An Examination of Louisiana's State Governance Structure in Higher Education and Its Impact on Public State-Funded College and University System Board Members' Voting Behavior: A Case Study

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AN EXAMINATION OF LOUISIANA’S STATE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS IMPACT ON PUBLIC STATE-FUNDED COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD MEMBERS' VOTING BEHAVIOR: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The School of Education

by

Melanie Smith-Johnson
B.S., Southern University and A&M College, 1981
M.A., Southern University and A&M College, 2006
December 2014
Dedicated to
My grandmother, Edna Travillion Breaux
My grandfather, Leroy A. Smith
and
Mary Ann Cunningham
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation identifies and analyzes factors of influence shaping the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members in the State of Louisiana. The study focuses on university board members voting decisions in budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda item issues at their respective board meetings.

Eleven (11) factors of influence were from drawn from previous literature on legislative voting behavior. In this study, the factors are referred to as Board member colleagues, Board chairperson, Committee member chairpersons, University constituents (i.e. administrators, faculty, staff, students and parents), Fiscal impact to the University, Governor, Legislature, Media & Research (i.e. personal reading through the internet, books, newsletters, etc…), Non-university community (i.e. Community and/or Business & Industry), Re-appointment to the board, and the System President.

The method utilized for this case study was in-depth individual interviews, direct observations, along with surveys to identify the most salient factors of influence on the voting behavior of university board members. A purposeful sampling of twenty-eight (28) surveys and sixteen (16) individual interviews with university board members were conducted in the spring and summer of 2014. Twenty-eight questions were designed from the survey to elicit spontaneous responses from university board members.

Findings indicated that fiscal impact on the university, the role of the systems president, the board and committee chairperson and university constituents were considered high factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board member voting behavior in the state of Louisiana.
This study is the first to examine factors influencing the voting behavior of the public state-funded university board members. A surprising finding revealed that institutional culture of the colleges and universities the board members represented played a significant role in university board members voting behavior.

By providing an analysis of Louisiana’s governance structure in higher education, this study broadens the understanding on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members; as well as provides insight on the present-day vital role governing board members play in shaping higher educational policy on the institutional level and the sustainability of the colleges and universities they serve.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Current narrative across the country indicates that higher education is in a period of significant strain (Altbach, et al, 2011), particularity at public state-funded colleges and universities. Massive budget cuts, campus reorganizations, increased tuition cost, low graduation and retention rates; and greater demand for autonomy and accountability have placed enormous demands on university board members to sustain the universities they serve. As a result, higher educational leaders, presidents, university faculty, staff, students and parents, and the public are all looking to college and university board members for answers to these complex questions in order to stabilize these unique challenges institutions are facing across the country (Snyder, 2014). This appears to be particularly true for public state-funded colleges and universities who are currently struggling to survive. These unique challenges have likewise ignited the urgent call for university board members to play a more active role in the governance of their institutions (Snyder, 2014). Therefore, university board members essentially must be allowed to carry out their fiduciary and oversight responsibilities of their institutions (Legon, 2012; Novak, 2012; Michaelson, 2013). Which raises the question of what factors serve to influence their individual voting behavior?

One major responsibility carried out by board members is their voting during board meetings on budget, academic and student affairs, personnel issues and all other pertinent agenda items pertaining to the sustainability of the institutions they serve; which indicates “the increasing importance of their work and influence” (Zeig, Baldwin, & Wilbur, 2014, p. 2). This is particularly true given the quickness at which decisions must be made (Duderstadt, 2001). Chait (2013) suggests that, university
board members keep three things in mind when making voting decisions: 1) “fidelity to mission of the university; 2) integrity of the operations; and 3) conservation of the core values” to the institutions they serve (Michaelson, 2013, p.1). Rick Legion (2014), President of the American Association of Governing Boards (AGB) points out that:

Most college and university boards don't reach their fullest potential for effective governance. In fact, many may suffer from boardroom dysfunctions that might not be fully apparent. Yet now, more than ever, boards need to strive toward a higher level of performance to meet today’s challenges and expectations (p. 1).

Although this appears to be an easy task to accomplish, current stories across the country paint another picture. For example, university board members voting to dismiss university presidents and other top administrators continually flood the media. Thus, indicating the rising pressures and inferences from state Governors and political stakeholders attempting to influence the day-to-day management decisions of the university systems (Stripling, 2014). As a result, “university board member independence is becoming increasingly threatened, as the universities become embedded in government, industry, networks and the professions” (Bastedo, 2009, p. 354). “Controversial issues within the past few years at institutions such as the University of Virginia, Pennsylvania State University, and the University of Texas have raised important questions about the proper role of boards in the governance and management of their institutions - Moreover, another major issue is how individual board members come to know and understand their roles and responsibilities and decide how involved to become in executing their duties” (Zeig, Baldwin, & Wilbur, 2014, p. 1).
Similar challenges have also escalated in the State of Louisiana, which is the setting for this study. I choose this particular state given that:

a) from 2008 to 2013 Louisiana’s public-funded colleges and universities have undergone tremendous budget cuts totaling over $650 million and have encountered low retention and graduation rates;

b) Louisiana has decreased state funding per student by 43.2%, which equates to $5,004 dollars per student, ranking Louisiana the second highest state in the country with this decrease (Mitchell, M., et. al, 2014);

c) Louisiana’s tuition cost at its public institutions has increased by 9.8% overall, totaling a $2,242 dollar increase in tuition per student; ranking Louisiana first in the country with this increases (Mitchell, M. et. al 2014);

d) Louisiana has a unique governance structure, whereas it has a coordinating governance structure, with four systems, but within one of the systems is a consolidated “superboard” comprised of nine colleges and universities;

e) Louisiana’s governor as chief administrator allows him full authority over the higher education and healthcare budgets; as well as the authority to appoint all higher education’s governing board members, with approval of the senate (Stripling, 2012).

For these above-mentioned reasons, along with other issues like the dismissal of the flagship university president and the firing of the chancellor at another major institution has stirred up great controversy among Louisiana educational stakeholders and the general public; one of which resulted in a student protest.
These complex issues have left more responsibility on students to pay for public higher education; and left the public and all other educational stakeholders concerned about the level of power the governor holds as the chief administrator. In addition, whom or what (factors) influence the voting behavior of university system board members when making voting decisions on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues and all other agenda items. Currently, Louisiana legislators are revamping educational policy connected to the appointment of college and university board members. Thus, passing amendment (House Bill 588) which “places restriction on the nomination and appointment process of university system board members who can sit on the state boards of higher education” (McGaughy, 2014, p 1). Therefore, this is a great setting to understand the central phenomenon of this study.

Currently, there are four state system boards of higher education to include: Louisiana State University System (LSU), Southern University A&M College System (SU), University of Louisiana System (ULL) and the Louisiana Technical College System (LTCS). The Board of Regents is the governing board, which sets the educational policy for all the system boards (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2014).

Given the flux in higher education in the state of Louisiana, with budget cuts of over $650 million dollars since 2008 (Pope and Adelson, 2013), university system board members find themselves faced with a plethora of complex financial and academic policy decisions to compensate declining state funding. From 2008 to 2014, Louisiana’s higher education funding per student has decreased by forty-three point nine percent (43.9%), since the start of the recession, to equate a reduction of five thousand and four dollars ($5,004) per student, which ranks Louisiana first among other
states in the change of state spending per student (Mitchell, et. al, 2014). Subsequently, this trend has served as a catalyst to increased tuition cost by fifty-two percent (52.1%) for public college and universities in the state (Mitchell, et. al, 2014). Although, many educators and researchers believe that politics and education don’t mix, the fact still remains that federal and state governments have played, and continue to play, a significant role in the policy and decision making process in public higher education. Historically, leadership and governance in higher education has always been a recurring controversial issue in the State of Louisiana as it relates to who should control it, how it should be controlled and when these changes should happen. That said, “in the case of trusteeship, we see significant institutional changes, where board members who were once appointed by governors and institutions to protect public college and universities from the political environment, now actively engaging within that environment to make decisions in concert with the external demands by the public and powerful political actors” (Bastedo, 2014, 2009, p. 358). Current empirical “literature on governing boards tends to treat trustee independence in a superficial manner and is often quite naïve in its treatment of political factors and financial conflicts of interest” (Bastedo, 2009, p.355). In addition, empirical research on these concerns remains quite rare (Kezar, 2006). Therefore, now more than ever it is important to gain a deeper understating relevant to what factors influence the voting behavior of individual board members. Simply, their vote on agenda items at board meetings is significantly important to the sustainability of the institutions they serve, particularly related to budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues. This is particularly
“true given the rapidity at which decisions must be made during board meetings” (Duderstadt, 2001, Bastedo, 2009, p. 355).

Although, many educators and researchers believe that politics and education don’t mix, the fact still remains that federal and state governments still play a significant role in the policy and decision-making process in public higher education. Historically, in the state of Louisiana, leadership and governance in higher education has ignited recurring controversy as it relates to who should control it, how it should be controlled and when these changes should happen. Given the political dynamics of Louisiana’s governance structure and wave of new changes surrounding its public higher educational policy, it is quite unique compared to other states. According to Winburn and Sullivan (2011), “Louisiana is a unique state with a unique political culture (p. 4).

The purpose of this exploratory case study is to identify and provide an in-depth understanding about the factors serving to influence the voting behavior of public-state funded university system board members as relates to educational budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items to identify the most salient. This study will also examine the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study which are, budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issue agenda items.

By providing an analysis of Louisiana’s governance structure in higher education, this study seeks to broaden the understanding pertaining to the role public state-funded university governing board members play in shaping higher educational
policy on the institutional level. Currently, under the auspices of Louisiana’s state
corporation, the governor is the chief executive officer of the state, which grants him
executive powers to control public higher education and health care budgets (Louisiana
State Constitution of 1974, Article IV). Although, this political decision’s intent was to
increase autonomy at the campus level and increase accountability; it appears to have
created a venue for governors, policymakers and other stakeholders to influence the
voting behavior of the board members. In light of this, the governor of Louisiana plays
a tremendous role in the shaping of educational policy.

Presently, “there is not a great deal of theoretical literature on postsecondary
boards of trustees/supervisors, therefore scholars and the general public assumes that
university presidents are the key decision-makers and institutional leaders” (Pusser, et
al, 2006), which is quite the contrary. Jeff Selingo, editorial director of The Chronicle
Education and What It Means for Students” spoke to a forum of Louisiana system
board members to inform them of significant and inevitable upcoming changes and
challenges in higher education in the State of Louisiana. He stated that:

The challenges in higher education in the State of Louisiana are not going away
and no one is going to fix the situation for us. We must act - and that will
require leadership, open minds, bold ideas, best practices, objective data,
political will and a decision to let go of the past and look forward. But we need
not have our hands tied - Institutions in Louisiana should be free to lead and
make innovative changes to compete and then be held accountable for results”
(McCollister, R. 2012, p.1).

Thus, the necessity for Louisiana’s public university system board members to be
allowed to make good, ethical voting decisions, representing the goals and mission of
the institutions they serve, without pressure from political influences is significant. In a
study conducted by Canfield-Davis & Jain (2010) it is noted that federal, state and public pressure for improved and more efficient college and universities has left educational policymakers at all levels with the task to answer complex questions with innovative attainable solutions for the institutions they serve.

Although university boards play a vital role within colleges and universities, often they are not given the same amount of attention in higher education literature as other topic such as faculty roles or student development (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). While most of the literature on boards examines their history, organizational structure and performance; few studies have considered how the role of individual governing board members might impact higher education outcomes (Conner & Rabovsky, 2011). Moreover, less attention focuses on the actual workings of boards or board members’ perceptions of their roles (Schwartz, 1998). McLendon (2003) notes that overall there is a small amount of thorough empirical analyses indicating factors influencing state policy for higher education. This study intends to fill the gap in literature in that area, by identifying factors influencing the voting behavior of university system board members who serve public state-funded colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana.

As a foundation for this exploratory case study, the factors of influence were drawn from John Kingdon’s (1977 & 1981) classic studies on U.S. congressional legislators, and Kathy Canfield-Davis’ and Jain’s (1996 & 2010) studies on state legislators. In Kingdon’s (1977 & 1981) study, seven (7) actors were identified serving to influence U.S. congressional members voting behavior to include: Constituency, Interest Groups, Legislative Colleagues, Party Leadership, Executive & State Offices,
Legislative Staff and Media & Research (Kingdon, 1981). Kathy Canfield-Davis’ & Jain’s (1996 & 2010) studies identified multiple factors as well influencing state legislators voting behavior to include: the Governor, Committee chairs, Re-election, Legislative Committees, Fiscal Impact and Legislative Leadership to name a few out of the eighteen identified. For purposes of this study, the following factors were selected, defined and operationalized to include: Board member colleagues, Board chairperson, Committee member chairpersons, (University constituents, i.e. administrators, faculty, staff, students and parents), Fiscal impact to the university, Governor, Legislature, Media & Research (i.e. personal reading through the internet, book, newsletters, etc…), Non-university community (i.e. community and/or business & Industry), Re-appointment to the board, and the System president.

Kingdon (1981) suggests “traditional systematic methodological approaches to examine how legislators vote on particular issues, to help account for voting on the House or Senate floor” (p.11). He proposes that one of the best ways to study legislative voting behavior, particularly on specific issues, was to conduct face-to-face interviews, shortly after the roll call voting, along with standard questionnaires (Kingdon, 1981). Kingdon (1981) believes that by interviewing legislators, this “helps to develop a kind of life history of legislators voting behavior to include: the steps legislators go through when deciding their vote, the considerations he and/or she weighs, and the political actors who influenced them” (p. 13). By doing so, detailed patterns can be adequately identified to answer what factors serve to influence the legislators voting behavior (Kingdon, 1981). Jewel and Patterson (1996), simply state
this by saying, “roll call vote analysis can only tell us only how a legislator votes, without telling us why legislators vote that way” (p. 416).

Another study conducted using this a similar approach by Canfield-Davis & Jain (2009) suggests that by “providing transparency though the identification of the factors serving to influence legislative voting behavior; promotes more cooperation and collaborations between educators, educational policy-makers, parents, state boards of education and state departments of education, which in turn builds and sustains collations of support across issues” (p.602). For these reasons, this exploratory case study will use these previous studies as a foundation to provide a rich, thick description and understanding of factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded institutions university system board members voting behavior on budget & finance, student & academic affairs and personnel agenda items at their monthly board meetings. By utilizing Kingdon’s (1977 & 1981) and Canfield-Davis (1996 & 2010) instruments; to include a survey, along with individual interviews, the researcher will attempt to: 1) provide an in-depth understanding on the factors influencing the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members which serves to shape educational policy on the institutional level; 2) convey the importance of political balance within state’s governing structures in the appointment of public state-funded university board members so they are allowed to make good ethical voting decisions, which ultimately effect the institutions they serve; to include the faculty, staff, student, parents and the public good; and 3) enable educational leaders and other stakeholders to better understand how to convey their needs to university system board members, which in turn, will hopefully enable all stakeholders concerned to better understand the
institutional culture in a way to achieve a consensus and incorporate positive institutional change.

1.1 Background of the Study (The Political Dynamics Surrounding Louisiana’s Governance Structure in Higher Education)

To understand the relevance of this study, it is important to gain an understanding and insight of Louisiana’s higher educational system. It is also equally important to recognize the unique political dynamics (contextual factors) surrounding its governing boards organizational structure and leadership. Additionally, it is essential to identify to the political factors, and their roles of involvement as it relates to the formation and oversight of Louisiana’s Board of Regents (state coordinating governing board) and the four (4) university system boards (university management boards) in the State of Louisiana. Kezar (2006) contends that “colleges and universities are inherently political organizations” (p. 411). Prior to 1968, Louisiana’s State Board of Education (BESE), was responsible for the educational oversight of all its citizenry, with the exception of all institutions under the control of Louisiana State University (Serrett, C, 2009). Subsequently, after the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education was established in 1968, with the primary mission to plan and coordinate all activities for Louisiana colleges and universities.

In 1974, under the administration of Democratic Governor Edwin Edwards, Louisiana’s state constitution and governance structure in higher education was totally revamped with the creation of the Board of Regents (state coordinating governing board,) along with the creation of three (3) university system boards. The Board of Regents was given full authority to coordinate, plan and was given full budgetary
responsibility for all public colleges and university systems in the state. All boards, to include the Board of Regents and university system boards, “consist of fifteen (15) members, with one (1) and/or no more than two (2) members from each congressional district, who are appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate” (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2013). Additionally, the Council of Student Body Presidents appoints one student member as their representative to the board (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2013). Board of Regents members are allowed to serve six (6) overlapping years and should represent the state's population by race and gender to ensure diversity (Louisiana State Constitution of 1974, Article VIII, Education).

