Managing Threats: Examining Intra-Organizational Collaboration Between Academic And Student Affairs Divisions

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University of Mississippi

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MANAGING THREATS: EXAMINING INTRA-ORGANIZATIONAL COLLABORATION
BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS DIVISIONS

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education
The University of Mississippi

By
MIGNON N. CHINN
August 2013
ABSTRACT

Tragic shootings in classrooms on the campuses of Virginia Tech (2007), Louisiana Technical College (2008), and Northern Illinois University (2008) where 39 students and faculty members lost their lives shattered perceptions of the college campus as a safe haven (Dungy & Roberts, 2010), brought heightened awareness to the decade-long increase of students with “severe mental health issues” enrolled in postsecondary education (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011), and became a “tipping point” for new resource allocations for violence prevention in higher education (Dunkle, 2009). Following The Virginia Tech Panel Review (2007), threat assessment and management teams (TAMTs) became an intervention of choice. As a result, I have chosen to explore the effectiveness of a TAMT through the eyes of individuals who developed higher education and are invested in student success, faculty members.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs units at one southeastern public research institution. There were two central research questions explored:

1. How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?

2. What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

Nineteen one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted which included three TAMT administrators, nine faculty members, and seven academic administrators who referred or aided in the referral of a student to the TAMT. Three themes emerged from the data analysis:
(a) *Collaboration at Big University*, (b) *I Didn’t Grasp TAMT at First*, and (c) *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*.

Although the TAMT at Big University (BU) facilitated the development of an effective process to report questionable student behavior, the TAMT was not an example of intra-organizational collaboration because authentic collaboration had not been achieved. While the divisions were able to work cooperatively, they did not share decision making or accountability.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the Chinn Family, Ruby (mother), Henry (father), and Sheryl (sister). Thank you for your endless love and support. I am so blessed to have a family who is willing to approach new challenges as a unit. Thank you for celebrating each milestone of this journey with me. More importantly, thank you for seeing the finish line when I was unable to see past the nose on my face. We made it and to God be the glory!
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AISP</td>
<td>Assessment intervention of student problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BU</td>
<td>Big University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAO</td>
<td>Chief academic affairs officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSAO</td>
<td>Chief student affairs officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>NaBITA</td>
<td>National behavioral intervention team association</td>
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<td>SIT</td>
<td>Student intervention team</td>
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<td>TAMT</td>
<td>Threat assessment and management team</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I must thank God for giving me the strength and courage to complete this doctoral process. When doubt crept in, You provided me with comfort and confirmation that I was heading in the right direction.

Next, I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Wells Dolan. I owe you an immeasurable amount of gratitude for your willingness to guide me through the dissertation process, and for pushing me to strive for excellence. To Dr. Bartee, Dr. Melear, and Dr. Showalter, thank you for your willingness to serve as members of my committee and for showing a genuine interest in my research topic.

In addition, I would like to say thank you to the vice president of student affairs at my research site for permitting my study, and trusting in my abilities. I also owe a debt of gratitude to the participants involved in the study. Undeniably, speaking with each of you was one of the highlights of conducting this research. Thank you for sharing your experiences with me.

I would also like to thank my extended family and many friends who were there for me throughout this process. Your well wishes and kindness will never be forgotten. I look forward to reconnecting with everyone and regularly participating in social gatherings in the future.

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When I set out on this educational journey, I had hoped to connect with at least one person in the program. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would encounter three colleagues to befriend during this journey. Val, Ayana, and Sara thank you for being such good friends and great scholars.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Overview of the study

The need to strengthen the undergraduate educational experience and student learning was one of the primary reasons why collaborations between academic and student affairs divisions increased in the new century (Schroeder, 2003). Although collaborations were not recommended or necessary for every endeavor (Kezar & Lester, 2009), they needed to be purposeful pursuits initiated by dedicated parties using national research findings and institution specific data if they are to be successful in higher education (Schroeder, 2003). In addition, Schroeder (2003) warned that successful collaborations between academic and student affairs were complicated and time consuming. They required devotion, involved shared visions, and focused on the values of student learning and undergraduate education. Hence, those involved in collaborations should be prepared to “share work, planning, goal setting, decision making, and problem solving, as well as vision, philosophy, values, and ideas” (Schroeder, 2003, p. 626).

Kezar (2005) identified two areas of collaboration, internal or intra-collaboration and external or inter-collaboration. Internal collaboration occurred between groups within the institution such as interdisciplinary research whereas external collaboration occurred between an institution and a group outside of the institution such as community partnerships (Kezar, 2005). In addition, Kezar also reported four types of cross-institutional collaborations: (a) academic and student affairs collaboration, (b) interdisciplinary and community based research, (c) team teaching and learning communities (d) and cross-functional teams. Among these four types of
cross-institutional collaborations occurring in higher education today, threat assessment and management teams (TAMTs) stood out as a potential academic and student affairs collaboration. The TAMTs were designed to address challenges associated with the contemporary student and college life today.

Today, academic and student affairs may be undertaking one of its most important collaborations through TAMTs as more institutions have witnessed record-breaking increases in both the numbers of students attending college (Drysdale, 2010) and the number of students requiring on-going psychological services (Winston, 2003). The TAMTs assisted in addressing student illnesses that were being treated, being left untreated, or had not been diagnosed. Moreover, a dominant concern of the TAMTs was to address the increase of violence on college campuses (Drysdale, Modeleski, & Simons, 2010) as more students with mental illnesses attended college. Unfortunately, it appeared that the increase in students with mental health issues in recent years has resulted in an increase in incidents of violence such as school shootings (Drysdale, 2010).

To adequately address these concerns, the members of the TAMTs were often intentionally chosen, trained, and in place to collect information regarding disturbing and questionable student behavior (Deisinger, Randazzo, O’Neil, & Savage, 2008). In addition, the committee monitored situations brought to their attention in an effort to prevent crisis incidents on campuses (Deisinger et al., 2008). The success of these committees likely aided in creating a healthier campus community while protecting the seamless learning environment for students. They also gave members of the community a place to report concerns and reduced instances of violence on campus. The numbers of these teams have grown after the Virginia Tech massacre (Marklein, 2011). Unfortunately, there was little known about the teams’ effectiveness over time.
Institutions of higher education needed to assess how effective these teams were in helping frontline individuals, such as faculty members, to identify and assist students in crisis. Therefore, this study explored if intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs units contributed to a safer higher education environment through the use of the TAMTs.

**Statement of the Problem**

Between April 16, 2007 and February 14, 2008, there were three shootings by students at institutions of higher education. Each of these individuals had mental health issues while in college that may have led to their shooting sprees and suicides. On April 16, 2007, Seung-Hui Cho murdered 32 people and injured 17 others at Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech) (Roy, 2009; The Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). Cho carried out the college shooting in two locations, inside a residence hall and an academic building (The Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007). On February 8, 2008, Latina Williams murdered two students at Louisiana Technical College (Newman & Fox, 2009). On February 14, 2008, Steven Kazmierczak murdered five students and injured twenty-one others at Northern Illinois University (NIU) (Vann, 2008). Thus, in a span of less than ten months, 39 students and faculty members lost their lives in shootings at institutions of higher education. The frequency of these three shootings had immediate and far reaching effects on the violence prevention techniques used by institutions, namely the creation of threat assessment and management teams.

Due to these shootings, the governors in Illinois and Virginia have insisted that institutions of higher learning in those states establish TAMTs (Deisinger et al., 2008; Marklein, 2011). These teams were viewed as a possible prevention mechanism. Deisinger et al. (2008) defined TAMTs as “a multi-disciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern and that may precede violent
activity on campus” (p. 5). These multi-disciplinary teams were often headed by an upper-level student affairs administrator, received information from campus community members who have encountered a student exhibiting questionable or concerning behavior (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009). When investigating a situation, members of the team often decided the next steps after gathering facts, speaking to witnesses, and/or speaking to the accused person (Deisinger et al., 2008).

Although TAMTs existed on some campuses prior to the April 16, 2007 Virginia Tech tragedy, the numbers have grown exponentially. Marklein (2011) reported that 80% of colleges have developed these teams since the Virginia Tech tragedy. These teams are known to have several other names such as Behavioral Assessment Team, Behavioral Intervention Team, Students of Concern, Threat Assessment Team, College Concerns Team, Threat Assessment and Behavioral Intervention, Campus Assessment Team, Campus Assessment Response Evaluation (Sokolow & Lewis, 2008) as well as Campus Assistance Team, Early Alert Team, Student Assistance Team, and Student Intervention Team (Deisinger et al., 2008). For the purpose of this study, these teams were referred to as threat assessment and management teams (TAMTs).

Significance of the Study

The college years were often portrayed as a time to meet new people, explore new things, undergo personal reflection, excel academically, have fun, and afterwards emerge as a better person. Bertram (2010) stated the public viewed “college is the best time of a student’s life” (p. 30). Heilburn, Dvoskin, and Heilburn (2009) even described college as a kind of haven for students as they underwent their individual transformations in preparation for adulthood. They posited:
The safety of those on our campuses is important. In certain respects, colleges and universities function as a haven from the pressures and expectations of the broader society, providing a setting in which youth can learn, mature, and prepare to assume adult roles. (p. 93)

For some students, their opportunity to temporarily circumvent adult responsibilities as they experienced college may be diminishing because of occurrences like recent school shootings at institutions of higher education. Dungy and Roberts (2010) suggested that recent school shootings have taken away the innocence of campus life. They explained, “What seems particularly tragic about campus shootings is that they shatter the myth of the academy as a kind of safe haven” (p. xiv). Consequently, one thing that school shootings did was bring attention to the fact that college campuses were not exempt from the dangers and violence that occur in other spaces.

Faculty, staff, administrators, students, and parents were concerned about shootings at institutions of higher education. In addition to the loss of life, many survivors were forever changed due to the psychological trauma they felt as a result of the depression and stress that was associated with campus shootings (Fischman & Farrell, 2008). For instance, a professor at Virginia Tech, Tilley-Lubbs (2011), wrote an auto-ethnography about the deep depression she experienced as a result of being on campus in her office as she heard the shots ring out in Norris Hall. Moreover, Ferraro and McHugh (2010) captured how murders at an institution of higher education can have far reaching effects with this statement:

The university is most challenged when it comes to murder, literally, for murder potentially transforms the university from a nursery for hope and promising young
leaders into a graveyard of despair and lost youth, for people affected directly and for those touched by it. (p. 2)

Many institutions had to decide how to move forward in the immediate and long-term future after tragedy had wreaked havoc on their campuses. In some cases, positive things came from tragedy. For example, Virginia Tech administrators decided that Norris Hall would be renovated and the second floor, which was the scene of the shooting on April 16, 2007, would house a new program, the Center for Peace Studies and Violence Prevention (Wilson & Wasley, 2008). In the case of NIU, that campus began the Office of Support and Advocacy to help those affected by the February 14, 2008 tragedy (NIU, 2012).

In addition to the recovery and memorials, institutions also were held accountable for their policies, procedures, and the disruption to learning environments through lawsuits and fines. For instance, Virginia Tech was sued for wrongful death by the parents of two of the women killed on April 16, 2007, Julia K. Pryde and Erin N. Peterson (Eile, 2012). The parents won the lawsuit and were awarded four millions dollars, but there was a $100,000 cap for each claim (Fiegel, 2012). In addition, Virginia Tech was fined $55,000 for two violations of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Statistics Act ([Clery Act], 20 U.S.C. § 1092(f)) associated with the April 16th massacre (Bell, 2011). The Clery Act is a federal statute that requires institutions receiving federal funding to disclose crimes that have occurred on or near campus (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Each of Virginia Tech’s fines were assessed at the maximum amount possible, $27,500 (Bell, 2011). The fines were levied against Virginia Tech for failure to provide timely warning to the campus community regarding the early morning shootings and not following the publicized warning protocol the institution
had in place (Bell, 2011). After litigation in 2012, the fines were overturned by an administrative judge for the U.S. Department of Education (Lipka, 2012).

In response to the Virginia Tech tragedy, institutions began to equip their crisis/emergency management plans with prevention tools such as TAMTs. This study sought to uncover faculty members’ perceptions of a TAMT on one college campus. The results of this study led to the assessment of the usefulness of TAMTs, implementation of processes and patterns, and the viability of both TAMTs and the role of faculty as participants in the future.

Empirical data regarding collaborations between academic affairs and student affairs now exists. In addition to the work that Kezar performed, Harris (2010) used Kezar and Lester’s (2009) model to conduct a study that addressed two areas of collaboration, interdisciplinary teaching and research. In addition, Rodem (2011) researched collaboration between four pairs of instructors who were committed to enhancing student learning. Each co-teaching pair consisted of one faculty member and one student affairs professional who team-taught a first year seminar, BGSU 1000 (Rodem, 2011). Noticeably, the quantity and types of research studies conducted on collaboration within higher education are rising.

