and Research	66.3	33.7
Creativity	18.3	81.7
Critical Thinking	15.4	84.6
Academic Achievement	26.9	73.1
Collaboration and Partnership	32.7	67.3
Vocational/Technical Skills	36.5	63.5
Access to Higher Education	38.5	61.5
Academic Readiness and Skill Development	18.3	81.7
Student Services	36.5	63.5
Community Focused	54.8	45.2
Technology	30.8	69.2

Research Question 2

Next, the database was split by group membership, two-year compared with four-year institutions, and the frequencies of the themes were calculated. Table 2 depicts the frequencies of these themes by group membership. Similarities were present on such themes as Life-long Learning as both groups had this theme present in over 40% of their mission statements. Other similarities were noted in Community Focused with at least half of both groups having this theme present in their mission statements. Many differences were present in the frequencies of identified themes. To determine the extent to these differences were statistically significant, Pearson chi-square procedures were conducted, with each theme serving as a separate dependent variable and group membership serving as the single independent variable. With a more than sufficient sample size and each group only contributing a theme present or theme absent value, the Pearson chi-square procedure was deemed the appropriate statistical procedure.

Table 2

Themes Identified by Percentages in Mission Statements Reported Separately for two-year and for four-year Colleges

Theme	Theme Present	Theme Present
	two-year	four-year
Leadership	8.6	47.1
Citizenship	21.4	47.1
Cultural Diversity	44.3	70.6
Life-long Learning	42.9	47.1
Excellence in Teaching and Research	50.0	100.0
Creativity	10.0	35.3
Critical Thinking	11.4	23.5
Academic Achievement	14.3	52.9
Collaboration and Partnership	28.6	41.2
Vocational/Technical Skills	54.3	0.0
Access to Higher Education	40.0	35.3
Academic Readiness and Skill Development	27.1	0.0
Student Services	40.0	29.4
Community Focused	57.1	50.0
Technology	27.1	38.2

Research Question 3

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Leadership. A statistically significant difference was found, $\chi^2(1) = 20.324$, $p < .001$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Leadership with 47.1% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with only 8.6% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .442, the effect size was determined to be moderate in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Citizenship. A statistically significant difference was found present, $\chi^2(1) = 7.20$, $p < .007$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Citizenship with 47.1% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with 21.4% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .26, the effect size was determined to be small in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square, conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Culture Diversity, yielded a statistically significant difference, $\chi^2(1) = 6.40$, $p < .01$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Cultural Diversity with 70.6% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with 44.3% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .25, the effect size was determined to be small in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Excellence in Teaching and Research. A statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 25.60$, $p < .001$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Excellence in Teaching and Research with 100% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with 50% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .5, the effect size was determined to be strong in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between

two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Creativity. A statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 9.8$, $p < .002$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Creativity with 35.3% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with only 10% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .307, the effect size was determined to be moderate in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Academic Achievement. A statistically significant difference was yielded, $\chi^2(1) = 17.38$, $p < .001$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Academic Achievement with 52.9% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with only 14.3% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .409, the effect size was determined to be moderately strong in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of vocational and technical skills. A statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 29.1$, $p < .001$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of vocational and technical skills with 0.0% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with 54.3% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .529, the effect size was determined to be strong in nature (Cohen, 1988).

A Pearson chi-square was conducted to determine whether a statistically significant difference was present between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Academic Readiness Skill Development. A statistically significant difference was present, $\chi^2(1) = 11.29$, $p < .001$, between two- and four-year institutions on the theme of Academic Readiness Skill Development with 0.0% of four-year institutions mentioning this theme, compared with 27.1% of two-year institutions. Based on Cramer's V of .33, the effect size was determined to be moderate in nature (Cohen, 1988).

For the remaining themes of Collaboration and Partnership, Access to Higher Education, Student Services, Critical Thinking, Community Focus, Technology, and Life-Long Learning, Pearson chi-square analyses failed to yield any statistically significant findings, all $p > .05$.

In sum, statistically significant differences were found between the two levels of Texas higher education institutions in the themes of Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, Academic Achievement, Vocational and Technical Skills, Academic Readiness Skill Development, with more four-year institutions emphasizing the themes of Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, and Academic Achievement, and with more two-year colleges emphasizing the themes of Vocational and Technical Skills and Academic Readiness Skill Development. No statistically significant differences were found between the two levels of Texas higher education institutions in the themes of Life-Long Learning, Critical Thinking, Collaboration and Partnership, Access to Higher Education, Student Services, Community Focus, and Technology. It appears that both levels of institutions place the same degree of emphasis upon these thematic areas, at least in their mission statements.