Although this political decision’s intent was to increase autonomy at the campus level to ensure accountability and equity in the distribution of funding; it appears to have created a venue for governors and policymakers with leveraging power to influence the voting behavior of the public institutions university system board members. This, along with ambiguities in the state’s constitution allowing the governor authority over education and health care budgets, leaves the governor with a great deal of control. (Louisiana Government Executive Branch, 2013) Richardson, et al (1999), point out in their research that “these policy environments and structures are important because they contain incentives and disincentives for performance, and recommends that all states start to balance their systems and the forces acting on them in ways that are responsive to their own needs in the twenty-first century” (p.10). Now more than ever, due to massive federal and state budget cuts, global competition, low graduation/retention rates and increases in colleges’ tuition; a balanced governance structure designed allowing Louisiana’s university systems board members to
effectively serve the institutions without political pleas is significantly important. Bess and Dee (2008) note that ambiguity in authority creates a venue for complications in academic decision making, “not so much about the decision at hand, but about who is responsible for making the decision—in essence, decisions about decision-making authority itself” (p. 589).

In the past few years, Louisiana’s university system board members have encountered a number of unique situations where the current governor has been heavily involved in attempting to influence voting behavior of board members. One article in The Chronicle of Higher Education: Leadership & Governance (2013) titled, “Lombardi’s Firing at LSU Puts the Spotlight on the Governor’s Reach Into University Affairs” (Stripling, 2013), captures the influences on voting behavior of Louisiana’s university system board members. Several board members stated in the article that:

The republican governor’s staff tried to strong arm Mr. Lombardi into firing people and as a result, when Mr. Lombardi did not comply with the governor’s demand, he was shortly recommended for removal from office by the majority of LSU’s university system board members. One of the board members stated “he felt like the guys on the board were acting solely at the behest of the governor?” Although, the governor does not have an ex-officio position on the board, as many governors do in some states” in 2013, half of the sixteen (16) board members on LSU’s systems board were appointed by Governor Jindal (Stripling, 2013, p.2).

In addition, in another newspaper article, a group of Republican state representatives indicated that Louisiana’s governor tried to secretly have the Louisiana Board of Regents to dismiss the state’s Commissioner of Higher Education, who “spoke out against the governor’s proposed budget to fund higher education for next year” (Addo, 2013, p.1). As a result, the commissioner of higher education did not seek to renew his contract and “walked away quietly from his job on March 20, 2014” (Addo, 2014, p. 1).
Another article indicated that out of the eighty-one (81) university system board members in the state of Louisiana “they are overwhelmingly male, and, with the exception of Southern University System, the boards are overwhelmingly white; excluding the student members, who are selected by their peers, and of that number 75 out of 81 board members were handpicked by one person, Governor Bobby Jindal” (Addo, 2014, p.1). These above mentioned case scenarios provide an indication that Louisiana’s “public post-secondary institutions are embedded within a larger political environment and that this environment has influenced policy adoption patterns” (McLendon, et al., 2009, p. 688), which might alter the voting behavior of board members. It also points out that, Louisiana’s governor has a large amount of authority in the nomination and appointment of board members to the Board of Regents (the state coordinating governance board), and to post-secondary university system boards (university management boards) with consent of the Senate (Louisiana State Constitution of 1974, Article VIII Education). Therefore, it is s to significant to understand the social, political, and economic environment and issues surrounding Louisiana’s governing structure in higher education to answer the central research questions of this study. See Figure 1.
Figure 1. Political Dynamics Surrounding Louisiana’s Governance Structure in Higher Education

- **Louisiana’s Governor**
  - (Appoints Board Members and has full authority over Higher Education & Health Care Budgets)

- **Louisiana State Legislators**
  - Board Appointments Confirmed and Ratified by the majority vote of the Senate

- **Board of Regents**
  - State Coordinating Governing Board
  - Appointed by the Governor

- **Louisiana’s University System Board Members**
  - Management Boards
  - Appointed by the Governor
1.2 Statement of the Problem

In 2008, many colleges and universities across the country went into “crisis mode” due to the recession (Mitchell, 2013). In 2008, Louisiana’s state funding for higher education was cut tremendously by almost six-hundred and fifty million dollars $650,000,000 (Pope and Adelson, 2013). As a result, colleges and universities in the State of Louisiana have and will continue to undergo massive budget cuts. These cuts have included: faculty and staff layoffs, furloughs, campus consolidations and reorganizations, and reduction in state funding per capita, per student. Additionally, one of the largest Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s) was forced to declare financial exigency (Straumsheim, 2013). In addition, university system board members have voted out two university Presidents, within from 2010 to 2014. As a result of all these events and issues, Louisiana’s public state-funded university system board members will face many challenging voting decisions regarding the budget agenda items at the institutions they serve. Given these dynamics, conflicts often arise when politicians, namely governors exert their influence on higher education units of governance; either directly or indirectly through board appointments to make changes that time and time again counter what institutional leaders want for their university campuses (Kiley, 2013).

Due to the tremendous budget cuts, particularity within public state-funded colleges and universities top administrators have been forced to rethink and reorganize how universities in the state can meet upcoming challenges and still stay competitive, which has left and continues to leave board members with critical voting decisions.
Therefore, their voting behavior will directly impact the sustainability of the institutions they serve. Martin Michaelson (2013) notes that university board members have fiduciary responsibilities, such as: fidelity, trust, and loyalty, to the institutions they serve and should use them when deciding how to vote on critical issues affecting the institutions they serve. With all the attention placed on performance and accountability of Louisiana’s university systems boards from a macro level; little to no attention has been placed the individual vote of university system board members, from a micro-level. After all, according to Louisiana’s state constitution, the management of campus level issues ultimately rests with its university system board members, and their final votes (voting behavior). This research will examine three major domain areas of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items to do so, this research study will attempt to answer the following questions:

1.3 Research Questions

1. What factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members to identify the most salient? And;

2. Are the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study?

These domain areas were chosen after I reviewed one-year of the university’s board minutes and from direct observations, which revealed that these issues were discussed and voted on more than other agenda items.
1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this case study is three-fold: 1) to identify factors of influence on the voting behavior of Louisiana’s university system board members to identify the most salient; 2) to analyze if the factors of influence remain constant across the three domain areas and; 3) to gain insight and a deep understanding of board members perceptions pertaining to their voting behavior in the three major domain areas identified within this study. This research will also provide an analysis of Louisiana’s governance structure in higher education, the patterns of politics and the distribution of power (Kingdon, 1981), given under the auspices of its state’s constitution. Although Louisiana has four (4) public university system boards, only two (2) university system boards agreed to participate and are used in this study, (the largest university system board is excluded due to lack of participation). Due to the nature of this qualitative case study, it was necessary that I contacted the university system boards prior to starting this research study, to inquire about their willingness to participate. Otherwise, I would not have been able to conduct this study. Further, all the university systems boards were asked to participate, however, not all were able to, due to constraints on their time with both official Board of Supervisor responsibilities as well as their own professional obligations.

As previously discussed, for purposes of this research the factors from drawn from John Kingdon’s (1977, 1981), and Kathy Canfield-Davis’ and Jain’s (1996 & 2010) studies on legislative voting behavior, paralleling them to examine the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members in the State of Louisiana. By applying a political science lens to educational policymaking, this study
aims to add to the body of research through understanding factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members on the institutional level. In doing so, this will hopefully enable and aid institutional leaders, university administrators, the educational community, students, staff and the public to understand the processes involved in and related to the voting behavior of university system board members at the institutional level.

1.5 Significance of Study

It is no doubt these are difficult times for those who manage higher education institutions, which has created a difficult political climate and diminished public confidence” (Gumport, 2000, p. 67). In turn, this makes governing public state-funded institutions in higher education a complex, challenging task. This study is significant because it is the first of its kind in that the case study examines what factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members in the state of Louisiana. Currently, particularly in the state of Louisiana we are witnessing major transitions in the realm of public higher education due to massive financial decreases in federal and state funding. Owing to these financial pressures, enrollment in postsecondary education in Louisiana dropped in 2012 for the first time since 2006 (Selingo, 2013). Additionally, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (2012) Louisiana’s public colleges and universities endured a $4,715 decrease (41.2%) in amount of state funding per student from 2008 to 2013. Coupled with this, students’ tuition costs have increased by more than 38% from 2008 to 2013 (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013), which has caused many colleges and universities to reorganize their campuses.
Previous research focuses the organizational models of university governing boards and why they have been successful and effective. In addition, these studies primarily have been quantitative. They also have examined university boards from a macro level and assume that board members have only the cumbersome task to endorse institutional policies and practices created under the leadership of the executive officer (Mintzberg, 1979), which is quite the contrary. Individuals on university boards play a tremendous role in the shaping of policy and the overall dynamics of the institutions they serve. Just as legislators, they are often influenced by external (social, political and economic) factors that sway their voting behavior to vote yea or nay on university related agenda items affect the overall sustainability of the institutions they serve. The Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (2009) clearly state that:

Governing boards of public institutions bear an abiding responsibility to preserve and enhance a legacy of learning, scholarship, and free inquiry that is unique to the college or university. As fiduciaries accountable to the public trust that’s placed in higher education, they must also exemplify the highest standards of integrity. Additionally, board members should ensure that the public purposes of higher education are served, through balancing the needs of the institution and the state, while pursuing what is best for the public they serve and the institution they govern. They must also serve as advocates, focusing on enhancing the quality of life for citizens, while preserving the university’s autonomy, determining its needs and pursuing its interest by avoiding compelling person interest or inappropriate dictates of public officials or bodies from which the board derives (p.1).

Therefore, Louisiana public state-funded college and university system board members must be allowed to use good judgment in their voting behavior; without external political inferences to solve the challenges of the 21st century in higher education to sustain the institutions they serve. McLendon (2003) notes that overall there is a small amount of empirical analyses specifying factors influencing state policy for higher education. He also states that “consequently, our understanding of the factors
propelling change in public state funded public institutions remains underdeveloped, both conceptually and empirically and knowledge of those factors will add to the rising theoretical literature on voting decisions in higher education” (p. 688). While most studies conducted regarding higher education governing boards tend to focus on structure (Kezar, 2006); little to none have considered expanding to understand the mechanisms by which they influence higher education policy (Tandberg, 2013). By using the interview and survey techniques, this study will add to the body of scholarly research by revealing factors of influence on the voting behavior of individual university board members in the state of Louisiana. In turn, this study could assist board members; rethink how they go about their decision-making. At a time of substantial turnovers with college presidents, chancellor and other top administrators, along with diminishing financial resources, sports scandals - the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges hopes to change the way college boards do business, and has developed a set of recommendations for board members to adhere too (Stripling, 2013). The results may also serve to stimulate conversations among board members to rethink how they review budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues to connect the dots between spending and student success. Lastly, from a policy standpoint, it can be used by legislators as an evaluative piece to gauge and leverage the appointment process so that university boards represent the congressional districts by race and gender on the institutional level. I also foresee several articles that may be written from the results focusing on this specific area of research (i.e. one example is conducting a nationwide study with board members of
public state funded college and universities to see if these same finding remain constant in other geographical locations and settings).

1.6 Definition of Terms

Stake (2005), suggests that “identifying and refining important concepts is a key part of the iterative process of qualitative research (p. 328). This particular section will identify, define and describe how the concepts and other relevant indicators were operationalized for the purpose of this research as follows:

Factors: Any communication or influence, verbal or non-verbal, intended or unintended, used as a recommendation for their decision making when voting (Matthews & Stinson, 1975).

Budget & Finance Agenda Item: A budget resolution, amendment, and all other financial issues related to monies appropriated to ensure there is revenue for expenses related to the operation of the university, which is before the university system board members for consideration to vote on at their monthly board meeting.

Constituents (i.e. university constituents, university administrators, faculty, staff, students and parents): An actor in the political system to which a legislator is held accountable (Kingdon, 1977). For the purposes of this research, the university constituents are factors in the system that university system board members are held accountable to and defined as the: administration, faculty, staff, students and parents. Governor: A person who is the leader of the government of a state, and is considered the leading formulator and initiator of public policy in his or her state (Bowman & McKenny, 2003, p.146). For the purposes of this research, the Louisiana’s governor is the current acting governor in the state of Louisiana during the timeframe of this study.
Legislative Colleagues (board member colleagues): persons whom the decision-maker may informally ask “for advice on how to vote” (Kingdon, 1981, p.75). For the purposes of this research, the legislative colleagues are defined as university board member colleagues.

Fiscal Impact to the University: Fiscal impact refers to “the amount of money required to implement proposed budget items and the monetary impact it has on the university system board members constituents” (Canfield-Davis et. al., 2010, p. 60).

Leadership & Ranking Committee Members (university board chairperson & committee member chairpersons): Those who occupy formal positions on a standing committee (Kingdon, 1981). For purposes of this research, ranking committee members are defined as: university board member chairperson and committee chairpersons.

Political: The way people within a collective setting use their power and strategies to assert or maintain their distinctive interest (Kezar, 2008).

University Systems Board Members Voting Behavior: For purposes of this research, university system board members voting behavior is defined as the individual roll call vote of Louisiana’s university system board members on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items. The roll call votes are published and recorded votes considered as a yea or nay vote.

Re-Election (i.e. Re-appointment to the Board): When a university system board member is appointed by the governor with consent of the Senate and needs to be re-confirmed by the senate during the overlapping terms of six years (Louisiana State Constitution of 1974).
Media and Research (personal reading): Anything read or seen about the abovementioned agenda items on the floor for a vote to include: personal reading, internet searches, books, television, news, magazines, daily newspapers ads, newsletters, radio, talk shows, committee and analyst reports, and interest groups.

Table 1. Operationalized Factors of Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Operationalized Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.  Board Member Colleagues</td>
<td>Fellow Louisiana board member colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.  Board Chairperson</td>
<td>University board chairperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.  Committee Member Chairpersons</td>
<td>University committee chairpersons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.  University Constituents</td>
<td>University administration, faculty, staff, students and parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.  Fiscal Impact to the University</td>
<td>Fiscal impact in to public state-funded universities in the state of Louisiana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.  Governor</td>
<td>Louisiana’s governor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.  Legislature</td>
<td>Louisiana’s legislature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.  Media &amp; Research</td>
<td>i.e. personal reading through the internet, books, newsletters, etc…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.  Non-University Constituents</td>
<td>i.e. community and/or business &amp; industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Re-Appointment to the Board</td>
<td>Re-appointment to the university systems board by the governor and confirmed by the senate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. System President</td>
<td>college or university systems president</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.7 Delimitations

Delimitations are defined “as those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of your study” (Simon, 2011 p. 6). This study will only examine two (2) of the four (4) university system board member in the state of Louisiana. The other two (2) university systems boards were invited to participate, but were unable to do so because of constraints on their time with both official board of supervisor
responsibilities, as well as their own professional obligations. This study is further delimited by examining only budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items presented during the university system board meetings held in the summer and fall of 2014. In addition, the level of investigation for study focuses factors of influence on the voting behavior of university system board members in the State of Louisiana, related to the three major domain areas of budget & finance, academic and student affairs and personal agenda items at the respective institutions they serve - with the unit of analysis being the vote itself.

1.8 Limitations

One of the major limitations within this study presents a one-time analysis of Louisiana’s university system board members voting behavior on budget issues. Additionally, the factors are drawn from previous research conducted on legislative voting behavior and used to examine influences on the voting behavior of Louisiana university system board members. The use of previous conducted research may cause the possibility of some misinterpretation of the data. Although this study does not embrace the standard statistical method, basic descriptive statistics support the findings. This study utilizes the use of the constant comparative data analysis method to identify and understand the factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members, in the State of Louisiana. It was also important that I selected reoccurring agenda items to provide a focus point for the survey and personal interviews with the participants. Therefore, the study will focus on the voting behavior of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items. Additionally, information regarding university budget agenda items is readily
accessible to the researcher. Selection of the participants interviewed will be limited
due to the time constraints and other obligations of university board members.
Additionally, only two (2) out of the four (4) university system board have agreed to
participate. Another limitation is that there is no way to verify that interviewee answers
are not misleading, due to the fact that the interviews are dependent upon the
perceptions and knowledge of the university system board members (participants) and
the interviewer. Despite the limitations, the information gathered for this study is rich in
detail and will provide a deep understanding and solid foundation for the findings
presented in this study.