This study added to the research on collaboration and examined faculty members’ views on academic and student affairs collaboration efforts regarding TAMTs. There had been no research that explored the multidisciplinary collaboration of TAMTs. Therefore, this study is significant because it: (a) added to the literature regarding TAMTs and collaboration; (b) explored whether TAMTs are a viable collaboration mechanism between faculty and student affairs professionals; (c) helped identify successful practices that educated and involved faculty members; and (d) detailed the TAMTs work with faculty to address crisis with individual
students. Furthermore, this study served as a resource for future studies on TAMTs and academic and student affairs collaborations.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs units at one southeastern institution. Getting the campus community members involved in keeping the campus safe is immensely important. Jablonski, McClellan, and Zdziarski (2008) explained the importance of heightened community awareness and education regarding the threat of violence in the following manner, “All members of the campus community must become more aware of and vigilant regarding potential individual or environmental circumstances that might indicate a heightened propensity for violence” (p. 11). The authors furthered their argument by recommending that training and awareness programs related to campus violence be offered to students, staff and faculty members, and parents at the beginning of welcome activities and orientation. Additionally, such programming should be repeated regularly throughout the academic year (Jablonski et al., 2008).

Faculty members are one of the major contributors to the success of any institution. They hold a unique role of educating and supporting students. Thus, gaining the assistance and support of faculty members in addressing student needs is imperative as higher education encounters one of the most isolated generations of students to date (Fischman & Farrell, 2008; Love, 2003).

Furthermore, there was no research on collaboration involving academic and student affairs regarding TAMTs. As the primary function of TAMTs is to prevent crisis situations that would interrupt the college learning environment, it was imperative to explore the effectiveness
of this team through the eyes of individuals who ostensibly come in contact with students frequently, the faculty members.

**Conceptual Framework**

The theoretical framework of this study was Kezar and Lester’s (2009) collaboration model for higher education. Based on the findings from research conducted at four institutions that were found to be highly collaborative, Kezar and Lester were able to design a three-stage collaboration model specifically for higher education institutions to help create a campus culture that embraced collaboration. For the purpose of this study, this model will be used as a template to investigate faculty members’ perceptions of TAMTs as a model of intra-organizational collaboration.

Using American corporate organization models as references, namely the Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman (MCM) model, Kezar and Lester’s (2009) model was comprised of three stages which were: “(a) building commitment to collaboration, (b) commitment to collaboration, and (c) sustaining collaboration” (p. 845). During stage one of building commitment to collaboration, four elements were involved – values, external pressures, learning, and networks. During this stage, institutions began to build a story for collaboration on that campus. The reasons for collaboration are then shared and discussed widely throughout campus to generate an argument for collaboration (Harris, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

In stage two of commitment to collaboration, a few criteria had to be met – mission, networks, and rewards. The institution’s mission must be revised to demonstrate the collaborative direction of the institution. Rewards for collaboration needed to be outlined. Moreover, a campus network needed to be in place to function as a source of leadership (Harris, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009). This network must be comprised of individuals who were eager to
participate and facilitate collaboration on their campus. (Harris, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

According to Kezar (2005), networks were instrumental in carrying out institutional work and were defined as “coalitions, alliances or complex set of relationships among a group of people that are useful to accomplish a present or future goal” (p. 839). Although the role of networks changed in every stage, they were crucial and essential factors to the success of each stage and to the overall success of the collaboration (Harris, 2010; Kezar, 2005; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

The final stage was sustaining collaboration. Adequately supporting collaboration was crucial to its longevity and success. During this stage, it must be apparent that the initiative that was undertaken by the organization was a part of the institution’s culture and was being adequately supported with integrating structures, rewards, and networks (Harris, 2010; Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Throughout Kezar and Lester’s three-stage model of collaboration in higher education, specific factors contributed to an organization’s progression from stage to stage. Relationships, networks, and change agents were all very important in this model (Kezar, 2001; Kezar & Lester, 2009). The progression from stage to stage can be a lengthy process that must be nurtured as Kezar and Lester (2009) cautioned that a collaborative campus environment will not emerge overnight.
Figure 1. Stage Model of Collaboration in Higher Education by Kezar and Lester.

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Research Questions

There were two central questions, one of which had two secondary questions, which this qualitative case study explored:

3. How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?
   a. How do faculty members describe their expectations of the TAMT?
   b. How do faculty members work with the TAMT to address crisis with individual students?

4. What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

Overview of the Methodology

Once I received permission from the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) of both my home institution and research site, I proceeded with the study. I piloted my questions at The University of Mississippi to test my data collection methods. The information learned and feedback gathered from that study was used to help select the research site and improve my subsequent study at that particular site.

The site for this research study was chosen based on criteria that allowed me to explore the research questions. Ideally, I wanted to conduct this study at a four year research institution with a minimum of 15,000 students. An institution with these characteristics likely represented the diversity of today’s college students. There were additional factors that I considered when choosing my research site such as identifying an institution that had a functioning TAMT for at least four years. Another attribute that I wanted the research site to possess was a TAMT that was organized in a manner that intentionally included members from academic and student affairs units on the team. Moreover, I wanted the opportunity to secure at least six to eight one-
on-one interviews with faculty members who referred a student to the TAMT at the chosen research site. Finally, I wanted an opportunity to observe at least three TAMT meetings held on that campus.

Once the research site was identified, I contacted the vice-president of student affairs at the institution to introduce the study and arranged a time for a face-to-face meeting to discuss the study. During the meeting, the vice-president of student affairs appointed one of the TAMT administrators to serve as my gatekeeper for this study. The gatekeeper helped me secure the names of 19 participants. The participants were currently-employed tenured, tenure-track, full-time clinical faculty members, and instructors with knowledge and experience with TAMTs. In addition, I asked for contact information for the chairperson of the TAMT, any other person who had acted as the chair, and any dean or chair of a department who assisted in a student referral. The gatekeeper sent an email to prospective participants to make them aware of the study and that I had been given permission to contact them. Afterwards, I contacted each person to answer any questions and to secure an interview time.

In this qualitative research study, I collected data via interviews, observations, and document analysis. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to explore and understand a social or human problem through the eyes of her participants (Creswell, 2009). A thick rich description of a phenomenon can be achieved through qualitative research (Merriam, 1998). In addition, a case study approach best fits this study because it allowed the researcher the freedom to describe, evaluate, and develop reasons for the phenomenon (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Specifically, I used a collective case study approach because although the research for this study is being conducted at one site regarding one program, each participant – faculty members, chairperson of the TAMT, and dean or chairperson of a department – who was interviewed
represented his own case because of his own experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The collective stories from participants contributed to understanding the larger phenomenon of the collaborative efforts of TAMTs on college campuses.

I triangulated the data by using one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interviews with faculty, the chairperson of the TAMT, and any department chairs involved in a TAMT referral; observations of TAMT meetings; and document analysis. The participants were three TAMT administrators and sixteen faculty members and academic administrators who referred a student or students to the TAMT within the last four years at their institution. In the event that I needed additional participants for this study, the following would have occurred: (a) I would send a letter to faculty members who had not responded to previous attempts offering them the opportunity to contact me about participating in the study, (b) I would conduct telephone interviews at a later date and time, and (c) I would use snowballing by asking faculty members who participated in the study to share the names of other possible participants (Creswell, 2008). Then I would confirm the potential participant’s eligibility with the gatekeeper.

The research questions and the theoretical framework aided in the construction of the interview questions. Interviews provided insight into faculty perception of TAMTs as a model of collaboration between academic and student affairs. With the participant’s consent, all interviews were digitally recorded using two devices. Following the interview, I wrote a brief summarization of the interview to be used later in the coding process. An outside transcriptionist transcribed all interviews verbatim. The transcripts and recordings were compared to ensure accuracy. All participants had an opportunity to review his/her interview transcript and clarify or expound upon any information that they had provided.
In addition to conducting interviews, I observed meetings of the institution’s TAMT. During these observations, I was not an active participant in the discussion. Observing how the committee conducted meetings aided in my understanding of how the committee worked on that campus. I also looked for any non-verbal cues exhibited by committee members that corresponded or conflicted with their verbal communication (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The observation helped me contextualize what faculty members reported in their interview. I took notes but did not record meetings in case confidential information was shared.

Although transcripts served as the primary data source, I extensively searched and reviewed publicly available documents that helped familiarize me with the institution and its TAMT. Articles, websites, reports, various mission statements, brochures/pamphlets, and training materials were evaluated in the document analysis. Documents were examined for accuracy, completeness, and usefulness when answering the research questions (Creswell, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) expressed that researchers should check documents for coherence and compare documents to other facts to determine plausibility. I recorded notes about each document (Creswell, 2008). I also asked the institution’s gatekeeper and the chairperson of the TAMT to assist me in the collection of pertinent documents.

Using the data gathered, I formulated chapter four. In this chapter, I provided a narrative about each of the participants interviewed. During data analysis, the transcribed interviews were used to identify patterns, themes, and subthemes. I conducted manual coding. Later, I used a qualitative software program, NVivo 10, to aid in identifying themes and subthemes. Participants were given an opportunity to read their transcripts and review the themes and subthemes during the member checking process. A description and explanation of the themes and subthemes that
emerged as a result of the interviews were shared with participants as well. In addition, direct quotes from participants were used in the findings to capture the themes.

**Definition of Terms**

*Chain of command* is “a militaristic paradigm for staff organization” in which there is a supervisor and a subordinate relationship (Jervis, 2002, p. 12).

*Collaboration* is a process in which a group of autonomous stakeholders of an issue domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain (Wood and Gray as cited in Kezar 2005, p. 833).

*Cooperation* is a formal relationship among existing networks in an organization (Mulford and Rogers, 1982).

*Coordination* refers to informal trade-offs … attempts to establish reciprocity in the absence of rules (Mulford & Rogers, 1982, p. 13)

*Intra-organizational collaboration* is collaboration among people (as in the functioning of teams, task forces, and committees) and across units (as in the search for synergies among different businesses in the same diversified company) (Mintzberg, Jorgensen, Dougherty, & Westley, 1996, p. 60).

*Networks* are coalitions, alliances or complex set of relationships among a group of people that are useful to accomplish a present or future goal (Kezar, 2005, p. 839).

*Targeted violence* is an incident of aggression that is deliberately aimed at a particular individual (Deisigner et al., 2008).

*Threat Assessment and Management Teams* are a multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concerns that may precede violent activity on campus (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 5).
Delimitations

This study focused on faculty members’ perceptions of the TAMTs as a model that helped them in directing students towards needed assistance and resources. Although reports regarding questionable student behavior can originate from various members of the campus community, this study focused on gathering information primarily from one potential reporting group, the faculty members. Therefore, I interviewed nine faculty members, at one institution in the southeastern region of the United States who had referred a student to the TAMT at that institution within the last four years. Using a single site approach afforded me an opportunity to immerse myself in the institution’s culture, interact with the participants, and spend extensive time on site gathering data.

Although instructors of record can be anyone involved in teaching a class at an institution, this study primarily focused on faculty members who were tenured, tenured-track, or full-time clinical professors. In addition, I interviewed the TAMT chairperson and two TAMT administrators. I also interviewed one academic advisor and six academic administrators who oversaw teaching faculty members, such as a department chair and dean, who were involved in a student referral to a TAMT. The information from this administrative group provided a different perspective and added to the richness of the study.

Finally, when choosing a research site, I looked for a research institution that had a functioning TAMT committee for at least four years. This four year period is within the timeframe that TAMTs became more present at institutions of higher education. Using this timeframe as a guide, I avoided collecting data at an institution that recently started a TAMT.
Limitations

There were a few limitations to this study. First, because of the sensitive nature of my study and the many positive responses, participants might have embellished, may not have been as forthcoming in their interviews, or wanted to ensure that their institution was viewed positively. Second, the observation of the TAMT could have been different due to someone’s absence, not having any pressing student matters, or having a pressing student issue. A third limitation was that the documents collected in the study could have been inaccurate, outdated, differed between best practices and daily practices, or were so recent that the information did not resonate with faculty members. I carefully listened, asked probing questions, and sought clarification if there appeared to be any discrepancy in the information shared.

Finally, the timing of data collection presented limitations. I interviewed participants towards the end of fall semester of 2012 and the beginning of spring 2013. As a result, some faculty members were occupied with the demands of fall and spring semesters. This resulted in some faculty members declining to participate in the study or a delay in providing a day and time to be interviewed. My timing was critical. However, collecting data in the summer, characterized by some as a slower time of year for faculty, would have presented an additional challenge in that individuals who were eligible to participate in the study could have left the institution. This would have resulted in a dwindling participant pool for me.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one provided an overview of the study, which examined faculty members’ experiences and perceptions of TAMT at one public four year institution located in the southeast. The overview included the research study’s purpose, its significance, the research questions, delimitations, limitations, and definitions.
Chapter two provides an in-depth review of literature relevant to this emerging topic. The literature focuses on five primary areas: (a) collaboration, (b) the Kezar and Lester stage model for collaboration in higher education, (c) faculty, (d) contemporary students, and (e) the journey to TAMTs in higher education.