Following the Pearson chi-square procedures that were performed, a variable was created in which the number of themes each institution had present in its mission statement was coded. This calculation provided a continuous variable that ranged from a low of 1 (one institution only had one of the themes present in its mission statement) to a high of 15 (this institution had all 15 themes present in its mission statement). Then an independent samples t-test was conducted and yielded a statistically significant difference between the two and four year institutions, $t(77.201) = 2.60$, $p < .01$. The average number of themes present for four-year institutions was 6.18 ($SD = 2.42$) compared with an average number of themes of 4.77 ($SD = 2.90$) for the two-year institutions. This difference yielded an effect size of .39, a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1998).

Research Question 4

A stepwise discriminant analysis procedure was conducted to address Research Question 4, "Which themes contribute the most to discriminating four-year institutions from two-year colleges in Texas?" To determine which themes contribute the most to discriminating between the two levels of Texas higher education institutions, stepwise procedures were first performed to select the most correlated themes and remove the variance in the levels of institutions, using Wilks' lambda criteria for entering or removing new variables at each step. These procedures resulted in the selection of five themes, which included Vocational and Technical Skills, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Leadership, Academic Achievement, and Creativity. Then, a discriminant function analysis was performed to determine which themes contribute the most to the discrimination of the two levels of higher education institutions in Texas. Wilks' lambda was statistically significant, $\lambda = .447$, $\chi^2(5, N = 102) = 80.16$, $p < .001$, indicating differences on the five themes between the two levels of institutions. Based on the standardized coefficients (Table 3) and the structure matrix (Table 4), the theme of Excellence in Teaching and Research has the strongest relationship with the discriminant function and the theme of Leadership has the second strongest, whereas Vocational and Technical Skills

has a negative value. On the basis of these results, the discriminant function appears to represent strong emphases on Excellence in Teaching and Research, as well as on Leadership. Four-year institutions score high on this function.

Table 3

Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients

	Function
	1
Theme of Leadership	.355
Theme of Excellence in Teaching & Research	.445
Theme of Creativity	.273
Theme of Academic Achievement	.339
Theme of Vocational and Technical Skills	-.711

Table 4

Structure Matrix

	Function
	1
Theme of Leadership	.443
Theme of Excellence in Teaching & Research	.514
Theme of Creativity	.290
Theme of Academic Achievement	.403
Theme of Vocational and Technical Skills	-.560

Discussion

Themes Identified

Qualitative analyses of the themes present in the mission statements of the four-year public institutions and the two-year public colleges in Texas sampled in this research study resulted in the identification of 15 themes. These themes include Leadership, Citizenship, Cultural Diversity, Life-Long Learning, Excellence in Teaching and Research, Creativity, Critical Thinking, Academic Achievement, Collaboration and Partnership, Vocational and Technical Skills, Access to Higher Education, Academic Readiness and Skill Development, Student Services, Community Focus, and Technology. Four years ago, Ayers (2002) analyzed themes in mission statements of 102 communities colleges in the Southern United States and identified seven themes, namely, access, workforce and economic development, comprehensive programs, quality and excellence, responsiveness to needs, specified service area, and diversity. The

researchers conducting this current study identified more themes than Ayers's (2002) study, with five of the themes overlapping with Ayers's themes; our cultural diversity corresponds to Ayers's diversity; our excellence in teaching and research corresponds to Ayers's quality and excellence access; our vocational and technical skills is similar to Ayers's workforce and economic development; our access to higher education corresponds to Ayers's access; our community focus and student services are similar to Ayers's responsiveness to needs.

Differences and Similarities in Occurrences of Themes

Our quantitative analyses of data revealed that statistically significant differences did exist between the two levels of Texas higher education institutions on 8 of the 15 themes, which were the themes of leadership, citizenship, cultural diversity, excellence in teaching and research, creativity, academic achievement, vocational and technical skills, academic readiness skill development. Percentage of occurrence comparison suggested that more four-year institutions focused on leadership, citizenship, cultural diversity, excellence in teaching and research, creativity, and academic achievement, whereas more two-year colleges focused on vocational and technical skills and academic readiness skill development. This finding confirmed Ayers's (2002) finding that vocationalism was a defining characteristic of two-year community colleges. However, the finding of statistically significant differences in eight themes countered Morphew and Hartley's (2006) research results that suggested similar pattern of themes among four-year public institutions and two-year public colleges, due to their nature of being public, and that the public institutions differed from private institutions because public institutions were held accountable by the key constituents; therefore, their mission statements communicated values demanded by the stakeholders and the communities that supported the public institutions. The researchers who conducted this current study indicated that although both levels of institutions are public, they did encode in their mission statements their choice of values and purposes that distinguished them as either four-year public institutions or two-year colleges in the eight areas indicated by the eight differing themes (the themes of leadership, citizenship, cultural diversity, excellence in teaching and research, creativity, academic achievement, vocational and technical skills, academic readiness skill development).