1.9 Summary

In this chapter, an introduction was provided to set the stage, along with a
backdrop explaining the political environment and other contextual factors surrounding
Louisiana’s governance structure and university systems boards used for this study. The
main purpose and significance of this research - to identify factors contributing to the
voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members related to
budget agenda items at the institutions they serve respectively is discussed. Definitions
of the operationalized factors are also provided.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation will include the review of literature, which
supports the problem statement, purpose, conceptual model and theoretical framework
in this research study. Chapter 3 outlines the design and analysis of the study, and
Chapter 4 will report the findings, results and will attempt to answer the questions
raised in the study. Chapter 5 will provide the reader with conclusions,
recommendations, and implications of further research studies in this area.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is to provide a foundation and pertinent sources to answer the questions relevant to this research in chronological order. The bodies of literature will cover the following specific areas to include: (1) an overview of literature on public governing board structures in the United States; (2) an overview on congressional and state legislative voting behavior; (3) an overview of Kingdon’s (1977 & 1981) classic studies on congressional voting behavior; and Kathy Canfield-Davis’ (1996 & 2010) studies on state legislative voting behavior; and (4) a conceptual model and theoretical framework used in explaining the perpetually evolving factors serving to shape the voting behavior of public-state funded university board members. Furthermore, this literature will provide the methodological approaches and findings of earlier studies related to voting behavior, which enabled the researcher to build and expand upon previously conducted research. This review of literature also provides a model identifying the eleven (11) operationalized factors serving to influence the voting behavior of public institutions university system board members, for purposes of this study.

2.2 Public State-Funded Governing Boards

In order to answer relevant questions pertaining to the research within this study, it is significantly important to understand the inception and historical evolution of public state-funded governing board systems. In the United States, “universities and colleges were often overseen by boards of trustees/supervisors, regents, overseers, or similarly titled entities” (Hermalin, 2002, p.1). Today, public state-funded institutional
governing boards have historically evolved from the first, “Lay Boards” founded at Harvard in 1936 (Pusser, 2013). As a result, boards across the country have simulated lay boards, with one exception. Instead of only directing one institution, boards today tend to oversee more than one institution, which is not the case (McGuinness, 1998, p.1). The literature below provides a clear understanding of how “the structures of higher education boards interact with politics to affect higher education policy (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2003, p. 6). For quite some time, “state governing boards have served as a buffer for the public as well as institutions of higher education in the United States from excessive government control” (Areen, 2010, p.698). After World War II, the Morrell Acts, and the signage of the G. I. Bill, the purpose and mission of higher education drastically changed due to an increased response from U. S. citizens to meet new workforce demands (Green, 2010). As a result, many state leaders became very interested in playing a more dominate role and desired to have more control over public higher education and institutional autonomy began to become an issue (Pusser, 2012). Between the 1960’s and 1990’s, many governors and legislators began creating governing board systems that still exist today (Richardson, 1999). In 1974, Louisiana’s governor convened a constitutional convention; changing the entire governance structure in higher education to include a new statewide coordinating governance structure and institutional governing systems. The governance structure includes: the Louisiana Board of Regents (state coordinating board), along with four (4) university system boards (university management boards) (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2013).

Today, post-secondary boards are considered the internal management boards designed with the primary responsibility to manage the institutions they serve
(Nicholson, Crotty, and Meier, 2003). While, public governing board’s categorizations and descriptions vary, which is sometimes confusing, the all have one thing in common, which is to supervise higher education institutions for the public good (Kezar, 2006). Much of the literature related to public education governing boards struggles with the concept of whether or not the governing boards should be centralized or decentralized organizational structures. Additionally, the majority of the literature on boards of trustees/supervisors is descriptive, presenting board members’ characteristics and offering prescriptive advice to educate them so they can better perform their duties (Chait, et al, 1991). Brain Pusser (2009) argues in the overturning of University of California’s affirmative action policy that trustees/university board members were linked to powerful political and economic groups whose interests, to some degree, explained the choices they made. This particular incident indicates that governing boards are considered the highest-ranking authority at the institutional level in higher education (Chait, et al, 1991). In that vein, it is important to understand who or what serves to influence their voting behavior.

Although, researchers categorized governance structures in higher education differently, for purposes of this research, McGuiness’ (2003) model, which is a state-centered typology, exemplifies one of the best ways to understanding the formal authority and order of influence within public-state funded governing board structures in the U.S. and in the State of Louisiana. These organizations are based on the fundamental role governance structures play in relation to the creation of state higher education policy. McGuiness (1997) denotes three (3) types of governance structures: 1) state governing boards (similar to consolidated governing boards), which have the
authority to govern institutions, establish salaries, set faculty personnel policies and create and implement policies, but more importantly allocate resources among the institutions under their jurisdiction; 2) regulatory coordinating boards (*state coordinating management boards*), which have the authority to coordinate all academic, financial, and human resources policy for institutions; and 3) the planning/service agency board structures, which plan and establish goals for state higher education, but have less authority or power to implement their recommendations at the institutional level (McGuinness, 2003). See Table 2.

**Table 2. Governance Board Structures in Higher Education in the U.S.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Structures</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>States Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consolidated Governing Boards</td>
<td>AK, AZ, FL, GA, HI, ID, IA, KS, ME, MN, MS, MT, NV, NH, NC, ND, OR, RI, SD, UT, WI, WY</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinating Boards</td>
<td>AL, AR, CA, CO, CT, IL, IN, KY, LA, MD, MA, MO, NE, NJ, NM, NY, OH, OK, PA, SC, TN, TX, VA, WA, WV</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning/Regulatory/Service Boards</td>
<td>DE, MI, MN, PA</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In this typology of the United States, there are twenty-one (21) governing boards’ states, twenty-five (25) coordinating board states, and four (4) planning board states. According to McGuinness, (2011), “there is no ideal governing board model” (p.1). Other researchers such as Kerr and Gage (1989) consider the board of trustees/supervisors as, “The Guardians” of the institutions they serve. They categorize public consolidated governing boards as governance systems with oversight of either
two (2) and/or four (4) year institutions, with community colleges having their own separate system. Consolidated governing boards are “responsible for the statewide planning, policy leadership, and above all, preserving the institutional missions” they serve (McGunnness, p. 147). Berdahl (1975) defines consolidated boards as single boards responsible for governing and coordinating all public higher education within a state. Statewide-consolidated boards are considered to be “superboards” because they have the authority and power to implement changes at all levels. In many instances, consolidated governing board systems in most states resulted from “mergers of land-grant multi-campus universities with former state colleges to include: Maine in 1968, North Carolina in 1971 and Wisconsin in 1971-73” (McGuinness, A. 2011, p.9).

Essentially, consolidated governing boards were created to: “1) promote mission differentiation; 2) curb unnecessary duplication; 3) counter turf battles and 4) serve as a mechanism between the state and the academy” (McGunnness, 2011, p.5). Lowery (2001) considers consolidated boards as centralized boards with the highest level of autonomy, which gives the power to participate in the development and implementation of institutional policy. They can also serve as advocates for the institutions they serve by expressing their needs to the legislature and governor (Nicholson-Crotty & Meier, 2009). Simply, they serve as a liaison between state government and the state governing boards representing the state’s systems individual colleges and universities.

Although consolidated boards have legal management and control of single institutions and/or a cluster of institutions, “they often struggle to balance day-to-day operations and policy functions on the institutional level” (Serrett, 2009, p. 4).
Statewide public coordinating governing boards differ from consolidated boards in that they have full authority to plan, coordinate and handle all fiscal responsibilities at the institutions they serve, but are often limited and have no role in the day-to-day institutional operations (Tandberg, 2013). In addition, coordinating governing boards are less likely to have the power and autonomy necessary to resist political influence (Tandberg, 2013, p. 507). According to the State Higher Education Officers (SHEEO), statewide coordinating boards have more direct control over financial and academic affairs (Tandberg, 2013), than other governing boards. Coordinating governing boards’ “single focus, should be to maintain good public policy for higher education, therefore they should be less distracted with institutional governance and supervision of management” (Lingenfelter, 2014, p.8), which is always not the case. Coordinating boards differ from consolidated governing boards in that they do not govern institutions, but they do appoint institutional chief executives or set faculty personnel policies. State governance structures with planning boards have less authority over policymaking and give that task to state legislators.

Today, across the country many public institutions’ governing boards members are selected by “one of four paths”: (1) direct appointment by the governor; (2) ex-officio appointment; (3) governor’s appointment with approval from the state legislature; or seldom, by election of popular vote” (Pusser & Loss, 2002). In the State of Louisiana, the governing board is considered a statewide coordinating board (i.e. the Board of Regents), with oversight of four (4) individual university systems boards. The Board of Regents is responsible for policymaking and making recommendations to the university systems, but do not have authority over the management of the individual
management of the individual university systems is left to each individual system board. Historically, and still today, institutional boards’ mission is to preserve the needs and demands of the institutions and of community they serve (Lenington, 1996). Although “education is not considered a branch of government, most states have established higher education governing boards to provide separation between the government and operations of the schools, by providing them with constitutional autonomy” (Lingenfelter, 2003, p.8). One defining aspect of board of trustees/supervisors is that they are composed of individuals who serve voluntarily and serve a significant role in governing of universities they serve (Owens, 1995).

Individuals on university boards play a tremendous role in shaping the overall dynamics of the institutions they serve. Just as legislators, they often public university board members are influenced by external factors to vote the way they vote on university related policies and issues. This study focuses on the identification and explanation of factors that contribute to university system board members’ voting behavior.

2.3 Congressional and State Legislative Voting Behavior

As discussed in the introduction, this study is built from previous conducted research examining legislative voting behavior, paralleling it to identify factors serving to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members in the State of Louisiana as it relates to budget issues. No research literature or studies were found that expressed specifically factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members. Therefore, it is relevant to review the literature to discuss the major studies conducted on congressional and state
level legislative voting behavior, pertinent to this study. Previous researchers examining legislative voting behavior have conducted mainly utilizing quantitative research measures. Although many studies examining legislative voting behavior have utilized roll call vote analysis as a methodological approach to identify influences of legislative voting behavior; many researchers in the “early 1970’s began to focus their studies examining who, how and what influenced their voting behavior” (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010, p. 601).

Wirt, Morey and Brakeman (1970), conducted a research study examining influences of voting behavior and found that both party and personal affiliations such as: age, gender, socioeconomic background, seniority and committee membership serve to influence the voting behavior of legislators. Another study conducted by Fenno (1978), examining legislators voting behavior, found that in their particular districts, re-election to office, and their constituents served, had the greatest influence on their voting behavior. As a foundation for this study, the researcher will use the factors, along with techniques from previous research conducted by Kingdon’s (1997) study in 1969 on U.S. congressional legislative voting decisions as well as Kathy Canfield-Davis’ (1996) study of northwestern state legislators to examine the voting behavior of Louisiana’s university system board members. In Kingdon’s (1977) study, he suggested that one of best and most frequently used approaches to examine legislative voting behavior is through roll call vote analysis, issue by issue. He also suggested in his later studies that methodological approaches just relying on just roll call analysis, did not tell us why; therefore, he suggested using this approach along with standard questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. Kingdon (1981) believed that interviews helped to develop
a “type of life history” explaining legislators’ voting behavior, weighed considerations and factors influencing his or her decision to vote the way they voted on legislative issues (Kingdon, 1981, p. 13). In his studies, Kingdon (1981) found that the “channels of communication,” between fellow legislators, served to highly influence legislators voting. These channels of communication are framed as common interaction through means of communicating with fellow legislators through written sources, face–to–face conversations, committee reports, and through televised debates (Kingdon, 1981).

Additionally, the study found that fellow legislators are considered useful sources of information and guidance, particularly to new (freshman) legislators because: “1) they are readily available at the time of decision to vote and 2) they are able to furnish the kind of information, most useful, taking into account the political and policy implications associated with the legislative issue (Kingdon, 1981, p.109). This notion also appears very common on the state-level as well.

By accumulating these types of external influences, generalized patterns and interactions were determined regarding the factors serving to influence the voting decisions of the congressional legislators (Kingdon, 1981). Matthews and Stinson (1975), also conducted a study finding that verbal and non-verbal, intended and non-intended interactions (voting cues), serve to influence voting behavior of legislators. As a result of his studies, Kingdon (1997) identified seven (7) actor and/or factor variables serving to influence voting behavior of legislators to include: Constituency, Interest Groups, Legislative Colleagues, Party Leadership, Media and Research, Executive & State Offices and Legislative Staff (Kingdon, 1977 & 1981).
On the state level, Ray’s study (1982) employed the use of Kingdon’s study on the state level by examining three states’ House of Representatives to include: Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, & Massachusetts. In this study, he eliminated the legislative staff, because many of the legislators had no staff at the time (Ray, 1982). Ray (1982) also found a strong relationship between party affiliation and legislative voting and also indicated that legislators use certain voting cues from their party and other legislators of their party when making voting decisions.

Another study conducted utilizing Kingdon’s model on legislative voting behavior was done by Patterson (1983). He conducted a study in three (3) northeastern states, which comprised of different regional and cultural settings. As a result, his research identified that party leaders and the governors serve to influence the voting behavior of legislators on the state-level. Patterson also identified the following six factors serving to influence the legislative decision-making: (a) party and party leaders, (b) committees, (c) staff, (d) lobbyists, (e) the governor, and (f) a legislator’s constituents. Patterson’s (1983) study identified one actor not identified in Kingdon’s (1981) study, which was the governor, serving to shape the voting decisions of legislators. He also noted that state policy decisions in state legislature can be influenced by various outside cues and other informational sources (Patterson, 1983).

Marshall et al (1986), conducted a study asking individual members of the legislature from six different states (Arizona, California, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Illinois) to find out at what level various factors served to influence their legislative voting on state legislative policy issues. Their findings concluded that individual members of the legislature served as the most salient actor influencing their voting
behavior. Marshall et al (1986) also concluded that policymakers share understandings about what is proper and right legislation in their respective state policy environments.

Mazzoni, Sullivan, and Sullivan (1983) conducted another study on state legislators asking them to identify what factors influenced their voting decisions on education policy decisions in the state of Minnesota. Their findings indicated that, due to the contextual setting and moral obligation legislators felt towards students, they leaned towards mainly utilizing their personal feelings first, along with their constituency, recommendations from colleagues, staff, interest groups views, and recommendations of friends when making their voting decisions related to educational policy decisions. Songer et al (1986) conducted a study interviewing legislators from both the House and Senate of two (2) states: Kansas and Oklahoma, to identify what factors served to influence their voting behavior on legislative issues in their respective states. Surprisingly, their findings concluded that in House of Representatives, legislators expressed that their personal values, above that of their constituents, served to influence their voting decisions on a “severance tax oil and gas bill, a bill to permit multistate banking; a bill to impose penalties for drunk driver; and a cigarette tax increase” (p. 985). They also concluded that, due to the different political cultures in each state, different cue sources served as important in their voting behavior as well (Flagel, 1990).

In Flagel’s (1990) study on the Texas’s school finance reform decision, various individual and other external group factors such as: party affiliation, collective and individual self-interest (re-election), served to influence the voting behavior of
legislators’ vote on the Texas school finance reform bill. The findings indicated that running for re-election was a major factor influencing voting behavior.

Canfield-Davis (1996) conducted a study utilizing the (Wahlhe and Rulau, 1959) behavioral research model and discovered eighteen (18) factors serving to influence state legislators voting decision. Building upon that research, Canfield-Davis et al (2009) conducted a descriptive qualitative study examining factors influencing legislative decision-making. One hundred and five (105) surveys were sent to legislators in Northwestern states asking them to rank the relative effect each actor and/or factor had on their decision-making when voting on particular issues in the legislature (Canfield-Davis et al, 2009). Their findings indicated that “fiscal impact, trust, constituency ranked as the highest factors of influence, while the governor was ranked at tenth (10th) out of the eighteen (18) factors and the media and legislative staff members were considered the lowest factors of influence” (Canfield-Davis, et al, 2009, p. 55).

Although limited, literature related to the governor and legislative voting behavior influences indicates that the governor’s party affiliation along with his or her budgetary powers serves as influence to the voting behavior and state funding from state legislators (Tandberg, 2013). In the State of Louisiana, the governing board and university board members are all appointed by the governor, which makes party affiliations and the relationship between “gubernatorial powers and policy outcomes” (Tandberg, 2013, p. 512) an ongoing vital component regarding voting decisions. Previous research studies indicate that governor’s with greater control over the state’s budget “have the ability to impose his or her will (influence) on the policy-making and
budgetary processes (the greater the power, the greater their ability to impact the process)” (Tandberg, 2013). As a result, this allows governors to have strong leveraging power as it relates to the voting behavior of university board members voting behavior, of whom he appoints. In conclusion, many studies on legislative voting behavior have suggested several factors serving to influence their roll call behavior on a national and statewide level; but there is no comprehensive study or literature applying this framework to examine the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members. This study will attempt to add to the body of scholarly knowledge in just that area.