Chapter three details the organization of the qualitative case study approach used for this study. It provides insight into the participants, research site, role of the researcher, data collection, and trustworthiness. Furthermore, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations also are addressed.

Chapter four provides the findings of the research. In addition, individual participant profiles are offered. The analysis of the data collected via interview, observation, and documentation is revealed. In addition, themes are discussed, both major themes and sub-themes.

Finally, chapter five offers a discussion and conclusion for the study. The research questions are discussed as they relate to the findings. In addition, the conceptual framework used in this study is examined. Implications for higher education, policy, and future research are provided as well.
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This qualitative case study explored faculty perceptions of the college and university threat assessment and management team (TAMT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions. The study investigated the effectiveness of the TAMTs as described by individuals who come in contact with students frequently, faculty members. The review of the literature examines five areas directly associated with the phenomenon to demonstrate a need for this study. The review of the literature is presented as follows. First, a definition of collaboration, an introduction to research about collaborations in higher education, and identification of barriers will be provided. Second, a detailed description of the conceptual framework, a model developed by Kezar and Lester (2009) specifically for use in higher education collaborations, is discussed. Third, an overview of the teaching context for contemporary faculty members will be presented. The overview will offer a glimpse of faculty history, their role in higher education, and how they are attempting to manage today’s students. Fourth, a detailed description of today’s student will be explained. The diversity demographics, challenges, and needs will be discussed. Lastly, a thorough investigation into TAMTs will be given. How these teams have evolved and the impact that they have had on laws and the lives of faculty and students will be revealed.
Collaboration

Collaboration, as defined by Wood and Gray, (as cited in Kezar, 2005) is “a process in which a group of autonomous stakeholders of an issue domain engage in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (p. 437). In addition, Gray (1989) asserted that collaborations involve “parties who see different aspects of a problem and constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their own limited vision of what is possible” (p. 5), and then execute those solutions together (Thompson & Perry, 2006). The process is interactive and requires effort from all involved throughout the process. Gray (1989) and Adelman and Taylor (2003) both indicated that collaboration is more than coordination and cooperation. Mulford and Rogers (1982) defined cooperation as a formal relationship among existing networks in an organization. According to Mulford and Rogers, “coordination refers to informal trade-offs … attempts to establish reciprocity in the absence of rules” (p. 13). Furthermore, Adelman and Taylor outlined how to achieve authentic collaboration:

One hallmark of authentic collaboration and partnerships is a formal agreement among participants to establish mechanisms and processes to accomplish mutually desired results (usually outcomes that would be difficult to achieve by any of the participants alone). In pursuing desired results, authentic collaborations design mechanisms and processes that (a) enable shared power, authority, decision making, and accountability; (b) weave together a set of resources (including financial and social capital); and (c) establish well-defined working relationships that connect, mobilize, and use the resources in planful and mutually beneficial ways. (p. 55)
On one hand, collaboration holds a very team oriented and group focused meaning; however, on the other hand, collaboration holds a very negative connotation. For example, *The American Heritage College Dictionary* (1997) defined the verb collaborate as “to cooperate treasonably, as with an enemy” (p. 273). The second definition is derived from World War II and dates back to the 1940s when members of Frances’s Vichy Government collaborated with the Nazis (Gordon, 1980). In this context, collaboration occurred when citizens were complicit with an enemy force that inhabited the region (Gordon, 1980). At times, these collaborations resulted in criminal acts such as killing citizens of the occupied territory (Gordon, 1980). Based on the two very different interpretations, it is easy to understand why some individuals may not be fond of the word or the concept of collaborating. Hence, understanding these different perspectives on collaboration may be worthwhile when seeking to implement or promote collaboration.

In addition to having two very conflicting meanings, the word collaboration is often used interchangeably with other words such as partnering, networking, coordinating, and teamwork in research studies and literature (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Although the terms share similarities, there are some distinct differences. Kezar and Lester (2009) addressed this dilemma in their research by finding a common thread for all the related terms which was that groups were “examining different ways of working together that involve collective and interactive approaches” (p. 6). To account for these differences in perspective about the value and results of collaboration, I chose a conceptual framework that encompassed all of the terms associated with collaboration as long as the involved groups develop structures that collectively include others in an interactive process.

Although collaboration efforts between academic and student affairs units are relatively new, members from both groups are beginning to emerge from their departmental silos to engage
with one another. Kezar and Lester (2009) found that collaborations between academic and student affairs benefit institutions in numerous ways. According to Kezar and Lester, the benefits include “student learning and teaching, research, improved governance and management, and operations and service” (pp. 15-20). In times of shrinking institutional funding, the benefits in the areas listed above enhance the higher education experience for students, faculty, and staff.

**Successful Collaborations in Higher Education.**

With varying degrees of success, many academic and student affairs units are attempting to collaborate. Success can depend on factors such as student enrollment and institution type (public or private) (Kezar, 2001). Moreover, the success of one collaborative effort can inspire participation in additional collaborations (Kezar, 2001). Kezar (2001) found that co-curricular collaborations enacted by both academic and student affairs staff were moderately successful. These co-curricular collaborations included advising, retention plans, diversity programs, and leadership development. Kezar also reported that programs such as first year experience, orientation, recruitment, athletics, were the most successful collaborations. The area that Kezar saw as lacking in progress from collaboration involved curricular collaborations. These collaborations included faculty oriented endeavors such as faculty development programs and senior-year experience courses.

Although there have been many successful collaborations to date, not all collaborations undertaken in higher education succeed. According to Doz (1996) more than 50% of collaborations fail. As a result, this research study will add to what is known in the area of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs as it pertains to TAMTs. Threat assessment and management teams flourished as a result of violence on college campuses; yet; little is known about how well academic and student affairs divisions collaborate
while serving on these teams and addressing student concerns. This study may provide information that could help fill in the gap in the literature regarding TAMTs.

**Student Outcomes from Collaboration.**

Nesheim et al. (2007) reported that when researching collaboration between academic and student affairs units there was one crucial area that was not being addressed. That area was student outcomes as a result of academic and student affairs partnerships (Nesheim et al., 2007). Students are the recipients of collaborative efforts because partnerships often are created to enhance the educational experience for students. As a result, the Boyer Partnership Assessment Project (BPAP) was created in 2001 to explore outcomes of participants involved in academic and student affairs partnership programs. With this in mind, researchers conducted a qualitative case study via on-site interviews, observation of participants, and document analysis (Neishem et al., 2007). Eighteen widely diverse institutions were the research sites used to uncover students’ perceptions about academic and student affairs partnership programs such as “first-year transitions, service learning and community service, living-learning communities, academic support, interdisciplinary courses, cultural programming, and leadership development” (Nesheim et al., 2007, p. 438).

The results of Nesheim et al.’s (2007) research on partnerships uncovered four categories as a result of partnership programs “acclimation to the institution, engagement, student learning, and academic and career decision” (p. 440). The first category, acclimation to the institution, had three outcomes. The first outcome was effective transitions. Students felt their transition from high school to college was easier because of the knowledge they acquired about the institution and its resources while participating in the partnership (Neishem et al, 2007). The next outcome was sense of community. Partnership programs provided student with a sense of community and
a sense of belonging at the institution early-on, which at times made large institutions feel smaller (Neishem et al, 2007). The final outcome was persistence in college. At times, the partnership programs helped the institution retain students because the programs were the reasons the students remained enrolled there (Neishem et al, 2007).

The second category was engagement in and outside the classroom. Nesheim et al. (2007) described the engagement outcomes as “(a) campus involvement, (b) academic engagement, (c) civic engagement, and (d) interactions with faculty and students” (p. 441). Nesheim et al. reported that partnership programs raised students’ awareness about campus events and activities which resulted in greater student involvement. Next, students were more involved in the learning process which increased class attendance and decreased discipline issues (Neishem et al., 2007). Furthermore, partnership programs helped students recognize the impact they could have on others through community service opportunities, service learning, and community activism (Neishem et al., 2007). Finally, partnerships programs gave students an opportunity to interact with faculty members and their peers in meaningful ways outside of the classroom (Neishem et al., 2007).

The third category was student learning. Neishem et al. (2007) found that student learning had five outcomes. Partnership programs helped students connect their curricular and co-curricular activities (Neishem et al., 2007). In addition, partnership programs sharpened students’ critical thinking skills (Neishem et al., 2007). Furthermore, partnership programs “fostered accountability as individuals and peers took on responsibility for the learning process” (Neishem et al., 2007, p. 444). Next, partnership programs promoted self-reflection which resulted in greater self-awareness and personal identity (Neishem et al., 2007). Finally, Neishem et al. found that students became more cognizant of how others felt.
The fourth category was academic and career decisions. There were three outcomes associated with this category: choice of college, choice of major, and choice of career (Neishem et al., 2007). Nesheim et al. (2007) discovered that, for some students, partnership programs were the deciding factor when choosing a postsecondary institution. Finally, partnership programs helped students explore and select majors and careers in an informed manner (Neishem et al., 2007).

Nesheim et al.’s (2007) research demonstrated that successful partnerships between academic and student affairs resulted in the creation of the seamless learning environments that Kuh (1996) wrote about nearly 20 year ago. In addition, the presence of more engaged students directly resulted from seamless learning environments (Nesheim et al., 2007). Nesheim et al. found that students could benefit greatly from academic and student affairs partnership programs and that interaction with faculty members played a profound role in the lives of student.

**Barriers to Collaboration.**

Scholars identified a number of barriers to collaboration in higher education. For example, Kezar (2006) observed that institutions are not organized to support collaborative endeavors. Harris (2010) said “the role of departments, disciplinary silos, and bureaucratic administrative structures” were reasons why higher education had not participated in more collaborations (p. 22). When institutions attempt collaboration within their current institutional structure the efforts are sometimes fruitless because of organization, administration, and processes. As a result, Kezar insisted that collaboration works best when organizations embrace the concept of collaboration and when the overall culture changes to embody the philosophical shift.
Structural barriers also prohibit collaborations. Oftentimes, student and academic affairs staff are housed separately in distant offices and have a history of operating autonomously (Philpott & Strange, 2005). As a result, there are limited opportunities for these groups to consistently interact in meaningful ways. Another structural barrier is that the duties, responsibilities, compensation, and policies differ between student and academic affairs (Streit, 1993). As result, power and status differentials contributed to a larger reluctance among individuals to engage in new approaches or to oppose collaboration in general.

Kezar (2001) said that collaboration also has cultural barriers which “relate to an ability to work together and lack of a cooperative spirit” (p. 48). If an institution does not have an air of cooperation and does not engage in open and constructive dialogue, collaboration will be stifled (Kezar, 2001). Institutions must be intentional about establishing the right kind of environment for collaborations to thrive.

Collaboration between academic and student affairs can be hindered because of viewpoints about each other held by members of academic and student affairs (Streit, 1993). Student affairs professionals have been considered administrators, not educators for some time (Philpott & Strange, 2003; Streit, 1993). On the other hand, faculty members are viewed as not attending to the holistic needs of students as well as not hard working (Streit, 1993). Faculty and student affairs professional must acknowledge their conflicting viewpoints, learn about themselves and their university subculture groups, and then attempt to learn about the other group if collaboration efforts are to move forward successfully (Magolda, 2005).

Differences in viewpoints and values between groups can result in conflict. Although academic and student affairs have attempted to avoid conflict, Magolda (2005) cautioned that aiming to get along without conflict can be a barrier as well. Magolda (2005) believed there is a
need for each unit to allow conflict to exist as long as civility and respect are maintained. Gamson (as cited in Magolda, 2001; Magolda 2005) recognized the tendency to avoid conflict and underscored the value of continued interaction:

[Higher education communities] must develop ways for members to disagree with one another without losing the respect of other members. People in colleges and universities are notoriously uncomfortable with conflict. We run away from it or stomp it into the ground. We deny it or overdramatize it…. Dealing with conflict… requires respect and civility. It does not ask that parties love or even like each other, just that they continue interacting. (p. 6)

Healthy collaborations develop best when members of each group share their differing views. Furthermore, Mary Parker Follet (as cited in Mintzberg, Jorgensen, Dougherty, & Westley, 1996) stressed that collaboration does not have to mean compromise (my way or your way); it should encourage groups to develop a third way of doing things together. On the other hand, Ressor (as cited in Martin and Samels, 2001) encouraged those involved in collaboration to strive to think as other individuals involved in the partnership would. If group members considered and valued everyone’s perspective equally, the odds of partnership success would likely increase.