On the other hand, levels of institutions did not seem to impact 7 of the 15 themes, indicating that both levels of institutions seemed to emphasize these themes, such as life-long learning, critical thinking, collaboration and partnership, access to higher education, student services, community focus, and technology. Traditionally, access to higher education, student services, community focus were the priorities of community colleges (Geiger, 1999). The fact that Texas four-year institutions have also included access, student services, and community focus as essential themes in their mission statements confirms Bogue and Aper's (2000) observation that four-year public institutions are increasingly pressured by multiple stakeholders to balance their mission priorities to meet the challenges of maintaining quality of teaching, maintaining enrollment and funding, serving students' needs and communities' needs while fulfilling its research mission. Our finding of four-year institutions sharing some similar themes as two-year colleges suggested the trend that four-year institutions in Texas may be expanding their mission to be more accessible and more responsive to diverse student population and community needs.

The Most Discriminating Themes

Based on the analysis of five potential discriminating themes (vocational and technical skills, excellence in teaching and research, leadership, academic achievement, and creativity), we found that the theme of excellence in teaching and research and the theme of leadership served as the best discriminating themes that could correctly place four-year institutions, whereas the theme of vocational and technical skills was least likely to place four-year institutions correctly in the level where they belonged.

This finding showed that although Texas four-year public institutions were expanding their role by providing access and services to larger student population and communities, they were at the same time still adhering to their traditional role of promoting excellence in teaching and research, a role that four-year institutions in America inherited from England and Germany (Bogue & Aper, 2000). They were also shouldering the mission of playing the leadership role expected by the nation to produce "human capital" to maintain "our national security and international standing" (Bowen, Kurzweil, & Tobin, 2005, p. 39). In an age when the social, political, and economic pressures demand American higher education to fulfill the "twin goals of equity and high-quality schooling" specified by A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), Texas four-year institutions seemed to be making efforts to meet this challenge, as reflected in their mission statements.

Philosophies Reflected in the Mission Statements

Statistically significant differences in themes between the two levels of Texas Institutions demonstrated differences in philosophies. Whereas the four-year institutions subscribed more to the idealistic and existentialist philosophies by accenting leadership, citizenship, excellence in teaching and research, academic achievement (idealistic goals of education), and creativity (existentialist goal of education), two-year colleges were more typified by their adherence to

pragmatism and progressivism as evidenced by their focus on vocational and technical skills and academic readiness skill development, indicating that they geared their mission toward mass education to address the needs of the under-prepared students – a democratic educational goal advocated by pragmatic and progressive philosophers (Gutek, 2004).

On the other hand, themes that were not found to be statistically different (life-long learning, critical thinking, collaboration and partnership, access to higher education, student services, community focus, and technology) had a philosophical underpinning predominantly pragmatic and progressive, typically subscribed by two-year colleges. For example, critical thinking was advocated by John Dewey's "Complete Act of Thought," and collaboration was central to progressive approach to curriculum and instruction (Gutek, 2004). Technology was viewed by many educational theorists as a means to achieve access, which was espoused by progressive educators (Gumport & Chun, 1999).

The fact that four-year institutions in Texas typically following the idealist tradition are also subscribing to philosophical approach typically adopted by two-year community colleges again confirm the literature that four-year institutions are pressured to adopt the values expected from the multiple constituents (Bogue & Aper, 2000; Morpew & Hartley, 2006).

In summary, the findings from the current research revealed that the two levels of Texas higher education institutions distinguished themselves by fulfilling their traditional roles, with four-year institutions adhering to their excellence in teaching and research, and providing leadership, and with two-year colleges adhering to their role of open-access and vocational training. On the other hand, four-year institutions also expanded their role to shoulder responsibilities typically fulfilled by the two-year colleges. This trend was also reflected in the philosophical underpinnings of the mission statements. Whereas two-year colleges espoused pragmatism and progressivism, four-year institutions embraced not only idealism, existentialism, but also pragmatism.

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