2.4 Factors

This study is built upon previous research conducted by Kingdon (1977, 1981) and Canfield-Davis’ et al (1996, 2009) studies identifying factors of influence on legislative voting behavior. Parallel to their studies, instead of investigating legislative voting behavior, this research is centered around the examination of public-state funded university system board members’ voting behavior on budget agenda items, specifically in the State of Louisiana. In order to do so, it is important to address each of the seven (11) significant factors identified and operationalized for purposes of this research.

2.5 Constituents (University & Non-University)

Kingdon (1981) defines constituents in his studies as the “only actors in a political system which legislators are ultimately held accountable too” (p. 29). For purposes of this research, constituents are defined as public state-funded institutions university administrators, faculty and staff members, students, and the public good. As legislators are held accountable to their constituents, so are public state-funded
university systems board members, according to Louisiana’s state constitution. Although, Louisiana’s university system board members are not elected officials, its state’s constitution clearly specifies that each university system has a “Board of Supervisors” created to supervise and manage the state colleges and universities within their system, with the goal to provide a learning environment and experience, at all stages of human development, that are humane, just, and designed to promote excellence in order that every individual within the state may be afforded a legal opportunity to develop to his and/or her full potential under this Article” (Article VIII, Education). Kingdon (1981) found during his interviews with the U.S. Congress that constituents were mentioned eighty-seven percent (87%) of the time as a major determining factors serving to influence the voting behavior of congressional legislators. He also found that once a legislator became an incumbent with tenure, constituency influence on legislative voting behavior lessened (Kingdon, 1981).

Songer, et al (1986) found that constituency for state legislators was the second most consistent influence as it related to legislative voting behavior. Canfield-Davis & Jain’s (2010) study examining factors of influence shaping legislative decision-making, looked at the perceived notions of lawmakers and observers of the legislative process and found that participants in this study believed that “constituents heavily influenced legislators voting behavior” (p. 65). For purposes of this research, constituents are defined as (i.e. university administrators, faculty, staff, students and the public good). The data obtained in this study seeks to identify if these actors (constituents) within public institutional settings serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded institutions.
2.6 Fiscal Impact (To the University)

Canfield-Davis et al. (2010) conducted a descriptive study identifying eighteen (18) factors of influence ranking them relative to the level of influence each of them played in the decision-making to vote on legislation in Northwestern states (p. 55). Their findings indicated that, out of the one hundred and five (105) surveys sent to legislators, fiscal impact was the most influential factor legislators used to make their voting decisions. For purposes of this research, “fiscal impact refers to the amount of money required to implement proposed budget items and the monetary impact it has on university system board members constituents” (Canfield-Davis, 2010 et al, p. 60). Fiscal Impact is a very important factor as it relates to public state-funded institutions, due to the decrease in federal and state funding. McClendon (2003) stated that, “higher education has lost autonomy to governors’ and other executive branch agencies over the course of the 21st century due to the relationship governors usually have with board members, who they appoint and because of the impact most governors have over the state budgeting for higher education, which lends them strong influence as it relates to fiscal impact” (p.514).

2.7 Legislative Colleagues (University Board Member Colleagues)

For purpose of this study, legislative colleagues are defined as public state-funded university system board member colleagues. In Kingdon’s (1981) study, he found that legislative colleagues serve to influence each other as it relates to voting behavior. Given the time constraints that most legislators often experience, fellow legislators serve as an excellent resource to other legislators, especially newly elected officials (Kingdon, 1981). Kingdon (1981) notes the following reasons why fellow
legislative colleagues serve to influence each other to include: “1) because they are considered as professional politicians, and give advice to fellow legislators appropriately tailored for the legislator’s political needs through their knowledge of facts, judgment, and trustworthiness; 2) because fellow colleagues are readily available at the time the voting takes place and; 3) because fellow colleagues consider themselves of equal status, so they feel comfortable about discussing legislation with each other” (p.73). Kingdon’s (1981) study also noted that “congressional legislators from large delegations consult more with their colleagues, than those from smaller delegations, and that Southern democrats consult more heavily within their geographical region than others do” (Kingdon, 1981, p. 105).

Matthews and Stimson (1975) found in their study that legislators usually vote on issues they are not always thoroughly educated about. Implementation theorist, Sabatier (1999) found in his study, that patterns of information flow, whereas, information generally flows from external sources to individual experienced legislators, who in turn, pass the information along to their inexperienced colleagues. In Canfield-Davis and Jain’s (2009) study, they found that state legislative colleagues “periodically swayed each other’s voting decisions on issues” (p.613). One participant in their study stated that “a lot of the voting behavior is so informal… it’s almost like the wink and nod system (p. 613). Kingdon (1981) notes that studies conducted, regarding legislative voting behavior, often assume that legislators are rational in their decision-making on issues, but, given the time constraints, that may not be the case, therefore they heavily rely on their legislative colleagues for advice on voting decisions. This research will
expand the literature in this area by examining the voting behavior of university system board members at their respective campuses.

2.8 The Governor & Legislature

In the field of education, most members of the governing boards across the country are named or nominated by their state’s governor. Now, more than ever, “governors have become more powerful in the policy arena and have played a significant role on the way education should go by addressing state economic concerns” (Mokher & McLendon, 2009, p.476). Additionally, with the budgetary powers given to governors through their state constitutions, they have begun to play a “more important role in the steering of educational policy within their states” (Gittell & McKenna, 1999, p. 476). The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2013), suggests that “Governors and legislators should make board selection a priority, and not let partisan or ideological considerations outweigh merit criteria when nominating members, who create the most important policy for maintaining and enhancing vigorous state systems of higher education” (p. 3). McDonnell (2009) and Canfield-Davis et al (2010) studies found that the role of the governor has become significant in directing state educational policy as well.

In Ray’s (1982) study, he found during the time of their study that the current governors were from the majority party; therefore, the governor’s office had minimal impact on the voting behavior of state legislators. However, Canfield-Davis’ et al (2010) study found that the governor “appeared to be a significant factor of influence over re-election, if the governor had power and/or influence in shaping the politically future of that particular legislator” (p.63). In the past decade, governors have become
even more powerful in the education arena by increasing coalitions with the business community and important constituent groups (Gittell & McKenna, 1999). Although studies have been conducted related to external relationships of the governor and university boards, they have been limited (Tandberg, 2010).

2.9 Leadership & Ranking Committee Members

For purposes of this research, ranking committee members are those individuals who occupy formal positions on standing committees (Kingdon, 1981). They are defined in this study as board chairpersons and ranking committee chairpersons. Party leaders and committee members in the legislature are usually elected by their peers; such as board chairs and ranking committee chairs for public university system boards. Kingdon’s (1981) study found that fellow legislators who elect committee chairpersons and ranking committee members “hold a special place of personal esteem with his or her fellow colleagues; and might have a pivotal position, which would likely be a source of influence on their colleagues. In Kingdon’s (1981) study, he found that most congressional legislators tended to vote that with their ranking members (p. 111).

2.10 Re-election (Re-appointment to the Board)

For purposes of this research, re-election was defined as re-appointment to the university board of supervisors. In Kingdon’s (1981) study, he found that the desire of legislators to become re-elected had little to no influence on the voting behavior of legislators. This fact that voter participation and knowledge of issues and of the legislators voting record is so limited that they do not consider their re-election when making voting decisions, especially incumbents. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2013), suggests in the reappointment of public university
board members, that “governors and legislators should develop statements of qualifications to use in the confirmation process and the public should understand these qualifications in advance and review the performance and qualification of the board members nominated for reappointment to ensure fair and bi-partisan process. This in turn, decreases the power and leverage of the governor and others as it relates to the voting behavior of university board members, especially on budget agenda items. As mentioned, Fenno (1978) found that legislators in their particular districts recognized that re-election to office, along with their constituents, served to influence the voting behavior of legislators.

2.11 System President

For purposes of this research, the system presidents are defined as Louisiana’s public state-funded system presidents at their respective campuses. Although presidents are recognized as the key representative of the colleges and universities they represent; overtime the role and responsibilities of university presidents have changed (Pusser & Loss, 2002). Currently, many presidents across the country have expressed “feelings of pressure from their governors to conduct their presidencies in ways that differ from their judgment about what’s in the best interest of the institutions they serve.” (Jaschik, S. 2014, p.1). Therefore, now more than ever they have become more vocal integrate player in higher educational policymaking and communicating with higher educational leaders and stakeholders the strategic plans and visions for the institutions they represent.
2.12 Media and Research

In today’s age of technology, legislators have access to a plethora of informational sources informing them on the issues they must vote on. Kingdon (1981) noted there is a limited amount of literature indicating how the media and research influence voting behavior of legislators. Another study conducted by Canfield-Davis et al. (2010), found that the media, “including television, radio and newspaper were ranked as the lowest factors shaping the voting behavior of state legislators (p. 63). Recently, Clinton and Enamorado (2013) conducted a study examining if the national news (Fox News) served to influence the voting behavior of legislators. Their findings indicated that “partisan press can create incentives for political leaders to change the positions they take; in other words, the mere presence of Fox News in certain districts shifted legislators’ voting behavior to become more conservative; which points to phenomenon that may continue to shape the voting behavior of legislators” (Archer, 2013, p. 2).

2.13 Perpetual Flow of Information among University Board Members Model

Given the state of emergency in higher education, in the State of Louisiana, particularly in the area of funding, it is significantly important that all stakeholders understand the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members related to budget agenda items. For purposes of this study, this model serves to provide a framework showing the perpetual flow of information across, within and between the factors influencing public state funded college and university system board members in the State of Louisiana as it relates to their voting behavior on budget agenda items. The model for this dissertation utilized key factors drawn from studies conducted by John Kingdon (1977) and Kathy Canfield-Davis & Jain’s (1996 & 2009) on legislative
voting behavior. Therefore, this model serves as an anchor for this study and will be referred back to when data is being interpreted within the study (Baxter and Jack, 2008). This model will continue to develop and be completed as the study progresses and the relationships between the proposed constructs will emerge as the data is analyzed” (Baxter and Jack, 2008, p.553).

This study is written from a constructivist viewpoint to understand and describe the individual perspectives, beliefs, and experiences of public, state-funded university system board members pertaining to their voting behavior on budget agenda items at their respective monthly board meetings. Therefore, the design used for this study is based on qualitative analysis with the use of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Because this is an exploratory study attempting to explain and understand the voting behavior of public, state-funded university system board members, this allowed me to discover the real life experiences which university system board members engage in prior to deciding to vote on budget agenda items at their board meetings. As a result, this research will provide a “holistic picture through analyzing words, reports, detailed views of informants, and conducted the study in natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15), to determine if there were unique themes or items that emerged within the context. Using this model (framework) also helped me to explain the social institutions (college and university experiences) and social change as a result of their individual actions (board members voting behavior) (Elster, 1989).

Although many studies on legislative voting behavior have suggested several factors serving to influence the voting behavior of legislators on a national and statewide level; no study has attempted to understand the factors serving to influence
the voting behavior of public, state-funded university board members. Providing a model aided me to collect, analyze, compare, refine and categorize the interactions among board members with the identified concepts from the data to gain insight and understand factors of influence on the voting behavior of university system board members in the state of Louisiana. Additionally, this model can assisted the researcher in determining which factors within this study sometimes overlaps at some point or another. The factors include: University constituents (referred to as: administrators, faculty, staff, students and the parents), Legislative Colleagues (i.e. university board member colleagues), Leadership and Ranking Committee members (referred to as: Board & committee member chairpersons), Fiscal Impact (i.e. fiscal impact on the university), the Governor, Re-appointment to the board, and Media and Research (i.e. personal reading through the internet, books, newsletters, etc...). See Figure 2.
Figure 2. Perpetual Flow of Information among Louisiana’s University Board Members
2.14 Summary

Much of the “literature in the area of education is fragmented” (Altbach, Gumport & Berdahl, 2011, p. 96). In this chapter, the review of literature presented, provides an explanation on the role governing boards play in the shaping of educational policy and the relevance to understand the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members in the State of Louisiana. In light of the fact that no other studies have been conducted examining the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members, this study was built from previously conducted research examining the factors serving to influence congressional and state legislative voting behavior. Furthermore, according to the literature, there is a limited amount of research in this area, thereby indicating the relevance for this study. In addition, the literature review provides a conceptual model for this study, along literature related to each of the identified actors and factors utilized within this research. By applying a political science lens, along with the use of the constant comparative method of analysis discussed in Chapter 3, this review of literature covers all the pertinent literature for this study.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I clearly present the methodology and procedures utilized to conduct this study. The chapter includes: 1) a restatement of the research questions; 2) rationale for choosing a qualitative approach; 3) the state, university and participant selections; 4) the interview protocol, data analysis and procedures that were used to analyze the data for this dissertation.

3.2 Rationale for Choosing a Qualitative Research Method

I chose to situate this study in the tradition of qualitative research with constant comparison of data (Creswell, 1994). Creswell (2009) points out that “qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups to explore a social or human problem” (p.4). Specifically, in this study I used multi-sites and multi participants for this exploratory case study. The rationale for using this method was because it allowed me to conduct in-depth personal interviews, along with surveys with public state-funded university board members regarding what factors influence their voting behavior on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items at their respective board meetings. I felt this approach was appropriate for this study because many features of this method fit well with the philosophy and nature of my study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). By utilizing a qualitative approach, the thoughts of the individuals (board members) involved in this study were allowed to relate their stories and experiences more accurately than an observer (Merriam, 1988).
Given that the research questions and survey focused on identifying and understanding the factors of influence on the voting behavior of university board members; a qualitative approach allowed a rich, deep understanding of the different perspectives to emerge from the data. Since this research’s aim was to learn and gain a deeper understanding about the actions of the participants within the study (Robottom and Hart, 1993), a case study approach appeared to be very suitable for this study. Baxter and Jack (2008) note that “qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts” (p. 544). Additionally, I sought to use this method because it ensured a comprehensive understanding of the participants within the study. One other advantage to this approach is that it allowed me to have close collaboration with the participants, who were able to describe their own views of reality (the story) (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). This study is bounded by: a) time and place (Creswell, 2003); b) time and activity (Stake, 1995); and c) definition and context (Miles and Huberman, 1994), to ensure that the study remains reasonable in scope (Baxter and Jack, 2008).

The use of multiple sources of data allowed me to: a) discover the real life experiences university board members engage in prior to and when deciding how to vote on budget agenda items at their board meetings, of which little is known; b) create opportunities to analyze and clarify the university board members responses and interpretations of the data; c) develop new or rethink current policies and practices to address disparities that exist between public university boards and other university stakeholders to promote effective stewardship; and d) through effectiveness advance the quality of education and ensure student success at the institutions they serve. This
case study is unique in that it is built from previous research related to legislative voting behavior to examine public, state-funded university system board members’ voting behavior in the State of Louisiana. This process involved both inductive and deductive coding. The codes used for this study resulted from the literature on legislative voting behavior and included items such as constituency, fiscal impact, leadership and so on. Although numerous researchers have used a variety of techniques, models, methodological approaches and theories in an attempt to explain and understand phenomenon related to legislative voting behavior, which is a very complex task; none have attempted to examine the individual (micro) voting behavior of public, state-funded institution university board members. This study attempts to do just that. For purposes of this research, the survey and interview questions were drawn from Kathy Canfield-Davis’ & Jain’s (2009) study on state legislative voting behavior to answer the following research questions:

3.3 Restatement of Research Questions

1. What factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members to identify the most salient? And;

2. Are the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study?

3.4 Research Design & Data Collection

This study used a case study design (Creswell, 1994), with the constant comparative analysis. By utilizing the constant comparative method, the researcher will be able to “clarify the meaning of each category, sharpen the distinctions between the
categories and decide the core categories within this study” (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1997, p. 567). This method will also allow the researcher to obtain a rich, deep, meaningful understanding of the phenomenon, viewing it without a pre-existing hypothesis, from an emic (insider approach) view, rather than an etic (outsider approach) perspective (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My choice to conduct a survey, along with in-depth interviews through the case study design allowed me to answer the central research questions for this study. It also allowed the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding the individual perspectives regarding the factors of influence on the voting behavior of university board members, to which nothing is known about this phenomenon.

3.5 State Selection

The study selected only one state, the State of Louisiana to conduct this study. This purposefully selected site was chosen because of its rich, historical, political, socio-economic background related to higher education. One of its distinctive features is its unique governance structure in higher education compared to other states. First, its coordinating governance organizational structure includes: one flagship university system (Louisiana State University); the one and only Historically Black College and University (HBCU) System in the county, (Southern University A & M College System); one other university system comprised of nine (9) universities (University of Louisiana System), which is considered to be a superboard within the coordinating governing system; and one community college system comprised of fourteen (14) community and technical colleges (Louisiana Community and Technical Colleges System), all under the umbrella of the Board of Regents(coordinating governing board
for all the systems). One other unique characteristic is that all of these board members are appointed by the state’s Governor, but must be confirmed by the senate.