Reliance upon only working with people you know further constrains collaboration. Mintzberg et al. (1996) reported that groups that have been convened with the same people for some time need to be shaken up and moved around before they become too comfortable. If left intact, these groups may only value the opinions of those in their group. This condition ultimately causes deterioration to the group’s effectiveness (Mintzberg et al., 1996).
The difficulty associated with collaboration can be a major deterrent. Mintzberg et al. (1996) described the labor of collaboration when they revealed that it “can be tedious, slow, and complex” (p. 69). As a result, many are reluctant to enter into these arrangements that require such hard work and diligence. On the other hand, people often engage in collaborations and do not realize that they are doing so (Mintzberg et al., 1996). In this way, creating structures to govern an already existing collaboration may in essence limit its success and thus become a barrier.

One of the biggest barriers for academic and student affairs collaboration involves personnel changes in student affairs (Martin & Samels, 2001). Student affairs staff members, specifically entry level, often rotate through institutions at a high rate early in their careers (Martin & Murphy, 2000). This is very different from how most faculty members approach their employment. Some faculty members usually “plant” themselves at institutions in pursuit of tenure (Martin & Murphy, 2000). As a result of the comparatively high turn-over in entry level student affairs positions, faculty members were often less motivated to participate in student affairs collaborations because of the challenges that come with an ever changing staff such as learning how to work together, changes in funding, and changes regarding direction (Martin & Murphy, 2000).

Luckily, some barriers to collaborations between academic and student affairs can be addressed. Streit (1993) suggested that institutions intentionally include the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) in curriculum discussions. This allows the student development perspective to be represented in the discussion (Streit, 1993). In addition, including language about the expectation that a joint plan of collaboration be developed by the chief student affairs officer (CSAO) and the chief academic affairs officer (CAO) helps legitimize student affairs and encourages the two to
work together to better the overall student experience (Streit, 1993). This is especially important because as Hirsch (as cited by Martin & Samels, 2001) asserted that relationships between CSAOs and CAOs can determine the success of a partnership.

In addition, changing the tenure process to reward faculty for service to students outside of the classroom setting may further encourage more faculty to participate in collaborative efforts (Martin & Murphy, 2000; Streit, 1993). Moreover, encouraging student affairs staff members to teach and/or co-teach may substantiate their roles as educators (Streit, 1993). In addition, some institutions have chosen to house the student affairs division within academic affairs to increase contact and collaboration between the two units (Walters, 2003).

Although collaborations between academic and student affairs divisions have a number of benefits as well as barriers, Magolda (2001) and Magolda (2005) cautioned groups to first ask themselves if collaboration is necessary before beginning any endeavor. Like many others, Kezar and Lester (2009) believed that there are times when collaborations should not be undertaken. Walters (2003) asserted that if a collaboration is to be successful it needs to be “well thought, strategic, and comprehensive” (p. 33).

**Research Involving Collaboration in Higher Education.**

At the turn of the 21st century, research on collaboration in higher education was being conducted. Kezar (2001) led a study in 1999-2000 that looked at the trends of collaboration between academic and student affairs. Her participants were a sample of chief student affairs officers (CSAOs) from diverse institution types. Of the 260 individuals that she pinpointed for the study, only 128 individuals responded to her survey instrument (Kezar, 2001). Hence, the response rate was less than 50%, Kezar’s findings should be viewed cautiously.
Kezar (2001) reported that all CSAOs who participated in her study reported some form of collaboration between academic and student affairs at their institutions. Public institutions had the most successful collaborations (Kezar, 2001). Furthermore, successful collaborations had funding associated with them many times (Kezar, 2001). “Cooperation, student affairs staff attitudes, common goals, and personalities” influenced the success of collaborative efforts (Kezar, 2001, p. 44). Kezar’s findings also showed that institutions should continue collaborative efforts around initiatives that have been successful. Gaining the support of senior administration also contributes to the success of collaborations (Kezar, 2001). The researcher also offered cultural and structural strategies that contributed to collaboration and change. The strategies were “leadership, cross-institutional dialogue, setting expectations, generating enthusiasm, creating a common vision, staff development, and planning” (p. 46).

In 2003, Kezar used data from the study she conducted in 1999-2000 again. The study examined three models that could be used in academic and student affairs collaborations, “Kuh’s model (change) focuses on values and beliefs, planned change focuses on leadership and planning, and restructuring and re-engineering focuses on structural alterations” (p. 138). Kezar found that an institution is most successful when Kuh’s model and the planned change model were used together.

In 2005, Kezar conducted another research study. This time she set out to determine how institutions advanced from being individually oriented, like most, to being more collaborative. Her study was influenced by four models of collaboration theory; one theory developed by Mohrman, Cohen, and Mohrman (MCM) was used to help shape her study. The MCM was “created within the corporate context” and “was selected because it was the most closely relevant
to the phenomenon under study, but also because it is one of the most comprehensive 
developmental models” (Kezar, 2005, p. 835).

Participants were nominated, surveyed, and interviewed prior to selection (Kezar, 2005). 
The four non-elite institutions allowed to participate in the study had conducted a great deal of 
collaboration within and outside of the institution and had achieved high levels of internal 
organizational collaboration (Kezar, 2005). Kezar (2005) employed a case study design while 
conducting her study. Kezar discovered “eight core elements” that needed to be redesigned to 
facilitate an environment for collaboration, “(1) mission; (2) integrating structures; (3) campus 
networks; (4) rewards; (5) a sense of priority from people in senior positions; (6) external 
pressure) (7) values; and (8) learning” (p. 833). This study resulted in the creation of a three 
stage model (Kezar, 2005).

Later, Kezar and Lester (2009) slightly altered the model that emerged in 2005. The 
model released in 2005 listed eight elements while the 2009 model listed only seven elements 
because sense of priority from senior executives was removed. Kezar and Lester removed the 
element because in higher education senior executives are less directive than those in corporate 
America. In higher education, senior executives had little to do with which collaborations 
emerged or how they were designed, that was delegated to faculty and staff (Kezar & Lester, 
2009). Although a sense of priority from senior executives was present, and at times was slightly 
directive when it involved rewards and integrating structures; overall, it was less directive in the 
higher education setting and therefore removed as an element. The new model will be discussed 
later as the conceptual framework of this study.

Harris (2010) conducted a study that explored interdisciplinary teaching and research 
collaborations by examining “how interdisciplinary strategies at American research universities
emerge, develop, and become institutionalized” (p. 25). Harris used Kezar and Lester’s model for intra-organizational collaboration as his conceptual framework. Twenty-one institutions, twenty of which were Carnegie classified research institutions in the United States, were involved in his study and data was collected through the review of institutional documents (Harris, 2010).

The documents collected by the researcher revealed how interdisciplinary collaboration existed and flourished at the 21 institutions (Harris, 2010). The research institutions in this study deemed collaboration to be necessary as they continued to compete for research dollars (Harris, 2010). They also viewed interdisciplinary activity as central to maintaining their research status (Harris, 2010). In addition, Harris found that these institutions “couple external pressures to solve societal problems with their own internal values supporting collaboration” (p. 32). For many of the research institutions, interdisciplinary research was supported with funding and the construction of physical space to house these interdisciplinary facilities (Harris, 2010). Finally, many of the research institutions involved in this study were not afraid to look at hiring additional personnel and re-evaluating the tenure process.

In another higher education related collaboration study, Rodem (2011) investigated collaboration between four pairs of instructors, eight individuals, who taught the first year seminar at Bowling Green State University. Each pair consisted of one individual from student affairs and one individual from academic affairs. Rodem used the Vygotsky theoretical framework in her dissertation because the framework asserted that social interactions with others can help an individual in reaching his/her full potential (or cognitive development). This framework allowed Rodem to interview each participant individually at the beginning, then
Rodem (2011) found that successful partnerships resulted in a higher productivity than individual work. She also revealed the vital role that developing trust, spending time with a partner, and level of comfort can play in a partnership (Rodem, 2011). In addition, prior knowledge of the individual and shared values also influenced the success of the collaboration (Rodem, 2011). Like many others who have researched collaboration, Rodem discovered that the success of collaboration can hinge on how well partnerships are established and supported. Therefore, developing meaningful relationships and effectively communicating contributed to the success of collaboration (Kanter, 1994). This study will explore how TAMT partnerships are established and maintained; as well as, look at how communication occurs within these partnerships.

**Kezar and Lester’s Three Stage Model as a Conceptual Framework**

Kezar and Lester’s (2009) three stage model of collaboration in higher education is the conceptual framework for this study. The model was formulated to assist leaders in creating higher education organizations that are successfully collaborative (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Although individual leaders come and go, Kezar and Lester deemed that a well-established plan of collaboration would be hard to dismantle if it becomes a part of the institution’s mission, structures, and rewards.

While the three stages of the model must be completed in order, the time that it may take to move from stage to stage differs based on institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009). The model is often illustrated in a circular fashion. Each stage of the model is detailed below. Hence, the seven elements that must be addressed to create a collaborative environment within an institution are
identified by Kezar and Lester (2009) as: mission, vision, and education philosophy; values; networks; integrating structures; reward; external pressures; and learning. These elements appear throughout the three stages of the model. Of the seven elements, the three elements that are critical for any successful collaboration are: (a) mission and vision, (b) a campus network, and (c) integrating systems (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Furthermore, the model demonstrates that networks and relationships are very important to a successful collaboration in higher education (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

**Stage One: Building Commitment.**

Stage one begins with messages being shared with the campus community to convince them of the relevance of collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). This message can be conveyed based on values, external pressures from constituents, and benefits of collaborations (Kezar & Lester, 2009). In stage one there are four essential elements that are necessary to help institutions demonstrate support for collaboration. The elements are values, external pressure, learning, and networks (Kezar & Lester, 2009). These elements are needed to help construct a foundation that supports commitment to collaboration throughout the institution; it helps the institution create a story in support of collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Each element may be demonstrated or identified differently on every campus because of history and tradition (Kezar & Lester, 2009). If one element is used independently of the others, the collaboration is not likely to be successful (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

The first element is values. Identifying institutional values that support collaboration will help establish a new institutional philosophy and aid members of the community in recognizing the importance of collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Kezar and Lester (2009) found that institutions that embodied values of being student centered, innovative, and egalitarian were
often able to collaborate more easily because they put forward concrete and compelling reasons for why collaboration was important to their institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

The second element is external pressure. As higher education financial resources dwindle, external sources of funding become more important. Therefore, when external pressure is exerted by outside constituents regarding the need to collaborate, members of the institution begin to take notice because they fear losing financial support (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Campus leaders, change agents, or some existing networks that already support collaborative endeavors should share very broadly the comments from external groups. Kezar and Lester (2009) suggested that knowledge of external pressures might help some individuals accept the need to collaborate.

The third element is learning. Learning is promoted when members of leadership share the benefits of collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Offering information that can be shared widely can aid in convincing campus community members of the need to collaborate. The learning element can be the evidence that some people need to compel them to participate in collaboration.

Finally, networks are the fourth element in stage one. These networks perform best when there is trust and mutual respect among members of the group (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Pre-existing networks are ideal when launching an effort to change the culture of an institution because they can promote and support collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009). If not already established, networks can be built by having meetings in common areas where faculty members gather to arouse interest (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Contrary to what many may believe, senior executives alone are unable to build commitment for collaboration in higher education (Kezar &
Lester, 2009). Kezar and Lester (2009) explained that it takes a network of people from all over campus to help validate the need for collaboration.

**Stage Two: Commitment to Collaboration.**

Once the institution understands that there can be a new/improved way of doing things, the organization is ready for stage two, which is a call for action. If ever an institution is to be committed to collaboration there are three things that need to happen. First, senior executives must work with the campus community to revise the mission and vision of the institution so that collaboration is clearly articulated and outwardly supported at that level (Kezar & Lester, 2009). The new philosophy must be viewed as important across campus. Furthermore, Kezar and Lester (2009) proclaimed that there should be opportunities available to the campus community to talk about and make sense of the new changes as well. This meant that simply rewriting the mission statement is not enough.

Second, senior executives need to provide rewards for collaboration. These rewards can take many forms such as mini-grant opportunities, revised promotion and tenure guidelines for faculty, and merit raises given in annual reviews (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Martin & Murphy, 2000). This signifies to the community the priority and importance of collaboration to senior executives. In addition, senior executives must also model the new philosophy to others in the institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009). The success of collaborations often hinge on senior executives’ support of projects, which is often financial, and encouragement to do more. Therefore, their support must be evident through written forms such as in documents and strategic plans (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

The third thing that must be met in stage two is having a group of individuals in place, a network, which actively supports and works to achieve collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009).
These networks serve in a leadership capacity. They put the mission into action and help mobilize the rest of the campus. Kezar and Lester (2009) revealed one of the key responsibilities of those individuals who serve in a network capacity is that those individuals “move the campus past ideas, visions, and mission to implementation” (p. 224). Having the correct people in place can influence how others receive and execute the idea of collaboration.

**Stage Three: Sustaining Collaboration.**

Once an institution has embraced collaboration, there must be attention given to the creation or redesign of campus systems that support sustaining the collaboration. The elements that must be met in this stage are integrating structures, rewards and incentive, and networks (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Kezar and Lester (2009) explained that there are particular elements necessary to sustain collaborations at an institution of higher education which are “integrating structure, rewards, resources, hiring, and formalizing the network” (p. 224). Showing a commitment to making a collaboration work by designating resources, personnel, and processes will greatly improve the likelihood that a campus will become more collaborative.

Hence, one way to promote sustainable collaboration on campus can entail making the overall venture easier to accomplish through the use of integrated structures (Kezar & Lester, 2009). As a result, some institutions have created structures such as accounting systems, budgetary systems, and units to promote and house collaboration institutes (Kezar & Lester, 2009). These integrated structures support teamwork and collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

In addition, Kezar and Lester (2009) affirmed that rewards and incentives are important motivational tools for staff willing to collaborate. Kezar and Lester also acknowledged that funding must be available to finance the infrastructure necessary to sustain collaboration efforts. Furthermore, changing how promotion and tenure are granted may aid in increasing
collaboration efforts as well (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Moreover, administrative support can sustain collaboration because as people take on additional work, having additional help in carrying out tasks can determine the success or failure of these projects (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Next, a network that is committed can help sustain collaboration on an institution’s campus. These individuals are responsible for continuing existing collaborations, encouraging new collaboration, and resolving any glitches in collaboration efforts on campus (Kezar & Lester, 2009). However, senior executives must be active in sustaining collaboration because these individuals control institutional resources and can change things that are hindering collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Collaboration between academic and student affairs is becoming more prevalent in higher education. Students, faculty, departments, and campus communities are benefitting from these collaborative efforts. Through the use of this conceptual framework, this study aims to explore more about one academic and student affairs endeavor, namely TAMTs, as a possible collaboration and a means to diminish students’ crises and acts of violence at institutions of higher education.

Faculty

First Faculty Members.

Seventeenth century instructors were young men who were approximately 21 years old who had ministerial plans and newly minted bachelor’s degrees (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). At that time, instructors were referred to as tutors (Rudolph, 1962; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Each tutor was charged with overseeing a group of students, usually white males (Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2003), through four years of school intellectually, morally, and spiritually (NASPA, 1989; Rudolph, 1962; & Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). The results of the
education rendered to these students were training for occupations such as clergy and political leadership to combat barbarism (Rudolph, 1962). Faculty members often acted as though they were the parental figures in the lives of students at the institution (Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2003). This task was not an easy one; tutors were often at odds with students regarding issues involving the curriculum and undesirable food (Rudolph, 1962; Thelin, 2003). Tutors were usually short term staff who used the position as a springboard to the next opportunity (Rudolph, 1962; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). As a result, they rarely ushered a group through four years of school.

After 1750, permanent faculty members called professors began to join tutors in the teaching ranks at American institutions (Finkelstein, 1997). These men usually worked at the same institution they once attended (Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006). Although the professors and tutors were often academically involved with the students, Finkelstein (1997) and Schuster and Finkelstein (2006) pointed out three distinct differences between the two groups: professors focused on a specialty area where as tutors were in charge of all aspects of learning for their group of students; professors were often older men who had gained some post-baccalaureate training; and the professor’s status at the institution was stable and on-going, maybe even permanent. In a relatively short period of time, professors were viewed as experts, were free to specialize in a particular subject area, and may have achieved graduate degrees (Finkelstein, 1997; Schuster & Finkelstein, 2006).

Initially, faculty members were completely responsible for all facets of institutions of higher education, both academic and student life (Colwell, 2006; Philpott & Strange, 2003). In this context, collaboration appealed to faculty because they coordinated campus life with faculty colleagues (Philpott & Strange, 2003). In later years, the immense responsibility of operating an
institution became a daunting task because of increased student enrollment and the advent of more complex student organizations and activities such as campus publications, athletics, and Greek-letter fraternities (Thelin, 2004). Although faculty members did not favor activities that caused students to deviate from formal curriculum, students persisted and prevailed in establishing such organizations that further increased the complexity of post-secondary institutions (Thelin, 2003).

As a result, colleges and universities hired deans of record to handle increased enrollment and poor student behavior (Thelin, 2004). Institutions charged deans to handle non-academic activities such as discipline and enforcing policy (Colwell, 2006; Thelin, 2004). The duties of deans of record soon expanded to include other non-academic responsibilities as well, which was indicated in *The Student Personnel Point of View of 1937*. This document articulated the core values of student affairs and explained that over time the roles of student personnel administrators included a plethora of student service-oriented activities not associated with classroom teaching such as “educational counseling, vocational counseling, the administration of loans and scholarship funds, part-time employment, graduate placement, student health, extracurricular activities, social programs, and a number of others” (American Council on Education [ACE], pp. 39-40).

In exchange, faculty members became more academically focused and were “encouraged to pursue their research specializations in laboratories, archives, and libraries and to bring the most recent scholarly knowledge to light in lectures and seminars” (Urban & Wagoner, 2009, p. 207). The efforts of faculty to advance research coalesced with the scientists in many disciplines and new fields of study (Geiger, 1990). As a result, increased scientific research meant that
faculty devoted less time to meeting the holistic needs of students (ACE, 1937). Moreover, for some faculty members research became more important than instruction (Thelin, 2003).

Consequently, the increased attention to academics and research caused the creation of hierarchical structures to address the complexities of higher education. These structures contributed to the lack of interest in collaborating in higher education and the bifurcation of academic and student affairs units (Schroeder, 2003). Faculty and student affairs staff members were performing two distinctly different tasks within the institution; as a result, collaboration between the two entities waned (Colwell, 2006). The separation of duties eventually led to each group’s limited knowledge of the other group’s responsibility (Colwell, 2006; Philpott & Strange, 2003). Thus, academic and student affairs continued to operate in individual silos with faculty ostensibly responsible for student learning and student affairs professionals primarily responsible for co-curricular activities (ACE, 1937).

The ethos changed from a focus on individual silos to creating seamless learning environments in the 1990s. Kuh (1996) supported the notion of connecting curricular and co-curricular experiences for students with the idea of seamless learning environments. He explained that seamless learning environments are created when curricular and co-curricular activities are seen as continuous, not separate (Kuh, 1996). Faculty members played a critical role as higher education began to change and extensive literature was written to support the need for faculty involvement.

In addition to Kuh’s work, the 1990s brought additional publications from professional associations such as the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). A few of the works generated by these groups included: Reasonable
Expectations (Kuh, Lyons, Miller, & Trow, 1995), The Student Learning Imperative: Implications for Student Affairs (ACPA, 1994), Principles of Good Practice for Student Affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 1997), and Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998). Each one of these documents expressed a need for collaboration between academic and students affairs personnel to enhance student learning.

Upon the arrival of the 21st century, new publications urged universities to adopt a student-centered approach for the improvement of student learning. Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College (Association of American Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2002) and Learning Reconsidered: A Campus-Wide Focus on the Student Experience (Keeling, 2004) compelled administrators to rethink undergraduate education in a way that placed students and student learning at its core. To improve student learning and the undergraduate experience, collaboration between academic and student affairs emerged as a key recommendation to address the holistic development of students in a curricular, co-curricular, and civic sense. Indeed, the role of faculty members had changed considerably over time and now new challenges require faculty members to address the emotional and intellectual needs of today’s students.

Today’s Faculty Members: Who Are They?

Today’s faculty members still play an essential role in higher education and working with students. The Almanac of Higher Education (as cited in The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2009) reported that there were 703,463 faculty members in higher education the fall of 2007. Unfortunately, the faculty ranks are not seeing the surge in numbers like student enrollment. Clayton-Pederson, Parker, Smith, Moreno, and Teraguchi (as cited in Smith, 2011) reported that at some institutions 60% or more of newly hired faculty members are replacements for former
faculty member. However, Smith (2011) reported that there has been a marginal increase in the number of international, Black, Latino, American Indian, and women faculty members. Lucas (1996) captured the numerous roles that faculty members in higher education engage in as:

They teach, counsel students, conduct experiments and otherwise do research, delve into the library’s archives, sit on committees, write grants, engage in consulting activities off-campus, supervise student interns in field sites, read books and articles to keep current in their fields, participate in campus activities, prepare class notes, and attend professional conferences and meetings. (p. 25)

Although faculty members have many tasks, some go about their work by putting in long hours with little recognition from the public (Lucas, 1996). In addition, faculty members are expected to build collegial relationships, manage the intense politics associated with academia, and perform three components of their position – teaching, research, and service to gain tenure and promotion (Lucas, 1996; Martin & Murphy, 2000). Furthermore, faculty members are expected to be accountable for their efforts and time (Lucas, 1996). This is a result of the academic accountability imposed on higher education by students, parents, legislators, corporate donations, and donors (Lucas, 1996). As a result of increased expectations, some faculty members are reluctant to take on additional responsibilities such as increasing informal interactions with students, changing their classroom lecture format to one that allows for more interaction and discourse with students, or voluntarily engaging in collaborative projects. However, as members of a campus community, faculty members must take seriously their responsibility to help enhance the college experience for students and making the campus community safer and better. Education about and use of TAMTs gives faculty members an opportunity to do just that.
Barriers for Faculty Members.

Faculty members are not immune to having challenges in today’s institutions. Altbach (2011) reported that becoming a faculty member is less attractive because of non-competitive salaries, larger classes, and the push for faculty to secure outside funding for the institution and research. A faculty member’s experience depends on many factors such as institution type, geographical location, department culture, and the size of the student body (Lucas, 1996). Moreover, the opportunities to earn promotion and tenure are dwindling because institutions are choosing to hire more non-tenured faculty due to economic pressures (Burgan, 1999; Weber, 1999). At times, part-time faculty members are less invested and less attuned to student needs because they are not permanent (Burgan, 2006) and are often left out of critical conversations (Martin & Murphy, 2000). Therefore, having increased numbers of part-time faculty inevitably declines the number of faculty available for partnerships (Martin & Murphy, 2000).

Moreover, there also has been an on-going debate regarding the need to reassess tenure (Burgan, 2006). Although faculty members can be terminated under very specific conditions, for most faculty members tenure provides them with “a guarantee of lifetime career security” (Lucas, 1999, p. 174). However, there is a pervasive belief that new professors are unable to advance because older and often less productive professors occupy tenured positions (Bowen & Schuster, 1986). Furthermore as faculty members get older, the gap continues to widen between them and today’s students (Martin & Murphy, 2000). This often leaves both faculty and students frustrated. Students are frustrated with older faculty members who do not effectively relate to them. Faculty members are frustrated because they see students as lazy and do not understand the needs of today’s students as they are different from any other students they have encountered.
However, the stresses associated with obtaining tenure can erupt into violence as was the case with Dr. Bishop at the University of Alabama in Huntsville.

Dr. Bishop was a biology professor who had been denied tenure once and then on the morning of February 12, 2010 she learned that her tenure appeal had been denied as well (Schultz, 2010). A colleague speculated that her denial might have been because she had too few publications, not secured a substantial amount of grants, and her peculiar personality (Barlett & Wilson, 2010). Although Dr. Bishop had hired legal representation to fight the decision, she attended a routine department staff meeting where she killed three colleagues and wounded three others (Bartlett & Wilson, 2010). Hence, for some faculty members, having to concentrate more on students can be a competing interest when attempting to fulfill the research and publishing requirements necessary to be considered for tenure and promotion.

In addition, faculty members are faced with teaching increasingly unmotivated (Crone & MacKay, 2007), harder to reach students (McGlynn, 2008). Crone and MacKay (2007) declared that faculty resent the fact that they are battling “for student’s time and attention” (p. 18). Gone are the days when faculty members could spend their class time lecturing. To hold the attention of student’s today, faculty members must become more technologically savvy (Duderstadt, 1999) and make learning more interactive or group oriented (Martin & Murphy, 2000). Today a faculty member is expected to take on the role of being a coach or consultant in the classroom (Duderstadt, 1999). Burgan (2006) believes that professors will have to re-conceptualize what it means to teach and learn. McGlynn (2008) went on to say that the role that faculty members play in the classroom must change as well which “involves a shift from seeing the classroom as a teacher-driven and content-centered to seeing the classroom as student-centered and process-driven” (p. 21). In addition to creating a learning environment in which today’s students are able
to learn and grow, faculty members must also accept some responsibility for preparing these students for life outside of the classroom.