One other purpose for intentionally selecting the state of Louisiana for this case study is because Louisiana’s higher educational system has undergone enormous budget cuts since 2008 of more than $700,000 (Deslatte, 2014); and is ranked 2nd in the nation for decreasing its state funding in higher education per capita, per student, by (41.3%), and tuition costs have increased by 38%, from 2008 to 2013 (Oliff, et al, 2013). Another rationale for this state selection is because within the last few years, there have been ongoing debates about the massive firing of presidents and chancellors within the last few years and many educational leaders and stakeholders believe the governor has too much control over higher education in the state of Louisiana (Stripling, 2013). Lastly, due to the ambiguities in the Louisiana’s state constitution allowing the governor with budget authority over education and health care, public state-funded colleges and university board members face a plethora of complex issues within a complex political environment. This coupled with the creation of the new educational policy for higher education, Louisiana Granting Resources and Autonomy for Diplomas (LAgRad Act), linking institutional funding with institutional performance, and the Work Force and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) initiative creates a unique case study scenario to investigate factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members’ voting behavior. After all, their voting behavior on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel agenda items and other issues will be important to the sustainability of the institutions they serve.
3.6 Setting and Non-Participant Observations

The researcher participated in observing university system board meetings in Louisiana at the respective colleges and universities six months prior to this study as an outsider, and used these observations as a source of the data collection. During this observation time, I was “better able to understand and capture the context within which the people (i.e. university system board members) interacted” (Patton, 2002, p. 262). Additionally, during this time I was not an active part of the setting (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). The purpose for this was to capture a better understanding of the setting, activities and persons participating in those activities from the viewpoint (Patton, 2002). Additionally, due to my extensive experience in higher education, I was able to understand the observations.

3.7 Participants

The purpose and intent of this study required purposeful sampling for the selection of Louisiana university system board members from public state-funded colleges and universities. Purposeful sampling is defined as the choosing of particular subjects because they help support the generalized findings from the individual interviews (Bogdan, et.al 2011). These purposefully selected individuals helped me to understand the problems and answer the central research questions (Creswell, 2009), pertaining to my study. The participants also aided to generate an information-rich case study which allowed me the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding and insight on the voting behavior of public, state-funded university system board members in the state of Louisiana.
The criteria for selection of the participants for this study were chosen based on the fact that they are currently serving as university system board members at public state-funded colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana. Additionally because of their knowledge and experiences related to the purpose and mission of public, state-funded colleges and universities they serve; and the importance of their voting behavior on budget issues at the respective institutions they serve. Lastly, because of the influence university board members vote has on educational policy at the institutional level.

Due to the nature of this qualitative case study that heavily depended on the individual experiences and participation of university system board members; I contacted all of the participants prior to beginning this study to determine their willingness to participate. Out of the four (4) university system boards in the State of Louisiana, only two (2) system boards agreed to participate in this study. Other board members were unable to participate due to constraints on their time with both official board of supervisor responsibilities, as well as their own professional obligations. Of the thirty-two (32) participants who agreed to participate. Twenty-eight (28) out of the (32) completed the survey, and sixteen (16) participated in individual interviews. Out of the 16 participants, fifteen (15) out of the twenty-eight (28) were democrat and the other nine (9) were republican. Their length of service varied, to indicate that nine (9) members had between 10-18 years of service, and had been reappointed by different governors, and the rest had served between 1 and 4 years.
3.8 Interview Protocol

Once I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I began mailing out an introductory package including a cover letter requesting a personal interview, along with the survey and two self-addressed, stamped envelopes. One of the self-addressed envelopes was for the completed survey and the other for board members who expressed that they would participate in a personal interview. The letter also requested their contact information to schedule the interview. The introductory cover letter fully explained the purpose of the study to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, and what would be done with the data collected once collected. The participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

For purposes of this study, the survey and interview questions were drawn from previous research conducted focusing on the three major domains factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members. Additionally, due my experiences in higher education and my clear understanding of the time constraints, the instrument used was designed to be as flexible and time sensitive as possible. As in Kingdon’s (1981) study, the questions were kept short. In order to develop the interview questions, the researcher focused on the recommendations of Kingdon (1977), which was to develop a sort of life story on what the researcher most wanted to know or find out.

I utilized several sources to collect data; therefore, the survey along with personal interviews was used for the data collection for this study. In order to ensure that all information remained confidential, the surveys were unmarked and did not
include names or any other identifying information. The surveys were retuned unmarked and input into SPSS 13 statistical software package for analysis. A descriptive statistic was run to summarize, organize and simplify the data (Gravetter, & Wallnau, 1996). See Tables 1, 2 & 3.

Kolb (2012) suggests that “the process of interviewing during qualitative research, allows the researcher the opportunity to gain perspectives of the individuals participating in the study” (p. 84). Before I started the interviews, I answered any questions the participants had regarding the purpose of the research and asked permission to tape record each interview on an audio recorder. The format for the personal interviews was semi-structured that allowed some deviation from the interview guide (Boag & Gall, 2003). The semi-structured interview questions and survey were drawn and framed from a predetermined list of questions to create a basic structure (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2009), for purposes of this study. In that the personal interviews were unstructured, open-ended questions remain flexible. To provide consistency, I asked the same questions in each interview in the same order with all the participants. Board members answered twenty-eight (28) open-ended questions which gave the participants the freedom to speak to the issues from their perspectives. After the interviews, I thanked them for agreeing to participate in the study.

As the surveys and interviews were completed, I begin to continuously transcribe and compare the information found in previous interviews and surveys. This process helped me in not having the cumbersome task of typing all the in-depth interviews at the end of the data collection process. The information produced during the interviews was also checked as follows: 1) through identifying evidence from
public documents and committee minutes; 2) by linking interview questions and data collected to selected quotations from interview comments made by university system board members interviewed; 3) by repeating the data collected to the university system board members being interviewed as a way of confirming intent and interpretation in conjunction the answers from the survey; and 4) by engaging in a process of researcher self-reflection to determine whether researcher bias influenced the data (Borg et al., 1993).

3.9 Constant Comparative Data Analysis

To analyze, categorize, code and label the data, I used the constant comparative method of data analysis, which is an approach to constantly compare data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The use of the constant comparative method of analysis allowed me to find common themes from different sources (Creswell, 1998). I performed my data analysis through observations, listening, reading and re-reading the to the interview data, taking notes, and examining the survey data. I outsourced some of the transcriptions of each of the audio file from interviews with the board members to an online transcription service. The other interviews from board members that opted not to be audio taped were transcribed by hand and then transcribed. Once all the data was collected, I proceeded to perform the “analysis by hand: approach to review the data. I placed the questions asking at least on overarching question represented in the survey in the each of the three domain categories. I read and re-read each of the transcripts and then wrote a summary of the interviews, and assigned each board member a number for each question with their responses (Example: For Question #1. I placed all the responses from board members 1, 2, 3, - 16 respectively, for each board member).
then cumulated all of the responses to make general sense of all the data collected from the interviews. This summary allowed me to determine if the data was sufficient and supported my research questions. Additionally, at this point data saturation occurred. Data saturation is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967), “when the researcher no longer receives information pertinent to the research.

Afterwards, I returned to the surveys and transcripts and coding the data. The survey data help to support my interview questions tremendously. Using different color highlighters I then: a) highlighted the most frequent occurrence of the factors of influence indicting the need to place it in one of the three major domain categories; b) highlighted any comments appearing to be realistic and credible by the participants; c) highlight any other issues that stand out because of their uniqueness; and d) highlight any other pertinent items to the study” (Canfield-Davis and Jain, 2010, p. 607). At this point, I then segmented, labeled and collapsed the data into each of the three major domains, to begin to look for the emergence of patterns and the series of themes (key factors) that emerged from the data. I then continuously examined and compared the data to identify the most salient themes. I then continued to constantly compare the data to identify that remained constant across all domains and to identify the least and most salient factors of influence under each of the three major domains. These factors represented the major findings from the observations, interviews and survey data to answer the central research questions for this study. The last step of the data analysis involved the creation of a list of the least and most salient factors of influence under the three major domain areas of budget & finance factors; academic & student affairs factors; and personnel factors.
I used a peer reviewer from a major university’s graduate school to assist with this process. Reasonable construction of data is defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as judgments made by the peer reviewer. Establishing trustworthiness and confirming internal and external validity is considered the researchers responsibility within his or her research (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In order to establish trustworthiness, credibility and dependability to this study, I used a peer reviewer and member checking (Creswell, 1998). Member checkers were also used to establish validity and reliability and to ensure dependability and transferability to this study as well. This process allowed me the opportunity to share the findings and interpretations of the data obtained from the various sources with some of the participants to determine that the results are credible (Creswell, 2007). Additionally, the researcher will provide a rich, thick description recounting the social, political and economic background, the setting, participants and other details of the study (Creswell, 1998). By using this process, transferability can take place which will allow other researchers to apply this study to similar situations or individuals (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Although lengthy and sometimes cumbersome, selecting to use the constant comparative method of data collection and analysis simultaneously throughout the study (Strauss and Corbin, 1990), enabled me to accomplish what would have been an overbearing task. See Table 3.
Table 3. Procedure for Data Analysis for Research Question 1 & 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 1</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Sources/Materials</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1. What factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members to identify the most salient? And;</td>
<td>Open-ended survey questions</td>
<td>Observations, University Board Member Survey, Board Minutes</td>
<td>Constant Comparative Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closed-ended survey questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistical Analysis – Basic Descriptive, Frequency analysis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question 2</th>
<th>Data Collection Method</th>
<th>Data Sources/Materials</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q2. Are the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study?</td>
<td>Open-ended survey questions</td>
<td>Observations, University Board Member Survey, Board Minutes</td>
<td>Constant Comparative Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closed-ended survey questions</td>
<td></td>
<td>Statistical Analysis – Basic Descriptive Frequency analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews</td>
<td>Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>Constant Comparative Method</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.10 Summary

In conclusion, gaining insight regarding the factors serving to influence the voting behavior of Louisiana’s public, state-funded university system board members’ voting behavior is relevant to Louisiana’s public higher education’s institutional outcomes. This study aims to make a significant contribution to the body of scholarly literature by providing insight and a deep understanding about Louisiana’s governance
structure, how their public boards function, the complex political and economic challenges board members encounter when making voting decisions; and what factors influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members. Additionally, this study seeks to illustrate how university board members voting behavior shapes institutional policy. Through direct observations, surveys, and individual interviews the most and least salient factors of influence on the voting behavior of board members will be identified. In summation, this study intends to serve as a starting point for further investigations regarding the dynamics and importance of how the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members impacts the sustainability of institutions they serve. In addition, to provide a deeper understanding from the individual university system board member’s perspective in their actual words to hopefully improve the quality of their board performance and public higher education.
CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This study examined factors of influence on the voting behavior of university system board members serving public state-funded institutions in the state of Louisiana. The purpose of this study was to answer two central questions:

1. What factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members to identify the most salient? and;

2. Are the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study?

This chapter provides findings that emerged from the study to answer the above mentioned questions. Several sources of data were used to generate the findings for this study, to include non-participant and direct observations, surveys, and one- in-depth individual interviews. Twenty-eight (28) of Louisiana’s university system board members participated in the survey. Of the 28 board members, 16 also participated in one in-depth individual, semi-structured interview. The interviews lasted between 60 - 65 minutes. The survey and interview protocols provided me with demographic information about the university board members; and were designed to elicit as much supporting evidence as possible about the factors of influence on the voting behavior of Louisiana’s university board members in the three major domain areas identified within this study. Collected data from the surveys were organized in SPSS 12 statistical software for analysis. A basic descriptive frequency analysis was run to obtain the 11 factors of influence percentages ranging from high, some to low influence on the voting
behavior of university system board members of public college and universities in the
three major domains identified in this study. Descriptive statistics was used to organize,
summarize and simplify the data (Gravetter, & Wallnau, 1996). The survey data
provided a significant amount of information and complemented the personal
interviews for this study; to help better identify and understand factors of influence on
the voting behavior of the university system board members in the state of Louisiana, in
the three major domains identified in this research. Additionally, this chapter provides
an analysis of the results that emerged from the survey; along with a description of the
findings from individual in-depth interviews conducted in spring and summer (2014) to
answer the guiding research questions. The semi-structured questions for university
board members were designed for purposes of this study.

To keep with the overall purpose of this case study which was to identify the
most salient factors of influence on the voting behavior of the university system board
members in the state of Louisiana; I combined a list of the eleven (11) factors of
influence drawn from previous research studies examining the voting behavior of
legislators by John Kingdon (1977) and Canfield-Davis & Jain (2009). I then broke
them down and organized the eleven (11) factors into the three major domains of
budget & finance, academic & student affairs, and personnel issues to answer the
central research questions.

Further, I draw back to the literature on legislative voting behavior to examine if
there are any similarities or differences on the voting behavior of public state-funded
university system board members and public state legislators in the State of Louisiana.
By applying a political science lens to educational policymaking will provide insight to
see if indeed in the real world legislators and university governing board members look to the same or different factors of influence when making voting decisions.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Louisiana’s University Board Members

I conducted and analyzed twenty-eight (28) surveys and sixteen (16) personal interviews with university system board members. The board members were selected through purposeful sampling, explained in Chapter 3, and were all asked the same set of questions from the interview protocol (See Appendix B). This list enabled me to evaluate the factors appearing to be common across the three major domains identified for this study. After organizing these responses according to the data analysis procedures described in Chapter 3, patterns emerged under each of the three major domains. Arranging the data this way helped me to reach my final goal of analysis, which was to identify factors of influence that have the greatest influence on university board members voting behavior at public institutions in the state of Louisiana in the area of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues. In addition, which factors remained constant across the three major domains and that appeared to bear little to no influence were identified as well.

To better understand the institutional and cultural environments in which each of the board members served, I participated in non-participant and direct observations, by attending board meetings and in individual interviews asked the following demographic questions to identify their party affiliation, gender and length of service, management and board experience and what governor appointed them to the board. The overall responses revealed that fifteen (15) out of the twenty-eight (28) surveyed were democrat and the other nine (9) were republican; and that the majority of the
board members served as board members between 10-18 years. The other newly appointed board member served between one (1) and four (4) years. Generally all of the university board members were appointed by one governor, with the exception of four (4) who were initially appointed by former governor, and then reappointed by the current governor. Responses to this question, gave me a general picture about the composition of the boards of public colleges and universities in State of Louisiana.

In addition, relative to this question data revealed that the majority of the board members were males, with the exception of one (1) female. These findings offered a good snap shot picture about the culture of the boards and what public college and university boards currently look like in the state of Louisiana. Though these boards should “represent the state’s population by race and gender to ensure diversity” (Louisiana State Constitution, ARTICLE VIII. Education), they do not. Recently, Louisiana legislators passed a new law (House Bill 588) to ensure equity and impartiality in the appointment of board members, in hopes to improve board performance.

Board members were also asked what management experience or educational background did they have prior to their appointment on the board. The survey results and individual interviews revealed that the majority of the board members had some type of experience serving on non-for profit or corporate boards, with the exception of two (4) members that had no board experience at all. However, many of them had similar management, business or legal experience. Four of them were very both successful entrepreneurs that brought a wealth of experiences to the boards in the area of budget and finance, strategic planning and the handling personnel issues to the
boards. The results also revealed that one board member served in major university managerial positions, such as President, Vice-Chancellor and tenure professorships. Some of the other board members had experience in two or more careers that covered two or more areas of knowledge and expertise, which brought value and experience to the boards in one or more areas. For example, one lawyer and businessman had a degree in finance and involvement with legal affairs which brought value in the areas of law and finance to the board; where he currently serves on the finance and legal committees. Simply, overall, it does appear that university board appointees in the state of Louisiana have diverse backgrounds. Other responses to this question revealed information about the experience of board members prior to becoming selected and appointed to the board. This information was very relevant and supported answering the guiding research questions by providing data about board members knowledge base in the three major domain areas of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues. Although all the board members answered this question, many of them were not as forthcoming when discussing their limited board experience; which indicates that this may be a good question to ask potential board members before they are appointed.

Another question asked to board member was which governor appointed them to the board members they served. The responses revealed that all of Louisiana’s university board members, serving public state-funded colleges and universities where appointed by the current governor, with the exception of five (5), who were initially appointed by another governor in a former term and then re-appointed by current Governor Jindal to the board.
The results and responses of this finding clearly align with the public’s perception and the about university governing boards in the state of Louisiana; and with the responses of board members from the individual interviews. From individual interviews with board members, several revealed that the public’s opinion of university boards is mixed up and negative because they don’t understand the operational complexities within higher education to run effective, efficient institutions. One board member stated that “I think the public’s perception of public university boards is negative, because the public thinks board appointments are very political from what they have seen in the media – and see the Governor having a lot of influence on the voting decisions board member make.”