**Ways Faculty Members Can Better Serve Today’s Students.**

Although faculty members have numerous responsibilities, they are faced with addressing the new and different needs of today’s students. Faculty members must be committed to meeting students where they are developmentally. Faculty can no longer expect that students will rise to meet the challenges they have set for them. Instead, faculty members must be willing to communicate and interact in a manner that students can recognize. Hence, faculty members should return assignments quickly, give praise because that is what many of today’s students are accustomed to getting, and learn to use technologies that the students recognize (McGlynn, 2008). Faculty members must understand the student population at their institutions and accept that students have time constraints because of competing interests such as work and family that might hinder their participation in various activities including classes (Hanson, Drumheller, Mallard, McKee, & Schlegel, 2011; McGlynn, 2008). Black (2010) said that faculty must accept that today’s students are “digital natives” because they have grown up with technology throughout their lifetime (p. 94). They are very familiar, comfortable, and quite reliant on technology (Black, 2010). Many faculty members have had the opposite experience as “digital immigrants,” individuals not born into a digital age (Black, 2011, p. 96). Digital immigrants view technology as something else to learn, a challenge that may never take the place of pen and paper (Black, 2010). Although faculty members and students are vastly different, faculty members are being asked to attempt new techniques in an effort to reach contemporary students.

Faculty members should use class time to help students make practical and interactive connections with the readings (Hanson et al., 2011). For instance, faculty members can use peer
instruction techniques that allow students to research topics outside class, and apply what is
learned to solve problems in class, so that multiple perspectives on the material are heard
(Berrett, 2012). This also means that many faculty members need to allocate more time to
effectively prepare to teach students; although at present, there is no additional monetary reward
or outstanding prestige associated with being a teacher (Winship, 2011).

Reaching today’s students in the classroom is of grave concern for faculty members. If
faculty members were properly trained regarding who today’s students were, the trials they face,
and able to recognize a student in need or crisis, faculty members might be better equipped to
reach students in the classroom. Moreover, having knowledge about the needs of today’s
students could help faculty members better perform other duties that are often associated with
their position such as academic advising and organization advising (Love, 2003).

Training Faculty Members to Address Student Needs.

The positive impact of educating faculty members on student needs and campus
resources was shown in a study that explored how informing faculty members of the counseling
center’s services increased the number of student referrals made by faculty (Nolan, Pace,
Iannelli, Palma, & Pakalns, 2006). The participants in this study were 50 new full-time faculty
members from three institutions, a private research institution in the South (n = 11), a private
religiously affiliated institution in the Northeast (n = 20), and a public regional urban university
in the Midwest (n = 19) (Nolan et al., 2006). These faculty members were either members of the
control group (25 people) which were given only the standard information or they were full
participants (25 people) who were provided an extensive packet of information about the
counseling center via campus mail (Nolan et al., 2006). Later, the 25 faculty members who were
full participants in the study received a phone call from the counseling center personnel to ensure that they had received the packet and to answer any questions (Nolan et al., 2006).

Nolan et al. (2006) found that faculty members who were full participants encountered students with personal issues about as much as the control group. Basically, students are seeking out instructors whether these instructors are knowledgeable of resources or not, which is another reason to equip faculty members with information. In addition, Nolan et al. found faculty who were full participants in the study were 46% more likely to refer these students to the counseling center while 0% of those in the control group referred students. This finding indicated that properly educating faculty members likely facilitated students receiving information on how to get assistance (Nolan et al., 2006). Hence, when faculty members were properly trained they seemingly pointed students in the direction of the help available to them.

Although faculty members often lack the training that could assist in maintaining a sense of calm during crisis on their local campuses, Scharman (2002) and Fischer (2010) revealed that, in contrast, some faculty members receive preparation to go abroad with students. As the number of students who study abroad has increased, Scharman suggested that creating emergency procedures that address a broad range of emergency matters was essential to the safety of the students and staff. Often, faculty members from the institution accompany these students or worked with them on site while they were abroad. Although students were responsible for knowing the culture and policies of the country they were visiting, Scharman recognized that faculty members often were trained, knowledgeable of emergency procedures, and understood laws that governed the country that the students were visiting.

Study abroad programs appeared to be an area in which some faculty members were receiving emergency training when accompanying or working with students. If institutions were
successfully equipping faculty members with the tools needed to identify and assist with students’ needs while abroad, similar practices should be adopted for emergency situations on their own campuses. Threat assessment and management teams may be a potential source for additional training in this area.

**Faculty Members Are Attempting to Reach Today’s Students.**

There are some professors who are striving to meet the needs of a broader range of students. As those needs change, faculty members are working to make adjustments. Today there are more non-traditional students, more technologically advanced students, more working students, and an increase in students studying at institutions but not living on or near campus (Li & Pitts, 2009). Therefore, the office hours offered by professors may not be convenient for all students. Li and Pitts’s (2009) study looked at one way instructors could attempt to be more available through the use of virtual office hours via Facebook’s instant messaging (IM) using information gathered from a survey distributed to students earlier in the semester.

Li and Pitts (2009) formulated two hypotheses for their study. They believed that nontraditional students (students in an evening class) would use virtual office hours more than traditional students (students in a day class). They also proposed that overall class satisfaction would increase for those students who were given the option to use virtual office hours (Li & Pitts, 2009).

Participants in the study were students enrolled in Management Information Systems (MIS) at a southeastern research institution. The study involved 89 students enrolled in five MIS classes that were taught by two instructors who had comparable teaching methods. Juniors and seniors comprised 95% of the participants. Two classes, one day and one night class, served as the control group for this experiment. The other three classes, two daytime and one night, had
virtual office hours via Facebook’s IM (Li & Pitts, 2009). Each instructor taught at minimum one day and night class. All virtual office hours were set for one hour on one week night. Additional virtual appointment times were available upon a student’s request. Traditional and virtual office hours were recorded throughout the semester (Li & Pitts, 2009).

Contrary to what Li and Pitts (2009) hypothesized, more traditional students in the day classes utilized the virtual office hours. Thus, the researchers rejected the first hypothesis. In addition, the students who were given an option to utilize virtual office hours expressed higher satisfaction with office hours than those who did not have virtual office hours, which supported hypothesis two (Li & Pitts, 2009). These findings were inconclusive because of the low number of participants. However, the study suggested that students were open to innovative ideas initiated by faculty members and appeared more satisfied with their overall class experience when given options by faculty members that appeared less rigid, more accommodating, and included the use of technology. Hence, the results of this study suggested that faculty members who are willing to use social media in their classroom are more likely to have students who are pleased with the classroom experience.

Connecting with students is not all that is being asked of professors today. Some police chiefs have offered to form a working relationship with faculty regarding the prevention of firearm-related violence (Thompson, Price, Mrdjenovich, & Khbchandani, 2009). The increase in classroom shootings, and faculty fatalities as a result of those shootings, spoke to the need for faculty to receive training on firearm-related violence prevention. In 2009, a study involving police chiefs revealed that 39% of the 417 participants believed that, at minimum, faculty members should play a minor role in the prevention of firearm-related violence on campus. The study also revealed that, of the 417 police chiefs who participated, less than one third of them
had actually trained faculty members on active shooter protocol, recognizing disturbing students, and/or the referral process (Thompson et al., 2009). Although the police chiefs’ demonstrated a willingness to include faculty members in prevention efforts, adequate training was largely lacking. If the experts who protect and serve campus communities believed that educating faculty members could be helpful, training should be offered because it could likely save the lives of students and faculty members (Thompson et al., 2009).

Although some police chiefs are training their faculty on firearm-related violence, some faculty members and students would like to provide their own protection while on campus by carrying a gun. This desire has resulted in efforts to pass laws that would enable them to carry concealed weapons on campus with a permit. According to Olson (2012), individual states are taking on the debate regarding concealed weapons. While some states are denying legislation that would allow concealed weapons on campus, other states have allowed concealed weapons under certain conditions (Olson, 2012). For instance, Kentucky prohibited guns from being carried on campus but allows them to be stored in cars (Olson, 2012). Recently, Colorado approved that all University of Colorado employees and students may carry guns as long as they have a permit (Olson, 2012). One size does not fit all regarding how this issue is being handled; many states have approached this issue very differently.

Furthermore, many fear that having weapons readily available to individuals on campus who are early adults might lead to increased violence. McLelland and Frenkil (2009) explained that the safety of college environments would be further compromised if guns were allowed:

It is difficult to imagine how colleges can provide safe environments if most constituents have the right to carry concealed deadly weapons. Adding guns to the normal conflicts
that arise, or to alcohol, drugs, competitive sports, or depression, is a recipe for disaster.

(p. A44)

Another way that safety could be compromised is if police officers arrived at the scene of an incident to find everyone present had their gun drawn (Olson, 2012). The officers would have a very difficult time determining the criminal from the concerned citizens who were attempting to help, which could increase the likelihood of an innocent person being shot or injured.

Although citizens have the right to bear arms, there has not been one incident in which an onlooker or victim has stopped an attack on campus by using a concealed weapon (Olson, 2012). With this fact in mind, allowing concealed weapons on campus may not be the best way to end violent incidents. States must make informed decisions about the issue, which means that conversations must be had about the long term ramifications of allowing concealed weapons on campus.

**Classrooms Are Shared Learning Environments.**

Faculty members are forced to deal with incivility and violence in their classrooms. They are also realizing that sometimes they are not prepared to handle their own classroom environments. For many years, professors have been the “sage on the stage” which meant that faculty members were the transmitters of knowledge and students were passive learners that memorized and reproduced the information on examinations (King, 1993, p. 30). Today, professors are competing with confrontational students who want to make their points in class.

Levine (2010) argued that higher education must help restore civility in society. One way to help make this happen, he concluded, was for professors to encourage students to engage in meaningful discourse that challenged ideas without attacking others in class (Levine, 2010). In addition, today’s students desire an interactive classroom experience (Duderstadt, 1999);
therefore, faculty members are being encouraged to help facilitate learning that allows students to construct their meaning of the class material in a safe environment with their professor and peers (Berrett, 2012).

However, faculty members have grown concerned about student behavior in the classroom (Baker, Comer, & Martinak, 2008). Students’ offenses range from minor instances of texting during class, late arrivals, and early departures, to major offenses such as inappropriately challenging or threatening the instructor (Baker et al., 2008; Burgan, 2006). Furthermore, issues of classroom incivility are happening in classrooms of seasoned professors as well as newly minted professors (Baker et al., 2008). Baker et al. reported that individuals from minority groups, and women professors, have had increased instances of uncivil classroom behavior. Paulson (2007) reported that an institution brought Miss Manners in to talk about civility, in an effort to combat these undesired behaviors. Dechter (as cited in Baker et al., 2008) revealed that some professors have decided to address classroom incivility by having students sign agreements regarding appropriate classroom decorum, as a means of holding them accountable. In some cases, incivility can give way to threats of violence or actual violence.

**Violence Strikes the Ivory Towers.**

Dr. Lucinda Roy is an Alumni Distinguished English Professor at Virginia Tech and the author of numerous works including *No Right To Remain Silent: What We’ve Learned From the Tragedy at Virginia Tech* (Roy, 2009). The book shared her personal account of the tragic massacre at Virginia Tech that took place on April 16, 2007. In her role as interim chair of the English department, Dr. Roy was asked by another faculty member to help with the misconduct of Seung-Hui Cho, the man who was later responsible for the horrific events.
Dr. Roy (2009) revealed that faculty members had not been given any guidelines for dealing with questionable student behaviors. Dr. Roy eventually devised a protocol to alert key administrators about questionable student behavior, and to solicit advice from them (Roy, 2009). In the fall semester of 2005, when Cho consistently acted inappropriately in the class of one of her faculty members, Dr. Roy enacted her protocol (Roy, 2009). In response, the course of action outlined for Dr. Roy by administrators was to either place Cho in another class, or offer him a comparable experience (Roy, 2009). Dr. Roy saw no need in potentially disrupting another class, so she reluctantly offered to meet with Cho one-on-one in her office with another instructor present. However, due to the communication silos that existed on the campus at the time, Dr. Roy and many others were unaware that Cho had exhibited questionable behavior in other places on campus as well (Roy, 2009).

Less than two years after her encounters with Cho and the implementation of inadequate interventions, he took the lives of 33 people which included faculty, students, and his own (Roy, 2009). According to Dr. Roy (2009), not only did the university lack a protocol for reporting troubled students, it also lacked a well-orchestrated plan for campus wide emergencies. As a faculty member and department chair, Dr. Roy was looking for a system that would allow her to help a student get the help he needed. However, Dr. Roy was not properly trained or informed of appropriate protocol at any point during her inquiries.

Dr. Roy is not the only faculty member who has encountered a disruptive student who needed a psychological intervention. While Dr. Roy escaped personal injuries, Dr. Neal-Vincent did not. Dr. Neal-Vincent was a professor at Jackson State University who also faced a student in crisis. While meeting with another student on June 29, 2010, Dr. Neal-Vincent was physically assaulted by her former student, Donald Plummer (Crisp, 2010). Plummer had been enrolled in
Dr. Neal-Vincent’s class a few summers prior to the attack (Crisp, 2010). At the time of the incident, the student alleged that the professor had placed voodoo on him and was inside his head (WAPT News, 2010). According to Dr. Neal-Vincent, Plummer entered her office on June 29th and began pounding her head, chest, back, and face with his fists (WAPT News, 2010). The other student who was meeting with Dr. Neal-Vincent at the time, Bryant, restrained Plummer until police could arrive (Crisp, 2010). It was later discovered that Plummer had knives, a saw, and a small machete in his backpack (WAPT News, 2010). Dr. Neal-Vincent was hospitalized due to her injuries.

Plummer had not risen to the attention of administrators or faculty members for disciplinary or academic reasons. He had no prior offenses with university conduct or the police (Crisp, 2010). Crisp (2010) reported that Plummer’s disciplinary record was pristine and his grade point average for the spring of 2010 was a 3.7. Following the incident the interim President of Jackson State University, Dr. McLemore, vowed to educate employees at the university on warning signs of students in crisis and ways to address “sensitive situations” (Crisp, 2010, A4). Although this gesture might help future faculty members who encounter a troubled student, this had come too late to save Dr. Neal-Vincent from her pain and suffering.

Hence, it is incumbent upon institutions to educate and equip faculty members with the necessary skills and resources that will help these frontline individuals identify students in crisis and provide appropriate referrals. This study explored whether a TAMT at one institution was providing faculty members with the training needed to refer students to resources.

**Faculty Members Struggle to Deal With Recent School Attacks.**

Following the shooting spree of former Pima Community College student Loughner, Professor Barreca (2011) was compelled to create a blog on the website of *The Chronicle of*
Higher Education. Loughner was responsible for a deadly shooting at a political rally outside of a Safeway grocery store on January 8, 2011 in Tucson, Arizona (Cloud, 2011). Loughner killed six people and wounded fourteen others (Cloud, 2011). Many suspected that then Congresswoman Giffords was his primary target (Cloud, 2011).

Months before the shooting spree, Loughner was suspended from Pima Community College for his bizarre behavior (Fenster, 2011). His rants and outbursts had concerned faculty and students so much that a faculty member asked that a security officer be present outside the classroom (Longstreth, 2011). The campus’s Behavioral Assessment Team (which is equivalent to a TAMT) was aware of the situation and had assessed Loughner to be a threat to members of its campus community, and also alerted the campus police (Fenster, 2011). As a result, Loughner was suspended from the institution pending a mental health professional’s assessment (Fenster, 2011).

The occurrences surrounding Loughner, which were the suspension at school and the mass shooting, left Professor Barreca uneasy and concerned. She began to recall her own encounter with a disruptive student. In the blog, Professor Barreca (2011) wrote that, as a new instructor, she was not prepared to deal with a disruptive student. After contacting numerous administrators about a student who was regularly masturbating during her class, she was advised to manage the situation. Barreca was told that the administrators wanted to avoid any additional confrontation with the student’s parents.

At the end of the blog, Barreca (2011) asked other professors to share their “scary” student stories. Unlike, Lizdroz (2011) who knew about TAMTs, very few of the blog participants had heard or used TAMTs. The responses from most of the professors revealed sadness, anger, fear, and confusion. One instructor acknowledged that she knew something was
not “right” with one of her students. She later regretted not doing more to get that student help to possibly derail his suicide (Memitchell, 2011). Another professor admitted that he referred to his marksmanship skills as a teaching and intimidation technique for students (Physicsprof, 2011). One faculty member disclosed frustration with the counseling center and administrators regarding Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g) (Benbel28, 2011). The primary goal of FERPA is to protect the privacy of a student’s educational records (Barr, 2003). Benbel28 (2011) commented that a student was not allowed to take his class anymore but the student was still allowed to be on campus; as a result, the professor needed to be escorted to his car for safety. Finally, a professor simply vowed to teach more online courses because of the cowardly administrators she had encountered (Profowanda, 2011).

Professor Barreca touched upon a topic that appeared to be on the minds of many other faculty members following the Loughner incident. Faculty members noticed the bizarre behavior of some of their students. In the blog, few professors had ever heard of TAMTs on their campuses. In addition, many of those who commented felt little to no support from administrators once they made a report, were not knowledgeable of what measures were available to them, and felt alone to face the “scary” students in their classrooms (Barreca, 2011).

Many of the “scary” students in college are suffering from mental health issues. They are in professors’ classes and labs. They are the students that professors might be getting to know during the informal interactions Astin (1999) suggested enhances a student’s college experience. Consequently, instructors must be equipped to recognize when their students are in distress and be prepared to share resource information with them and/or take action themselves.
Contemporary Higher Education Context.

The increased issues of many of today’s students have overtaxed personnel both in academic and student affairs units. At times, institutions have been unable to provide the care that some students needed to persist at institutions of higher education. As academicians are forced to find new ways to educate scores of students often with fewer resources, more is being asked of them. Faculty members are expected to teach, research, and serve; secure money for research opportunities; and formally and informally connect with today’s college students. Now that TAMTs have been created at many institutions, faculty members are being asked to take on another role, reporting student concerns.

Contemporary Students

In the beginning of higher education in America, colleges were established to educate a handful of homogeneous, elite White males (Thelin, 2003). Today, there is a stark contrast. Today’s students are diverse due to a number of factors associated with diversity of background and situational differences (El-Khawas, 2003). Goldrick-Rab and Cook (2011) reported statistics from the 2008 National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) regarding how race and gender in higher education has changed significantly within approximately a forty year timeframe:

The proportion of white students steadily declined between 1976 and 2006 (from 84% to 67%), while the proportion of Hispanic students tripled (from 3.6% to 11.4%), the proportion of Asian students nearly quadrupled (from 1.8% to 6.8%) and the proportion of black students grew by over 40 percent (from 9.6% to 13.3%)…. Now more than half of all undergraduates are female, and, while the presence of men attending college full time has declined (from 48.5% in 1970 to 35% in 2008), the representation of women attending part time has increased (from nearly 8% in 1970 to nearly 14% in 2008). By
2018, women are expected to account for nearly three out of every five undergraduates.

(p. 257)

The increased diversity of students has had an intense effect on teaching and learning because these students have had varied experiences and backgrounds. Today there is no typical student or typical college experience (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011).

Almost 15 million students were enrolled in undergraduate education between 2000 to 2008 (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). These astonishing numbers were because more students understood the value of attaining postsecondary education. In addition, both President Clinton and President Obama encouraged the pursuit of postsecondary education (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). Nowadays, 95% of all high school students intend to obtain some level of postsecondary education (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). In addition, higher education enrollment numbers have surged because more students are eligible for college because of increased high school graduation rates and the fact that more jobs require postsecondary education (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). However, students are arriving to college less academically prepared and in need of remedial classes that do not count towards earning a major (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011; Love, 2003). Levine and Cureton (as cited in Love, 2003) revealed that nearly one-third of all undergraduate students have enrolled in a remedial course such as in math, writing, and reading. As a result, institutions are forced to allot more funding to academic support (Martín & Murphy, 2000). Moreover, a new trend toward delayed enrollment after high school is emerging among today’s student (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011). In fact in 1995-1996, approximately one third of students waited a year or two to begin their higher education experience (Horn, Cataldi, & Sikora, 2005).
College students can be classified as traditional and non-traditional. Non-traditional students have been a part of higher education for some time, but their numbers have grown exponentially. According to McGlynn (2005) the definition of non-traditional student has expanded greatly to encompass a vast group of students, and is now defined as:

Having one or more of the following characteristics: delayed enrollment to college; attending college part time; working full time while attending college; being financially independent; having dependents other than a spouse; classifying as single parents; and lacking a high school diploma (p. 13).

Although the economic downturn has contributed to an increase in the number of students enrolling in school, it has also contributed greatly to the number of non-traditional students as well.

The traditional-aged college student is considered to be a member of the Millennials or Generation Y (Black, 2010). For the purpose of this study, I will use the term Millennials. These students were born between 1982-2002 (McGlynn, 2008; Elam, Stratton, & Gibson, 2007). Individuals from Generation X and the Baby Boomer Generation are their parents (McGlynn, 2005). Dunkle (2009) labeled Millennials “the most diverse in higher education history, from race/ethnicity diversity to diversity in sexual orientation, to national status” (p. 7). For the Millennial Generation, school shootings have been a major part of their educational experience (Elam et al., 2007). They either lived through, heard of, or watched images of what happened during school shootings at Heath High School in West Paducah, Kentucky on December 1, 1997, Westside Middle School in Jonesboro, Arkansas on March 24, 1998, Thurston High School in Springfield, Oregon on May 21, 1998, Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado on April 20, 1999, Deer Creek Middle School in Littleton, Colorado on February 23, 2010 (Vossekuil,
Fein, Reddy, Borum, & Modzelski, 2002) and Pearl High School in Pearl, Mississippi on October 1, 1997, Parker Middle School in Edinboro, Pennsylvania on April 26, 1998, and Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia on May 20, 1999 (Kleck, 2009). In addition to school shootings, the Millennial Generation has also lived through wars such as Desert Storm in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the War on Terror (Black, 2010). The tragedies listed above are unique to this generation. These occurrences profoundly changed things in the United States and for this Millennial Generation.

Although Millennials lived through some adverse events, these students still possess very positive and unique characteristics. Dunkle (2009) characterized Millennial students as “perfectionist, driven, highly protected, and entitled” (p. 7). McGlynn (2005) revealed that, unlike some other generations, the Millennial Generation came along during a time of wealth and the creation of safety regulations:

These students grew up in a time of economic prosperity. They are the most protected generation in terms of government regulation and consumer safety. They are used to being indulged as a result of changing child-rearing practices, and they are used to being consulted in decision-making by their parents (p. 14).

Moreover, McGlynn (2005) proclaimed Millennials to be very diverse individuals, ethnically and racially, because many of their parents moved to the United States from somewhere else, “one in five of these students had at least one immigrant parent” (p. 14). As a result of the great diversity that Millennials have been exposed to, Howe and Straus (as cited in Elam et al., 2007) asserted “there are some concerns that students of this generation may dismiss issues related to diversity, such as racism and discrimination, as less of a problem than in previous generations” (p. 22). In addition, this generation enjoys philanthropy and has “a marked
desire to do good” (Crone & MacKay, 2007, p. 21). They are no strangers to standardized tests (Elam et al., 2007). Group work and social networking became more popular or was invented during their lifetime (Howe & Strauss, 2000). They are graduating from high school and pursuing postsecondary education at an increased rate (McGlynn, 2008). Millennial students are the most socially connected group of all times due to the conveniences of texting, instant-messaging, email, and cell phones (McGlynn, 2008).

Members of the Millennial Generation also have some very strong obstacles in their overall lives. Millennials’ use of and dependence on technology is one of those obstacles. First their excessive use of technology has helped this group become multitaskers which is positive and damaging (Black, 2011; Hanson et al., 2011; McGlynn, 2005). Millennials are accustomed to tinkering with technology until they master it. As a result, Millennial students find the traditional lecture very boring because it does not challenge them and does not allow them an opportunity to experiment to find the answer (Black, 2010). In addition, technology, specifically social media, has enabled Millennial students to cultivate relationships around the globe in a very superficial manner because of the anonymity of the computer; as a result, some say that a number of Millennial students may fear intimacy and commitment because they have failed to grasp the idea of true friendship (Black, 2010). Black (2010) pointed out that the technological abilities of some members of the Millennial Generation has caused them to be disconnected from the world, “Ironically, Gen Y may be simultaneously the most-socialized generation in the digital world and the most isolated generation in the physical world” (p. 96). In addition, technology has hindered the amount of time devoted to studying and in person social interaction (Hanson et al., 2011). A few researchers believe that the brains of Millennial students have undergone a physiological change simply because of the numerous technological interactions
that they experience on a daily basis (Black, 2010). Furthermore, the multi-tasking that these students are accustomed to, at times, does not appear to work when attempting to learn complex information in college (McGlynn, 2005).

Getting students to pace themselves is important to the overall health of students and has become an obstacle for Millennials. Millennial students are usually very active in high school. As students vie to get into the best colleges, the high school years have become very competitive (Winship, 2011). As a result, by the time these students start their freshman year, they are mentally exhausted (Winship, 2011). For some, this has led to low academic achievement.

Furthermore, the current state of our economy is a hindrance for Millennial students. Unfortunately, these students are taking on hefty loans, delaying finding full-time work by staying in school to pursue additional degrees which often leads to increased debt, and desperately looking for work while in school (Thomas, 2012). Thomas (2012) reported that the economic downturn has had a profound effect on the Millennial Generation’s ability to become self-sufficient individuals, “One in four Millennials says they’ve actually had to move back in with their parents, after unsuccessfully trying to make it on their own” (para. 2). For some members of the Millennial Generation it has become necessary to delay going their own way because they are simply trying to survive.

Millennial students are experiencing postsecondary education in a very different way than past generations. Academic and student affairs units must find effective ways to reach and aid these students. The challenges of this generation are requiring faculty, staff, and administrators to make adjustments for today’s students and their parents.
Parents of Millennials.