In addition to these comments, in a 2013 newspaper article a joint examination of campaign finance records conducted by The Times-Picayune and WVUE Fox 8 News revealed that the public’s opinion on the appointment of board members was that “they agreed with the governor's agenda - and they have contributed, often generously, to his campaign fund” (Torres, M. & Zurik, L., 2013). The article shared the following information about Louisiana’s appointed board member contributions to reveal the following:

Table 4. Louisiana Board Member Contributions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board or commission</th>
<th>Members who contributed to Jindal</th>
<th>Total contributions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LSU Board of Supervisors</td>
<td>12 of 16</td>
<td>$288,714</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Regents</td>
<td>15 of 16</td>
<td>$286,487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Louisiana System</td>
<td>10 of 14</td>
<td>$189,711</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Torres, M. & Zurik, L., 2013, p. 1

It would be incorrect for any researcher to assume that one can attribute certain characteristics to a group of individuals simply because of their political contributions.
However, according to the data collected indicates that the majority of the current board appointees by the current governor, “contributed, often generously, to his campaign fund” (Torres, M. & Zurik, L., 2013); which might have bearing on public state-funded university board members voting behavior.

Overall, this information has provided a general idea and contextual information regarding the university board members backgrounds and experiences. From these demographic questions, three conclusions were drawn related to answer the central research questions for this study. First, the board members background information and political affiliations, secondly, the foundation for them being appointed and who appointed them, and third, their length of service, experience, expertise and perceptions on their rationale for being there.

The following section examines the factors of influence on the voting behavior of public institutions board members in the three major domains areas of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues in the following sections. In this section I will also parallel the literature on legislative voting behavior to the voting behavior of university board members to provide an overview of the similarities and differences of what factors (cues) they follow when making voting decisions. For purposes of this study, I wanted the experiences narrated to the reader in the voices of the participants. I will use the individuals own words to describe their experiences related to the voting behavior of the board members in the three major domain areas.

4.3 Budget & Finance Factors

In the area of budget and finance, board member surveys and interview results revealed that 82% of the board members, overwhelming felt that the fiscal impact on
the university had great influence on how they voted on fiscal matters. One of the board members expressed during an interview that:

Today, fiscal impact to the universities we serve plays a major role in my voting behavior, because the margin for error is so small - 10 years ago when I was making fiscal decisions, I was much more lenient in my voting behavior. Although universities are still considered non-for-profit organizations, we have to operate like a for-profit business. Currently, on a scale from 1-10 we are at an 8.5 in the state of Louisiana in terms of being in fiscal crisis.

Another board member commented that:

I know when I am making my mind up on how to vote on anything - how it will impact the university fiscally is the first question I ask. I think our job as system board members is to be able to lay out the fiscal issues and to educate each other enough so that we understand the complexities and trade-offs that we have to make in order to move the system forward. I also think that financial impact both to the institutions and to the students is something that’s constantly at the forefront of our decision making.

Many board members expressed that due to the drastic declined in funding they are left with many complex issues they must vote on to keep the colleges and universities they serve afloat while still remaining competitive. Several other board members also indicated in interviews a strong desire engage with other board members from their peer institutions to discuss their fiscal problems to possibility come up with solutions for the public colleges and universities they serve. The consensus of board members was that although, each of institutions they serve are unique in their own way; collectively thorough conversations, they might be able to offer advice to each other to improve overall board effectiveness.

Other opinions of the university board members related to their voting behavior on budget & finance agenda items revealed that the system president and university constituents have high influence on board members’ voting behaviors, 54% and 39%, respectively. It was evident that many of the board members seriously take into account
what the system presidents have to say about budget and finance agenda items. Many of them indicated the importance of being supportive of the university presidents. They felt if the president was successful in carrying out the vision and mission of the colleges and universities they serve, all educational stakeholders would be successful. Several board members offered comments during the interviews that further illustrate how the system president and university constituents influence voting behaviors around fiscal matters. For example, one board member stated, “If a fiscal issue is on the agenda, I go to the university system president because his is responsible for the system. The system president also heavily influences my voting behavior on budget & finance agenda items because they spend a lot of time with legislators and people in the executive branch, who have first-hand knowledge and understand about our institutions fiscal status.” Other board members shared similar sentiments saying that: “Fiscal impact is important to any business – and although the university is a place for higher learning, it is run as a business. You have to keep track of expenses and make sure it is under control – so I usually go to the university president when making budget or fiscal policy decisions.”

While these experiences were common among all the board members, the discussions about the financial burdens at each institutions story appeared to be different at each college and university. Interviews of board members revealed that due to the size, mission, amount of state funding, athletics, alumni and fundraising proceeds and research dollars each institution received to counteract the drastic budget cuts, influenced their fiscal decision-making and voting behavior. Therefore, some of their voting experiences, thoughts and voices about their system president and university constituents were quite different. While some of the board member’s revealed that they
felt the universities they served were moving forward direction to meet the needs of the 21st century; other board members felt they were trapped in financial and political mess without a clear vision of where their institutions would end up in the future.

Not all board members considered the system president and university constituents in their decisions around fiscal matters. One board member expressed, “When voting, I follow the lead of the university chairperson, who keeps us very abreast on what is going on in the legislature regarding our university budget and finance issues.” Other participants also indicated that they were in constant contact with their board chairperson and entire university community. Many of the board members revealed that the university administration, faculty student and parents influenced their voting behavior, particularly on budget and finance agenda items. One board member stated that “When board issues arise on budget and finance issues I’m not clear about – I try to get as much advice on the agenda items from the faculty, staff, students and other university colleagues because they have more knowledge in particular areas I don’t know much about – the students and faculty who are in the trenches of what going on day-to-day can always shed light in particular situations. So I often go to them before I make my voting decisions.” See Figure 3.
Figure 3. Budget and Finance Factors

Survey and interview results also demonstrated that 64% of board members felt that re-appointment to the board had little to no influence on their voting behaviors and fiscal matters. Other factors that showed little to no influence on board member voting
behavior on fiscal matters were the governor’s opinions (50%) and non-university constituents (50%). Although these factors appeared not to have any significant influence, I anticipated that the opinions of the governor would have greater effect on board members voting and behavior because of the governor power as the state’s chief administrator and his authority to appoint board members. Some of board member comments also suggested similar connotations. One board member stated that:

One major stakeholder group obviously is the Governor’s office – because whoever is in the executive branch, we (board members) pay a lot of attention to initiatives that are going on there, and that does influence the voting behavior. Particularly, since all of our board members are appointed by the Governor.

This was a much unexpected comment in light of the results from the survey, and because during interviews many of the board members strayed away from talking about their appointment by the governor to the board. Other board members also offered comments on why non-university constituents had little to no impact on their decisions. One board member commented that: “Most of the time the university presidents, faculty, legislators, and the governor’s office, who typically have influence my voting behavior on fiscal issues. Rarely, do I hear from or take into consideration non-university constituents like business & industry, when making voting decisions on budget and finance issues pertaining to the university.” However, during interviews several board members expressed that they believed interacting with the business and industry community will increase due to the recent Work Force and Innovation for Stronger Economy (WISE) legislation enacted within the last few months.

One board member commented that “I am sure will start to have dialogue with business and industry to compete for dollars that will increase revenue for the universities we
serve through the new Work Force and Innovation for Stronger Economy (WISE) fund.”

One major consensus among all board members was that college and university leaders play a key role in managing communications with the campus community to explain how the financial downturn of the economy, resulting in a lack of state funding is currently affecting their campus on a daily basis. All board members agreed that transparency to administrators, staff, faculty and students is important to the strategic planning and successful implementation of the new policy and programs to improve the sustainability of the institutions to retain and graduate students. More importantly, to make a positive difference at the institutions they serve. See Table 5.

Table 5. Budget & Finance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>High Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Board Member Colleagues</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Board Chairperson</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Committee Member Chairpersons</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. University Constituents</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fiscal Impact to the University</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Governor</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Legislature</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Media &amp; Research</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Non-University Constituents</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Re-Appointment to the Board</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. System President</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 Academic & Student Affairs Factors

Overall survey and interviews results revealed that 75% of the board members felt that fiscal impact to the university had great influence on how they voted on academic and student affairs agenda items. One board member stated that:

When you have companies like IBM, Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), or GE Capital come in and say I need more graduates – and I want you work with me on developing curriculum to meet the workforce demands - and I’m willing to invest in your university if you are willing to be responsive to my company’s needs by providing us with either the research or the graduates that we need. These are real operating dollars that can flow to the institutions - So then you can make a dent in what you have to do.

Currently, the majority of the board members felt that adjusting curricular to meet the new workforce demands in the state of Louisiana, can help offset the financial pressures and generates dollars for the colleges and universities they serve. They also indicated that engaging students more would help with retention and graduation rates. Many of the board members exhibited a desire to work with business and industry to keep the students we graduate in the state, which would create economic development and keep the dollars in the state, thereby generating more revenue for public colleges and universities to operate.

Another board member stated that:

It’s important to understand that one university can’t do everything. You’ve got to prioritize! But now, I also say that we can’t be successful unless there is a fourth thing. The fourth thing is that we have the ability to leverage private dollars in our enterprise. There are so many examples of this happening across the country – that’s part of what Louisiana’s WISE Program is meant to do, which is to scale up and stimulate some of these things that are already going on and generate funding for our universities and students.

The Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Workforce Economy (WISE) program is a new initiative comprised of all leaders from higher education in the state
of Louisiana. This WISE Fund will increase funding in higher education in the state by 141.9 million dollars and allow colleges and universities to compete for dollars. The intent of this incentive is to encourage innovation and a commitment from state research institutions to partner with private industry to produce graduates with high-demand degrees and certificates; and enable them to link their coursework to industry needs to better prepare Louisiana students to compete in the workforce and within the new global economy (Governor’s Office Press Release, June 2014). Surprisingly, none of the board members mentioned in their comments the criteria that colleges and universities need to meet in order to compete for the WISE funding, which will place larger research institutions at an advantage to gain more of the resources. According to the respondents, the impact of this legislation may help to bring about cross discipline and cross campus collaborations, which be great for the state of Louisiana to compete for research dollars.

The opinions of the system president and board and committee member chairpersons also surfaced as factors having high influence on board members voting behaviors, 43% and 39%, respectively. Several board members offered comments during the interviews that further illustrate how the system president and board and committee member chairpersons influenced voting behaviors around academic & student affairs agenda items. For example, one board member stated “I talk with the university presidents first, the board chairperson and sometimes fellow board members that have experience in this area.” Other board members shared similar sentiments by saying that:

Prior to the board meetings, the board chairman attempts to keeps us well informed but, when I don’t have all the facts that is when I will ask the system
president or other fellow board members what is their take on the agenda item. I also spend a great deal of my time talking to institutional presidents; because they are the boots on the ground. They are there every day working under significant challenges trying to do herculean tasks to try to move the agenda forward.

These implications indicate that although university presidents do not handle the day-to-day operations, which falls under the chancellor, they often serve as the bridge to gap between the university board chairperson and university board members, especially when they are not completely sure on how to vote on board agenda items or just need additional input before they vote. Recently, in the state of Louisiana, the flagship university combined both positions, which appears to be creating conversation among other university boards in the state of Louisiana to follow their lead.

Another interesting dynamic emerging from board members interviews about their voting behavior on academic & student affair matters was that often to get an objective, well-versed opinion to make their voting decisions in this domain area; they often consult with outside sources before casting their vote. One board member expressed:

These are always hard choices, so I have outside consultant to evaluate the departments and programs before I consider how to vote on academic & student affairs agenda items – and in most cases, I go with their recommendations.

Survey results and interviews also demonstrated that 82% of board members felt that re-appointment to the board had little to no influence on their voting behaviors on academic & student affairs matters. Other factors that showed little to no influence on board members voting behavior on academic & student affairs agenda items were legislative opinions (50%) and the governors’ opinion (46%).
Although none of the board members offered comments related to why re-appointment to the board, the legislature and the governor had little to no impact on their voting behavior, one interpretation of this finding indicates that the legislature and the governor had influence on their voting behavior on academic & student affairs matters. He commented that:

Due to Louisiana’s governance structure and policies in higher education, where the governor has oversight of the budget - I think the Governor and the legislature heavily influences board members voting decisions and educational policy in Louisiana.

These same sentiments are in current literature findings, and affirm that that the role of the governor and the legislature has become significant in directing state educational policy, which usually at some point affects academic and student affairs (McDonnell, 2009; Canfield-Davis et al, 2010). This is evident, particularity in the state of Louisiana, with the adoption of two current pieces of legislation the LAGrad Act and the WISE workforce initiatives, mentioned earlier. Both, educational polices were written by state legislators and written into law by the governor. Another interesting finding related to the voting behavior of board members on academic and student affairs matters was that (54%) of the university board members indicated that their fellow board colleagues somewhat influenced their voting behavior on these issues. Many of the board members said that depending on the issue and whether or not the decisions of the board leadership align with what’s best or the institutions we manage greatly influences their voting behavior. See Figure 4 & Table 6.
Figure 4. Academic and Student Affairs Factors

Fiscal Impact to the University

System President

Board Chairperson

Committee Member Chairpersons
Table 6. Academic & Student Affairs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>High Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Board Member Colleagues</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Board Chairperson</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Committee Member Chairpersons</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. University Constituents</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Fiscal Impact to the University</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Governor</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Legislature</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Media &amp; Research</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Non-University Constituents</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Re-Appointment to the Board</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. System President</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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</table>

These figures clearly align with the sentiments of several of the university board members indicating that fiscal impact to universities they serve has been an ongoing, having to deal with the dealing with financial pressures, which has either caused them consolidate and/or restructure their campus’, their departments and curriculum. Thus, ultimately has resulted in massive layoffs of faculty members and staff, and decrease in the enrollment, retention and graduation rates. These figures and statements also validate why fiscal impact to the university is a major influence the voting behavior of university board members in the state of Louisiana.

4.5 Personnel Issue Factors

Results from the surveys and interviews revealed that 68% of board members felt that the fiscal impact on the university had great influence on how they voted on
personnel agenda items at their respective board meetings. One of the board members expressed “with the budgets continually dropping, fiscal impact plays a major role in my decision making on personnel and all other agenda items.” During a face-to-face interview on board member comment that:

Fiscal impact plays a huge role on my voting behavior on personnel agenda items – Let me give you an example - today there was a personnel issue on the agenda we had to vote on for a position that needed to be approved today - and I was not sure if the person had the right qualifications for the job or what economic impact hiring this person would have on the university - so you saw first-hand I called the chairperson to get answers to these questions. Then I called the person who applied for the position to get more information about their experience, before I decided how I wanted to vote.

This was a valuable piece of knowledge that many of the board members expressed as being a major issue when trying to make voting decisions about personnel issues on the university level. The consensus of most of the board members was that they did not want to hire any new personnel unless absolutely necessary, due to the drastic budget cuts across the board. On the other hand, many feared that not hiring competent faculty members to teach cutting edge curriculum to prepare students for the workforce was vital to the sustainability of their institutions. That said, they always thoroughly examine the hiring of high paying personnel more closely and its impact on the university; rather than the lower paying administrative positions. They also indicated that at some point you have to say no to the things you can no longer do to keep the ball moving forward in other important ways.

The opinions of the system president and board chairpersons also surfaced as factors that have high influence on board members’ voting behaviors at 57% and 43%, respectively. Within the group of board members, several board members commented during the interviews that the board chairperson usually contacts them personally to
discuss upcoming personnel agenda items and they do take into account their recommendations when making voting decisions.” To further illustrate how the system president and board chairperson’s influence their voting behavior on personnel agenda items. Two board members commented that: “I strongly listen to what the board chairperson has to say before voting on personnel agenda items.”

Another commented that:

Depending on the issue – and depending on the campus - I consult with the board chairperson on personnel issues that I feel I’m not knowledgeable about, and sometimes I will read information or use social media. I always talk to the campus system president as well about personnel agenda items, about their recommendations, because I know they are in constant contact with the chancellor, who handles the day to day operations?

Many of the board members felt because they spent limited time visiting the colleges and universities they serve. They heavily relied upon the board chairperson and president when making voting decisions on personnel agenda items. They felt it was their responsibility to be committed to ensuring that the university continued to provide students with a high quality education, by having well trained, highly competent personnel. See Figure 5, Table 7.
Figure 5. Personnel Issues
Not all board members considered the university system president and board chairperson in their voting decisions on personnel agenda items at their respective board meetings. One board member expressed, “I get advice from fellow board members, the systems board chair and the president on personnel agenda items – and I sometimes I talk to faculty or staff to inform me on recommendations for hiring personnel.” But they also noted that they don’t make all their voting decisions based on what leadership has to say. According to the respondents, sometimes they are well-informed prior to board meetings by the board chairperson about upcoming personnel agenda items; but they don’t always agree with their position related to how they should vote, therefore reaching a consensus on personnel agenda items becomes a cumbersome task. One board member commented with similar sentiments saying that:

Sometimes indecision of my fellow board members on major personnel issues can frustrate me – because these decisions are critical and can make difference on how the university operates. For instance, when we were trying to decide on whether or not we would renew out Chancellor’s contract. I put on the agenda as an action item to give our chancellor a new three-year, contract; because I thought he was doing a good job. On the other hand other board members didn’t think so. So the best way to solve issues like that is to see who’s going to vote it up or down to find out who voted no and who votes yes.

Many of the university board members pointed out during the interviews that coming to a consensus about hiring of major personnel, like the university presidents, chancellors and other key personnel often required many executive committee meetings, which excluded the public’s opinion. Although they felt this was sometimes necessary, one board member stated that he preferred public forums and interviews with the potential candidates for those type positions, prior to making their voting decisions. He expressed that open forums always provide candid information about a candidates
viewpoints on how they think the college or university should function, which greatly influences his voting behavior. Other survey and interview results also demonstrated that 72% of board members felt that legislators had no influence on their voting behaviors and personnel matters. One board member commented:

As a board member I am committed to ensuring that the university continues to provide high quality and affordable access to higher education for all students, therefore, I try to educate myself and seek advice from all stakeholders before I make my voting decision on personnel agenda items.

Another factor that showed little to no influence on board member voting behavior on personnel matters was re-appointment to the board (68%), and non-university constituents’ opinions at (64%). Although none of the board members offered comments about the influence re-appointment had on their voting behavior around personnel matters. I anticipated that the re-appointment to the board and the opinions of the governor would have had greater influence on board members voting behavior. See Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7. Personnel Issues</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Factors</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Board Member Colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Board Chairperson</td>
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<td>3. Committee Member Chairpersons</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. University Constituents</td>
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<td>5. Fiscal Impact to the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Governor</td>
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<td>7. Legislature</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Media &amp; Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Non-University Constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Re-Appointment to the Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. System President</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4.6 Outside Factor/Institutional Culture

Although the survey only asked questions about the eleven (11) identified factors of influence, data emerging from the personal interviews indicated that one other high factor of influence on the voting behavior of board members was institutional culture. Institutional culture is often associated institutions uniqueness and basic factors like size, goals, purpose and values of the institution, the staff, management and students, fiscal responsibility and historical mission of each institution (Kezar, 2008; Campell, M. & Hourigan, N. 2008).

Louisiana has a rich history in its post-secondary educational system, stemming from the changes within the 1974 state’s constitution, with the reorganization of its higher education’s governance structure. These changes included the creation of three management boards, who are responsible for statewide the day-to day operations of the campuses; and the Board of Regents responsible for statewide coordination of the all public colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana. This system has its own unique culture encompassing a flagship university (Louisiana State University System) to one of the largest Historically Black College and Universities in the country (Southern University System). It also has a system, comprised of nine colleges and universities (University of Louisiana System) and a Community College and Technical Colleges system comprised of thirteen (13) community and technical colleges. That said, many of the board members reoccurring factor mentioned during interviews with board members was that each college and university does not have the same student population, are the same size, have the same goals and missions; and do operate in the
same way, which influences greatly influences their voting behavior at their respective institutions. From the data collected, intriguing information and comments emerged showing that the colleges and universities institutional culture highly influences the voting behavior of university board members. This context-based data helped me to understand and gain insight about how institutional culture influences board members voting behavior on finance/budget, student & academic affairs and personnel agenda items. In an interview one board member stated that: “I think the cultural circumstances surrounding an institution don’t always allow university board members to make decisions based how that particular institution operates, therefore, we don’t always vote the right way.” Another board member had similar sentiments by saying that “the lack of autonomy and limitations, – like on finance issues, NCAA accreditation rules, state laws make it sometimes hard to manage and make the right decisions for each individual campus and sometimes you end up making a voting decisions across the board for all campuses that you don’t want to make.” Several board members expressed that sometimes the difficulty in reaching consensus on these complex issues was another issue they faced due to institutional differences. One board member commented that “my hope is that the committees I serve on move aggressively to provide appropriate relief at the institutions that are facing the most critical problems and come to a consensus on those complex issues our institutions are facing; and for all of us who are fighting each and every day to improve our institutions.” This cross-campus university board member input revealed that board members are not always able to examining these institutions through the lens of their institutional cultures, which is problematic, and heavily influences their voting behavior. Although other board
members said that they collaborated and listened to their fellow colleagues viewpoints, they also stated that it depended on the issue. Additionally, all of them unanimously stated that they talk with their university chairperson, which the data revealed was a major factor of influence on university board members voting behavior.

On the other hand, responses from other board members from the interviews indicated that they did not consider their colleagues recommendations when voting on budget, student & academic affairs and personnel issues during board meetings. One board member commented that “you don’t always know what’s been discussed among other colleagues prior to the meeting and how much they have influenced other board members on the about how to vote before they come to the committee meetings.” Two other board members commented:

Sometimes other members on the board get personal and emotionally involved when making voting decisions and don’t always make good sound voting choices. I don’t do that – I like to look at the facts and take the analytical standpoint when making my voting decisions. I’ve seen first-hand in board and committee meeting when colleagues have not always voted the way they should have based on emotion.

The other said:

My fellow colleagues sometimes have too much behind the scenes back-and-forth dialogue among each other to position themselves on their voting behavior.

From my observations and the data collected, board members discussions on board agenda items occur sometimes up until the board meetings begin, but only discussions without consensus. Due to the nature of the complex issues board members must vote on, on various occasions from the observations board members have several problems
coming to an agreement on certain board issues, mainly concerning the budget, academic and student affairs or personnel issues.

4.7 Legislative and University Board Members Voting Behavior

Although these different actors have different responsibilities, they are both held accountable to the public good. Along, with the fact that both legislators and university board members voting behavior are critically important to the sustainability of public higher education. Therefore, by paralleling the two entities this study will provide insight and demonstrate the relevance of why the previous literature on legislative voting behavior was utilized for purposes of this study. Additionally, this section provides a glimpse indicating showing like legislators both turn to get their voting cues when making voting decisions and what factors serve to influence their voting behavior.

For the purposes of this research, legislative colleagues are defined as university board member colleagues. They are both considered the persons whom the decision-maker may informally ask “for advice on how to vote” (Kingdon, 1981, p.75). Previous studies on legislative voting behavior indicate that given the time constraints that most legislators often experience, fellow legislators serve as an excellent resource to other legislators, especially newly elected officials (Kingdon, 1981). Additionally, studies done with state legislators indicated that a legislative camaraderie does exist within the legislature that periodically sway fellow legislators voting behavior (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010). Based on the findings from this study, it appears that university board members have similar sentiments as legislators. Although university board member colleagues were not considered one of the high factors of influence
seventy-one percent (71%) indicated that board member colleagues had some influence on their voting behavior when it came to making decisions on how to vote on budget and finance agenda items. The results also indicated that 54% felt that their colleagues had some influence on their voting behavior on academic and student affairs and personnel agenda items.

Findings also revealed that like legislative leadership such as the House Speaker and Senate majority leaders are elected or nominated by their peers, such as the university board and committee chairpersons. Previous studies conducted on legislative voting behavior found that fellow legislators respect their fellow colleague’s opinions; therefore, they consider legislative leadership as a “factor of influence in shaping the voting decisions” (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010). Overall, based on the findings in this study revealed that at least twenty-nine (29%) percent of the board members sought advice on voting decisions from their board and committee chairpersons on budget & finance agenda items. The results also revealed that between thirty-nine and forty-three (39% - 43%) percent of the board members thought that board and committee chairperson had some influence on their voting behavior on academic & student affairs agenda items and personnel agenda items respectively.

The electorate or constituents of legislators are considered persons in the political system to which a legislator is held accountable (Kingdon, 1977 & 1981). In this study, the university constituents are considered persons/factors in the university system that university system board members are held accountable to and defined as the: university administrators, faculty, staff, students and parents. In evaluating the survey results, university board members indicated that university constituents was the
second highest factor of influence on their voting behavior when making their voting
decisions on budget and finance agenda items. Thirty-nine percent (39%) indicated that
university constituents were highly influence their voting behavior on academic &
student affairs agenda items; whereas only fourteen to thirty-nine percent (14% - 39%)
of the university board members felt that university constituents were high factors of
influence; overwhelmingly, between 50 – 75% indicated that university constituents
had some influence on their voting behavior on budget & finance, academic student
affairs and personnel agenda item issues.

In this study, fiscal impact on the university proved to be the most salient
factors of influence across the three major domains on university systems board
members voting behavior. Like university board member legislators are often examine
the fiscal impact to bills that are introduced in the legislature, which often influences
their voting behavior (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010). Like legislators, university board
members overwhelmingly showed that fiscal impact on the colleges and universities
they served influenced their voting behavior. Previous literature also revealed that
lobbyist and special interest groups are factors of influence on the voting behavior of
legislators (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010). Like special interest groups influence
legislators; the survey and individual interviews reveled that groups with special
interest like the governor’s office, the legislature, media & research and non-university
constituents influence the voting behavior of university system board members.

Literature on legislative voting behavior indicated that legislator’s opinions
about bid for re-election (self-interest) as a factor of influence upon voting decisions
were undivided (Canfield-Davis & Jain, 2010), as did university board member about
re-appointment to the board. Some of the participants in this study confirmed that re-
appointment to the board was a factors of influence, while other discounted re-
appointment as a factor of influence.

Congressional legislators revealed that the U.S. President are not always
considered as a factor of influence, when voting on legislation. Although this may be
ture, previous studies conducted also indicated the President can exercise strong
influence over a Members of Congress (Pritchard, A., 1983). Additionally, if the
President is from the same political party he tends to be a factor of influence on the
voting behavior on the legislator of the same party. This study revealed that the system
president was a high factor of influence on the voting behavior of board members. In
that they are elected by their peers, unlike the President of the U.S. See Table 7.

Table 8. Legislative and University Board Member Voting Behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legislators</th>
<th>University Board Member’s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legislative colleagues</td>
<td>University board member colleagues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership and Ranking Committee Members (Speaker of the House Senate Majority Leader)</td>
<td>University board and committee chairpersons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electorate /Constituents</td>
<td>University constituents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Interest Groups</td>
<td>Fiscal Impact on the University, Governor, Legislature, Media &amp; Research, Non-university c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self- Interest</td>
<td>Re-appointment to the board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. President</td>
<td>System President</td>
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</table>
That said, the governor wields a great deal of power over both entities because of his position as governor, chief administrator and the person in charge of major political appointments, such as the university board members and legislative appointments.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, I described the results from the observations, university system board members survey and the findings from the individual interviews relevant to the factors of influence on the voting behavior of university board members serving public state-funded institutions in the state of Louisiana. A summary, discussion of the data findings, conclusions and recommendations for future research are presented in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 5
SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I think that even though boards tend to show a united front, a lot of the time personal opinions affect the voting behavior of board members. University board members should try and make the best decisions for the well-being of the university. Also, most of the public thinks board members are paid for serving on the board, but they are not. They dedicate a large amount of their time to serve as board members for the good of the university.

University system board member

I think it is so crucial that good, committed people, leaders, be put on these Boards. Because the job is important and the stakes are high and the issues are complex.

University system board member

The final chapter of this dissertation consists of 1) a brief overview and limitations of the study; 2) a summary of the major findings; 3) conclusions that I have drawn from these findings; 4) suggestions for future research and; 5) policy recommendations.

5.1 Study Overview

This purpose of this study was to understand factors of influence on the voting behavior of university board members serving public state-funded institutions in the state of Louisiana to answer these central questions:

1. What factors serve to influence the voting behavior of public state-funded university system board members to identify the most salient? And;

2. Are the most and least salient factors that influence the voting behavior of the university system board members consistent across the three major domains of interest in this study?
To do this, I observed, surveyed and interviewed Louisiana’s university system board members currently serving public state-funded colleges and universities. A purposeful sampling strategy was used to select the participants. This participants selected for this study were chosen based on the fact that they are currently serving as university system board members at public state-funded colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana. Moreover, they were chosen because of their knowledge and experiences as board members; and because ultimately, their individual votes collectively have direct influence on educational policy at the institutional level related to budget & finances, academic & student affairs and personal issue agenda items. Due to the nature of this qualitative case study that heavily depended on the individual experiences and participation of university system board members; I contacted all of the participants prior to beginning this study to determine their willingness to participate. Out of the four (4) university system boards in the State of Louisiana, only two (2) system boards agreed to participate in this study: the Southern University System (SUS) and the University of Louisiana System (ULS), to exclude the flagship university. Other board members were unable to participate do to constraints on their time with both official board of supervisor responsibilities, as well as their own professional obligations. Of the thirty-two (32) participants who agreed to participate. Twenty-eight (28) out of the (32) completed the survey, and sixteen (16) participated in individual interviews. For purposes of this study, I chose qualitative research methods for this study. I choose this method of inquiry, because it allowed me the opportunity to explore and understand factors influencing the voting behavior of university system board members in the state of Louisiana in the three major domain areas identified within this study. Although the
quantitative measures (survey), supported my findings, I believed this was the best way
to gain a deep understanding about factors of influence on the voting behavior
institutional board members. By capturing their knowledge, experiences and insight
through individual interviews gave board members the opportunity to tell their stories
in their own unique settings (Borg & Gall, 1989).

This study collected data from multi-sites and multi-participant’s utilizing the
constant comparative data analysis, case study approach (Creswell, 2009). I derived the
deductive codes (factors) from the literature on legislative voting behavior reviewed
earlier. These factors were then organized into the three major domain categories within
this study to identify the highest factors of influence out of the eleven (11) factors of
influence. The three major domain areas were: 1) budget & finance factors; 2)
academic & student affairs factors; and 3) personnel issue factors. Data was constantly
compared throughout the study, with line-by-line sentence and paragraph analysis,
along with the survey data. This was followed by labeling and categorizing of data until
patterns of the findings began to emerge.

Data collection for this study was conducted through surveys and one in-depth
interview with 16 respondents. I utilized several sources to collect data; a survey along
with personal interviews. The survey utilized helped me to capture demographic data
about the participants. The survey’s also provided a wealth of information from board
members about the high to low factors of influence in the three major domain areas
identified in this study. Finally, individual interviews lasting for about an hour to an
hour and one half provided the rich, in-depth data on factors of influence on the voting
behavior of university board members in the state of Louisiana. Validity of the data was
conducted by using member checks and a peer reviewer, which was the only logical way to ensure validity of the data.

5.2 Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations. One of the major limitations within this study presents a one-time analysis of Louisiana’s university system board members voting behavior on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues at their respective board meetings. Secondly, generalizing the study with information from only two sites was another added limitation. While members from these boards participated in the study, it does not adequately represent all the public state-funded colleges and universities in the entire state. Thirdly, not every board member was interviewed that completed a survey. Additionally, the factors are drawn from previous research conducted on legislative voting behavior and used to examine influences on the voting behavior of Louisiana university system board members. The use of previous conducted research may cause the possibility of some misinterpretation of the data. Although this study does not embrace the standard statistical method, basic descriptive statistics support the findings.

5.3 Summary of Major Findings

Budget & Finance

Data collected from the observations, surveys and individual interviews of the participants overwhelmingly demonstrated that fiscal impact on the university was the most salient factor of influence on their voting behavior when voting on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issue agenda items. This factor remained constant across all three of the major domains areas. The second highest
factor was the system president and thirdly, university constituents. The majority of the board members expressed that fiscal impact on the university was a key factor of influence on their voting behavior in the three major domain areas for the flowing reasons: 1) drastic cuts in state and federal funding of public institutions; 2) decreases in enrollment and retention due to tuition increases and; 3) lack of external funding. These financial challenges also indicate the need for university presidents and boards to work together to address fiscal impact on the university’s operations to sustain the institutions they serve (AGB, 2014).

Other board members indicated during interview and in their survey responses that under the domain area of budget & finance the system presidents and university constituents had high influence on their voting behavior when making decisions on budget & finance agenda items. Many of the board members indicated that even though university presidents were not involved in the day-to-day operations, they seriously considered their opinions. They also indicated that because university presidents are in constant contact with chancellors, board chairpersons and all other stakeholders that they were continuously aware of the current trends and issues’ pertaining to what was in the best interest of the institutions they serve. For these reasons, they indicated that their voting behavior is influenced by university system presidents. Interviews with board members also indicated that they felt with so many budget cuts in the state of Louisiana, combining the job duties and responsibility of the chancellor and president to save revenue was not a bad idea. Currently, Louisiana’s flagship university combined the job of chancellor and system president and hired one individual to take on both responsibilities.
Another high factor of influence emerging from the survey and interviews were the university constituents. As defined in this study, university constituents are the faculty, staff, student and parents, which board members indicated play a major role in their voting behavior. From the interview responses two themes emerged: 1) was that serving the university faculty, staff and the particularity the students appeared to be at the core of why the university board members served on the board; and 2) making sure the colleges and universities they served remained viable and open was another. One board member commented during an interview, “I love Graduation! - And I attempt to attend every graduation ceremony of the schools I serve. When I see the huge accomplishments of the students we serve, it makes all the hard work worthwhile.” Other interviews revealed that board members see the students as their customers and feel they are very important and influence their voting behavior. One board member remarked that “on a scale from 1-10, I would rank the students first, faculty second, and staff third - and I am very much mindful of the students who are our consumers, therefore they do have a major influence on my voting behavior.” These comments from the data collected clearly indicate that university board members envision the students as a main priority.

Another interesting finding worth noting related to a factors of influence on voting behavior of the participants was that although board member colleagues were not considered a high factor of influence, 74% of the members felt they had some influence on their voting behavior related to academic and student affairs.

Under the domain of Academic & Student Affairs, interviews, observations and survey data revealed that the majority of the respondents indicated that fiscal impact on
the university was the highest factor of influence on the voting behavior of university board members when voting on academic and student affairs agenda items. The second highest factor of influence was the systems president and third was university and committee member chairpersons. Most respondents stated that considering the massive budget cuts (budget & fiscal factors) encountered since 2008, many of their voting decisions have required them to reexamine and restructure their academic colleges and departments to meet the competitive demands of higher education in the 21st century. Therefore, fiscal impact on the university greatly influences how they vote on academic and student affair agenda issues. The board members also expressed from interviews that they had to examine their university’s graduation and retention rate in each of their departments and to see if there was a need to cut some duplicate programs; and/or replace them with new innovative programs aligning with the workforce. They felt that from a fiscal standpoint, in the future this could impact their institutions they serve in a positive way, by generating revenue through the new Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy Fund (WISE). This initiative is a new incentive for public state colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana to compete for dollars totally $0 million dollars (Regents Recap, 2014).

Other factors of high influence on the voting behavior of board members while voting on academic and student affairs issues were systems presidents and board and committee chairpersons. The data obtained from interviews and the survey data indicated that individual board members constantly communicate with their board chairpersons and committee chairpersons prior to board meetings, particularly on academic & student affair agenda items before making their voting decisions. In an
interview one board member said “our board chairperson contacts me personally to discuss upcoming agenda items, and I seriously take into account their recommendations when making voting decisions.” Other board members commented that they heavily relied on board leadership and committee chairpersons when making voting decisions on academic and student affairs agenda items prior to board meetings to see which way to vote and why. Many of them indicated in interviews that they were not very knowledgeable in this area. They also expressed that one of the board and committee chairpersons’ responsibilities was to try to articulate the value of whatever items are brought forward at board meetings, and try to handle and incorporate revisions that would alleviate any concerns that are out there, prior to the meetings. Therefore, board members often rely on the university leadership to educate them on the current agenda items, as well as make voting recommendations. One university systems chairperson commented board that “leadership has a lot to do with voting behavior of board members, because that is part of their job – and if the kinks have been worked out ahead of time and the staff brings recommendations that they’ve already vetted widely, which is what we all try to do with students and other stakeholders who might have an interest in it what needs to be on the agenda then it closes the gaps and moves higher education in a positive direction in the state.”

Recently, the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (ABG), came up with a how to guide designed to “spark, inform, and nurture productive board conversations about oversight of educational quality and to help board members engage more with each other(ABG, 2014). This statement indicates that it is essential that more conversations must occur among board members who are on the
same boards and collectively across the system so the state of Louisiana’s higher educational system can move forward to meet the challenges of the 21st century, along with the ability to compete with other states to recruit, retain, graduate and prepare student for the workforce.

Relative to the third highest factor of influence, university board members strongly thought that fiscal impact on the university influenced their voting behavior of board members when voting on personnel agenda items. Given the flux in higher education in the state of Louisiana, many of Louisiana colleges and universities many of the public state-funded institutions this was not a surprising. Board members overwhelmingly expressed because of massive cuts several they have been forced to make several personnel changes. In current years, many persons in leadership positions from presidents and chancellors to academic deans and tenured faculty have been forced out which caused personnel cost to continually rise. Additionally, given the changing nature of higher education policymaking and the increasing political environment, many of the board members expressed that they often find themselves not always in the best position to make the right personnel voting decisions for the institutions they serve. One example of this occurred at Louisiana’s flagship university, with the dismissal of President Lombardi who “repeatedly spoke out against the governor’s budget priorities, attempts to reshape the system’s governance.”(Kiley, K, 2012). While many members of the board rejected claims that they were not carrying out a directive from the governor’s office, the board’s minority claimed it should have not been a surprise to people in public higher education (Kiley, K. 2012). Which leaves the question, if indeed re-appointment to the board influences board members voting
behavior? Survey results indicated that 25% felt that re-appointment to the board had some influence on their voting behavior; along with the 32% claiming that the governor sometimes influenced their voting behavior on personnel agenda items at board meetings. On the other hand, interviews with the board members revealed something quite different. Several of the members of the board commented that the governor and the governor’s office have a great deal of influence over the things put on our agenda and the issues that we work through. Therefore, they are considered as major stakeholders that they pay a lot of attention too and that they do influence the voting behavior, particularly since they are appointed by the Governor.

The second and third factors having great influence on board members voting behavior were the system president and board chairperson, respectively on personnel issues. The majority of the board members indicated personnel issues often places them in a complex situation in which they are not sure how to vote on personnel issues. Therefore, they heavily rely upon the systems presidents and board chairpersons when making their voting decisions on personnel issues because, they are in constant contact with the university chancellors and other major stakeholders that are familiar with the university operations on a day-to-day basis. Overall, board members indicated due to their lack of expertise in each area of university operations, it is evident that several factors serve to influence their voting behavior and that they heavily rely on variety of sources to gain information before making their voting decisions. Therefore, many of them expressed the need for orientation sessions for new board members.

One additional factor, not explicitly listed on the survey or in interview questions that emerged from the personal interviews, institutional culture. Several of
the participants indicated that although each of the individual campuses had their own unique characteristics; they expressed a strong desire to engage in cross campus discussions with other board members serving other institutions to share their expertise, find out about current trends in higher education and have conversations about how they can solve problems at their individual campuses to eliminate them from reoccurring while building collaborations for research and other opportunities to generate revenue for their institutions. Many of the board members expressed this would be a win-win situation for all public state-funded colleges and universities in the state of Louisiana and help the universities all function more effectively to retain and graduate students.

This section is a summary of the finding believed to be the most salient to this study. The findings indicate that fiscal impact on the university, the role of the systems president, the board and committee chairperson and university constituents are high factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board member voting behavior in the state of Louisiana in the three major domains of budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issue agenda items at their respective institutions.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the opinions and experiences of public university board members related to what factors influence their voting behavior on budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues agenda items, additional research is needed to generate explore and evaluate how university board member go about making their voting decisions, which ultimately impacts the sustainably of the colleges and
universities they serve. As a result, I offer the following recommendations for additional research is to generate more in-depth understandings of issue.

Recommendation 1: In consideration that the most salient factor of influencing the voting behavior of public university board members was fiscal impact on the university; studies examining if state economic differences might influence the voting behavior of public university board members should be taken into consideration. For example, do factors of influence on the voting behavior of board members differ in states that are struggling economically vs states that are financially stable and;

Recommendation 2: Given by reduction of state funding since 1980, educational trends indicate that state fiscal support will soon equal zero by 2059 (Mortenson, T.G., 2012). In light of this, public higher education will gradually have to rely strictly on external dollars. In that view, how will that impact the selection of higher educational governing boards and their voting behavior?

In the next section, I will briefly discuss policy recommendations that directly stem from university board member experiences and on my understating and evaluations of effective board stewardship.

5.5 Policy Recommendations

As a result of my observations, interviews, surveys and own personal knowledge and experiences in higher education, I offer the following policy recommendations to ensure that public university members are allowed to carry their fiduciary responsibilities and vote on agenda items at their respective board meeting without political pressures as follows:
1) Placing shorter term limits for public university board members, would allow no one person to have control over board operations to improve performance;

2) Revising of Louisiana’s state constitution, removing the governor to have oversight and control of the state’s healthcare and educational budgets.

3) Establishing a public election of public university board members, which would allow the general public to elect them, which might perhaps increase equity and diversity on the boards.

5.6 Contribution of Study

This study is the first to examine factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board members in the state of Louisiana. This exploratory case study also provides deep insight and understanding of factors influencing the voting behavior of university board members from a micro level on budget & finance, academic and student affairs and personnel agenda items at their respective board meetings. Furthermore, this study contributes to the scholarly literature by presenting the voices, insight and perception of university board members and how they go about making their voting decisions on board agenda items. It also provides useful insights for boards, presidents, legislators and other educational stakeholder studying university institutional governance.

5.7 Final Thoughts: So what?

In the onset of this research, I hypothesized that the governor would have had the highest influence on the voting behavior of university system board members in the State of Louisiana. This thought appears to fit with the public’s perception, which is that boards are over politicized; therefore, not allowing university system board
members to exercise their fiduciary responsibilities (Michaelson, 2013), on the behalf of their major stakeholders (students, parents and the public good). One board member revealed in an interview that there is somewhat of a Void in the public’s perception of public university boards and what they do. As expressed in this study, most board members are professional people, with outside careers and some retired. Many of which many have never had the opportunity to work in higher educational settings. That said, they are not experts on every single issue for which they have to render a vote.

This study demonstrates that board members want and need guidance when making voting decisions regarding budget & finance, academic & student affairs and personnel issues and other specific agenda item issues. By identifying and examining the factors of influence on the voting behavior of public state-funded university board member voting behavior, it provides a deeper understanding of the perceptions and steps board members take when making their voting decisions. Gaining a deeper understanding of these factors of influence can serve as an educational tool for higher educational leaders and other educational stakeholders to gain awareness about ways to improve their voting behavior and board performance. Simply, they can make quality decisions that will help best serve the interest of the universities they govern. As stated by one of the board members, when all is said and done “accountability is an important way that a board can help, but also understating that we are here for the greater public good to produce graduates and productive citizens - we all have a great responsibility to move the ball forward, even in spite of the resource challenges, but more importantly is putting visionary strategic leaders who make good, ethical decisions at the helm of the universities we serve.”
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A:  
INTRODUCTORY COVER LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear University System Board Member,

My name is Melanie S. Johnson and I am a graduate student at Louisiana State University, currently working to complete a dissertation in the Educational Leadership, Research and Counseling (ELRC) program, with emphasis in higher education. I am asking your help to collect data for my dissertation. The purpose of my research is to explore and identify factors that might serve to influence the voting behavior of university system board members of public state-funded colleges and university systems related to finance/budget, academic affairs and personnel issues. By conducting this study, I hope to address the deficiencies in scholarly literature regarding voting behavior of public state-funded university board members.

Because you are a member of one of Louisiana’s University System Boards, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached survey. The following survey/questionnaire will require approximately 10 -15 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for responding nor is there any known risk. In order to ensure that all information will remain confidential, the questionnaires are unmarked and will be distributed and picked up after the board meeting by a board staff member. All documents (both answered and unanswered will be returned to me by the System Board Office. Please do not include your name or any other identifying information. Copies of the study will be provided to my department and to LSU’s Graduate School as a requirement for graduation. If you choose to participate in this project, please answer all questions as honestly as possible. Participation is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate at any time. It is also my desire to interview members of the board, if possible. Each interview will last only 10-15 minutes concentrating on factors related to the voting behavior of university system board members when making voting decisions. If you decide to participate in the interview process, please check the box below and return this letter to the university board assistant, who will be scheduling interviews and picking up the survey. I will make myself available after the board meeting, or at a time and place of your convenience.

The topic of this research is extremely important to me, so I would like to thank you for assisting me with my educational endeavors and your participation. If you have any other concerns or questions, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Roland Mitchell at e-mail address rwmitch@lsu.edu, Co-Investigator Melanie S. Johnson, at mjoh128@lsu.edu, or Louisiana State University at irb@lsu.edu or 225-578-8692.

Thank you,
Melanie S. Johnson, PhD Candidate
Educational Theory, Policy and Practice Department
Louisiana State University Researcher

Dr. Roland Mitchell, Chairman of Doctoral Committee
Educational Theory, Policy and Practice Department
Louisiana State University

___Yes, I am interested in participating in one 10-15 minute interview for your dissertation.
SURVEY OF UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD MEMBERS

Party: Democrat Republican Other
Gender: Male Female
Length of Service serving on the Board: years

To what degree do you believe the following factors influenced your voting decisions on finance/budget issues? Please choose and circle one number for each category listed below.

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<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>No Influence</th>
<th>Some Influence</th>
<th>High Influence</th>
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<tr>
<td>Board Member Colleagues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Chairperson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Committee Member Chairpersons</td>
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<tr>
<td>University Constituents (i.e. Administration, Faculty, Staff and Students, Parents)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiscal Impact to the University</td>
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<td>Governor</td>
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<td>Legislature</td>
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<td>Media &amp; Research (i.e. personal reading through the internet, books, newsletters, etc…)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-University Constituents (i.e. Community and/or Business &amp; Industry)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Re-appointment to the board</td>
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<td>System President</td>
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To what degree do you believe the following factors influenced your voting decisions on academic and student affairs agenda items? Please choose and circle one number for each category listed below.

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To what degree do you believe the following factors influenced your voting decisions on personnel action agenda items? Please choose and circle one number for each category listed below.

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<tr>
<td>Re-appointment to the board</td>
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APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS GUIDE

Date: __________
Start Time: ______ Stop Time: ______
Interview location: ____________________________________________________________

1. What management experience or educational background do you have in the area of higher education or in the oversight of a state public-funded university?

2. Which governor appointed you to the board?

3. Do you serve on any board committees? If so, how long have you served? What gives you satisfaction serving on the committee? What frustrates you about serving on the committee?

4. From your perception, describe the university board meeting process. How does an agenda item get passed, or defeated during a meeting?

5. What prompts you to seek advice on a particular agenda item?

6. Who do you usually contact for advice on agenda item issues?

7. What skills or behavior do these individuals have that prompts you to seek their input?

8. Why do you trust their judgment?

9. How do you become informed on agenda items, which you may know very little about?

10. What groups or individuals, if any, do you think are presently the most influential in determining or directing educational policy for Louisiana public state-funded universities?

   University Board Members  Governor  Business & Industry
   State Board of Education  System President  University Staff
   Student and Parents  University Faculty
   The Legislature  Board Chairperson

11. How do you gauge public opinion regarding University Board Issues?

12. How frequently do you hear from your university and non-university constituents (i.e., administration, faculty, staff, parents, students, community and Business & Industry)?
How do they contact you?

13. How much influence do they have on your voting behavior?

14. How much influence do you think they have on your colleagues’ votes?

15. What kind of influence does the board leadership have on your vote?

16. What kind of influence does the legislature have on your vote?

17. What influence do you have on your colleagues’ votes?

18. Describe the impact that an election year has on your voting behavior as it relates to education issues?

19. What effect does fiscal impact have on your voting behavior?

20. What would it take to change your mind about how you plan to vote on an agenda item?

21. How did you go about making up your mind to vote on the university operational budget this fiscal year?

22. How did you go about making up your mind to vote on which departments and programs were approved or terminated?

23. How did you go about making up your mind when voting whether or not a faculty member received tenure or not?

24. Were there any board member colleagues you paid attention to or listened to when making your decision to vote? If yes, why them?

25. Did your personal position on voting issues ever conflict with that of individuals that you regarded as politically important when making your voting decision?

26. Was there anything you read, saw, accessed or heard that affected how you viewed agenda items you vote on?

27. At any point along the way, were you ever uncertain about how to vote?

28. Is there anything else that you feel is important to highlight regarding your voting behavior?
APPENDIX C:
IRB APPROVAL
VITA

Melanie Smith-Johnson is currently a Grant Management Specialist and Adjunct Professor of Political Science at Southern University A&M College. She received a B.S. in Marketing and an MA in Political Science from Southern University A&M College; and has several years of academic and research programmatic and administrative experience in higher education. She has worked for various federal, state and local grant-funded programs. She has served as a grant reviewer for the Louisiana Department of Education and the City of Baton Rouge. She has published in the Race, Class & Gender Journal. Her research and teaching interests include higher educational policy and its impact on public funded institutions, politics, governance, leadership and creating change in higher education, sustainability of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU’s), diversity in higher education, state and local politics and African-American politics.