Unlike many other generations, the parents of Millennial students were usually in their 20’s, financially fit before having children, and maintained an active involvement in their child’s day to day activities (Murray, 1997). Many parents strived to ensure their child’s success by exposing them to new activities, getting them involved in sports, and helping to address their educational needs. These parents often advised and looked for services for their children (Elam et al., 2007). Unlike previous generations of parents, parents of Millennial students often are unable to let their children go when they reach college age (Elam et al., 2007). These parents are very emotionally connected to their children; they communicate often (Dunkle, 2009; McGlynn, 2005). As a result, institutions began finding ways to incorporate parents into their child’s college experience (McGlynn, 2008). Today, institutions provide and/or have created parent orientation programs, parental relations offices, campus tours, information sessions about financial aid, Parents’ Weekend, Parents’ Newsletters, and Parents’ Advisory Councils (Elam et al., 2007). The growing expectation that parents and students have of administration to address individual student needs has caused areas of higher education to become more consumer focused.

Consumerism in Higher Education.

As a result of their expectations for preferential treatment, many of today’s students become disheartened when faculty and administrators fail to meet their needs and expectations. One reason for this is because students often view professors as individuals who work for them (Baker et al., 2008; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010). Some students believe that a college degree is yet another thing that can be bought and that learning was not a part of the experience (Crone & MacKay, 2007). And although this is a micro view of what is happening in
the world today, the consumer mentality (also known as student entitlement) that many students have attached to higher education is not being embraced by academicians (Singleton et al., 2010). Student entitlement is when students believe that certain goods and services should be afforded to them by faculty members and the institution regardless of their academic performance (Singleton et al., 2010). In 1993, Levine characterized the consumerist view of the college experience that many students hold in the following way:

> They are seeking a stripped-down version of college without student affairs, extracurricular activities, residence life, varsity sports, campus chaplains, and Greek life. The relationship these students want with college is like the one they already have with their banks, supermarkets, and other organizations they patronize. They want education to be nearby and to operate around the clock. (p. 4)

Professors expect that students will meet the set standards for academic achievement. However, the advertisements and marketing materials used by institutions to attract students often emphasize the fun activities rather than academic rigor associated with being in college (Singleton et al., 2010). Furthermore, U.S. News and World Report and Maclean’s University Ranking have unfairly perpetuated the notion of higher education as a commodity by determining and publicizing which institutions achieved the best rankings (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). If continued, student entitlement could be detrimental to the quality of higher education that students experience.

Singleton-Jackson et al. (2010) revealed that previous studies were conducted in the United States and examined gender, narcissism, and parenting child as possible reasons for students’ consumer mentality. Singleton-Jackson et al. decided to conduct their study with Canadian students at a midsized university. They used a qualitative phenomenological approach.
that included semi-structured interviews and focus groups which permitted them to hear about academic entitlement from the actual students (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010).

The participants were 52 first-year students enrolled in a psychology class, who earned one bonus point in the class for partaking in the study (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). There were 46 women and 6 men participants who were 18-25 years of age, a majority of them 18-19 years old (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Students signed up for one hour focus groups of seven to ten people and the questions centered on money, value of education, and other consumer related questions (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). The researchers found six themes: “product value of education, social promotion, the roles of professors, teaching assistants, administrators, and shoppers or scholars” (Singleton et al., 2010, p. 350). Surprisingly, Singleton et al. (2010) found that control was present in each of the themes because of the student’s desire to steer their own educational experience.

It is necessary to provide some particulars about each of the themes as described by Singleton et al. (2010). Theme one, The Product Value or Education, centered on the idea that being educated would yield a good job or particular career (Singleton et al., 2010). Only 9.8% of the participants demonstrated that they understood college to be about learning and educating oneself (Singleton et al., 2010). Theme two, Social Promotion, occurred when students wanted good grades without putting in the necessary work to earn those grades (Singleton et al., 2010). Students believed that based on their cost of attendance, they should be guaranteed academic success regardless of the effort they exerted. This theme coupled customer orientation and entitlement together. Theme three, The Role of the Professor, the participants implied that professors should be working/catering to the needs of students simply because they paid tuition (Singleton et al., 2010). While viewing themselves as customers, the students perceived their
professors to be their service providers who had no other duties. Theme four, *Teaching Assistants (TAs)*, students believed that TAs needed: (a) to know how to teach, (b) to be able to speak good English, and (c) to be open to making time for them when needed (Singleton et al., 2010). With theme five, *Administrators*, the researchers found that participants did not know much about administrators. They thought that administrators made too much money, simply because they witnessed a faculty labor strike early in the semester regarding salaries (Singleton et al., 2010). Knowledge of this occurrence on campus might have colored their perception because they had not had extensive interactions with administrators. Theme six, *Shoppers or Scholars*, examined if students felt like scholars or customers/shoppers. Many times, the students answered saying that they viewed themselves as customers mainly because that is how they believed the institution treated them (Singleton et al., 2010).

Based on the findings of this study, faculty and administrators must take a closer look at what they could be doing to contribute to the consumer mentality of today’s students, because the preservation of academic integrity should be of grave importance to all. One way to address the problem is to have recruiting/admissions officers seek the opinion of faculty members about recruiting materials (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Next, faculty members could solicit feedback from students regarding the course outline (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). In addition, institutions could seek to form councils with representation from faculty, staff, students, and administrators whose mission is to ensure that the institution’s mission addresses both academic and student services goals (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). Communication appeared to be one way to preserve overall academic integrity, while being clear with students about how the institution, is or is not, equipped to meet their needs and expectations.
Overall Decreased Emotional Health.

As today’s students face new and different realities, these students are seeking help for mental illnesses at counseling centers. Goldrick-Rab and Cook (2011) said 90% of college counseling center directors reported “an increase in the number of students with severe mental health issues” over the last ten years (p. 268). In 2006, 23% of students in counseling needed psychiatric medication as compared to only 9% of students who required psychiatric medication in 1994 (Schwartz & Kay, 2009). Furthermore, the alcohol and drug abuse of some students who take psychotropic drugs further exacerbated the existing condition (Dunkle, 2009). In addition, stress levels for today’s freshman students are higher than in past generations (Winship, 2011). Some suggested that one reason for the increase in stress was because students do not know how to balance priorities (Hanson et al, 2011). Stress complicates this situation as mental illness can be intensified by stress (Gecker, 2008). The mental health problem and stress of the student may lead to a student choosing to harm himself/herself or others.

In the case of the Morgan State University incident, the student, Kinyua decided to harm someone else. Kinyua is accused of killing, dismembering the body of a family friend, and eating the heart and a part of the brains of the deceased (“Cannibalism Suspect Had History”, 2012). It appears that Kinyua was involved in two other violent incidents on campus prior to this murder. In December of 2011, Kinyua was dismissed from ROTC because he punched a hole in a computer lab wall and was not allowed on campus pending a judicial review (“Cannibalism Suspect Had History”, 2012). After the incident, an instructor commented in a campus police report that Kinyua was an “unusually angry person” and “a Virginia Tech waiting to happen” (“Cannibalism Suspect Had History”, 2012, para. 1). After the judicial review, Kinyua was allowed to continue taking classes at the institution after a police officer and others counseled
him ("Cannibalism Suspect Had History", 2012). In January, Kinyua spoke in a bizarre manner at an anti-hazing forum. Then in May of 2012, Kinyua allegedly blinded another student in one eye and fractured his arm, shoulder, and skull when he hit him with a baseball bat ("Cannibalism Suspect Had History", 2012). Two days after being released on bail for the baseball attack, Kinyua killed, dismembered, and ate someone who has been staying with his family ("Cannibalism Suspect Had History", 2012). Kinyua’s violence had gotten progressively worse and quickly spiraled out of control. Although there were some indicators that Kinyua was in crisis, he somehow was unable to get the help he needed. As a result, a Morgan State student was severely injured and another man was dead.

Although student violence against oneself and others is of great concern, The Jed Foundation (as cited in Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011) reported that each year approximately 1100 suicides occur on college campuses. Unfortunately, many of those who commit rampage shootings intend to commit suicide and choose to kill others in the process (Hoover, 2008a). When Pavela, a campus safety expert, was interviewed by Hoover (2008a), he commented that suicide prevention may become a violence prevention tool on campus as well.

Rimer (2004) explained that parents also bear some of the blame for students’ stress because they have managed their children’s schedules and problems for far too long. Millennial students have become so accustomed to being accountable to parents that they have failed to learn how to be accountable to themselves. As a result, many students and parents expect higher education administrators to complete tasks and solve problems for their students.

A recent survey from The American Freshman: National Norms for fall 2010 (Pryor et al., 2010), conveyed that freshman students reported low emotional health. The number of students who had given details of good to above-average emotional health was 51.9% in 2010.
which was the lowest since the question was included on the survey in 1985 (Pryor et al., 2010; Sieben, 2011). Moreover, Sieben (2011) reported that the emotional health of women was lower than men. As a result, some counseling centers have begun providing more outreach programs that focus on promoting good mental health. For instance, Sieben explained that the counseling center at the University of Connecticut trained 3,000 faculty and staff on Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) which is a suicide prevention method. This institution recognized that faculty and staff across campus encountered students far more frequently than personnel in the counseling center. Therefore, the University reasoned that those individuals needed to be equipped with the tools necessary to recognize when a student was in crisis (Sieben, 2011).

Not only are today’s students exhibiting low emotional health, a thirteen year study (1988-2001) showed that students have more severe and complex problems than in years past (Benton, Robertson, Tseng, Newton, & Benton, 2003). The results showed that the number of students seen by a counselor for depression doubled, suicidal students tripled, and there was a quadrupling of students treated after a sexual assault during the time of the study (Benton et al., 2003). The researchers found that fourteen of the nineteen categories measured in the survey showed an increase in the number of students having difficulty. There were categories that increased sharply, some that showed an initial increase and then stabilized, and others that experienced no major increase at all. Benton et al. (2003) found that media attention to certain topics also caused a periodic spike within some categories because they resonated with what students were going through at the time.

Students’ personal growth and emotional well-being are areas that many institutions are concentrating on these days because of the changing demographics of students (Rimer, 2004). As a result, Morgan State University has instituted a mandatory conflict resolution class for students.
(Schnoebelen, 2013). The class is a student initiative aimed at decreasing violence after two recent campus shootings (Schnoebelen, 2013). Furthermore, the increase in mental illnesses has caused some institutions to offer unlimited counseling sessions, increase services that address typical transition issues such as homesickness, offer modified staff training to address current student trends, and encourage students to embrace the joys of learning (Rimer, 2004). Critics say that administrators are going overboard because they are choosing to address student development issues in a medical manner (Rimer, 2004). Still, administrators are spending large sums of money on amenities for students such as massaging chairs, biofeedback, pet therapy (Rimer, 2004), as well as, climbing walls and posh residence hall accommodations (Winship, 2011). Although purchasing amenities is well intended to improve mental health, these items drive up the cost of attending college and likely lead to increased financial burdens for students which in turn increases stress levels.

Although counseling centers were already experiencing an increase in the number of patients, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 led to more students seeking counseling (Kitzrow, 2003). The Virginia Tech tragedy also brought a slight increase in funding for 15% of college counseling centers and personnel for one-third of them (Farrell, 2008). This recent increase in funding and personnel has not been enough to keep up with the high volume of students that many counseling centers face. Therefore, educating faculty, staff, and students regarding warning signs of mental illness is essential to decreasing the number of students responding with violence as a result of untreated mental health problems.

**Increase in Mentally Ill Students Committing Murder on Campus.**

In recent years, there have been increased instances of mentally incompetent students and former students possessing guns on college campuses. These students not only often harm
themselves, but have done harm to others. Although Cho (Virginia Tech), Williams (Louisiana Technical College), and Kazmierczak (Northern Illinois University) may have been the most recent incidents of mass shootings, there have been others in the past.

According to Newman and Fox (2009), the University of Texas at Austin suffered tragedy when mass murders occurred there on August 1, 1966. Charles Whitman murdered his mother and wife and then drove to campus and positioned himself in a bell tower (Newman & Fox, 2009). For more than 90 minutes, shots rang out. Afterwards, fourteen people were killed and dozens injured by the hands of a talented sharp shooter ex-marine, before he was gunned down by an Austin police officer (Newman & Fox, 2009). Whitman left a letter requesting that his remaining money go to mental health causes because he felt that was the cause of his violent actions (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010). An autopsy revealed a cancerous brain tumor (Ferraro & McHugh, 2010) which might have contributed to his severe headaches and shooting spree.

Newman & Fox (2009) researched a few others. Peter Odighizuwa attended the Appalachian School of Law. On January 16, 2002, he murdered the dean of the law school and a professor. He was distressed because he had received his second dismissal from the law school and his marriage was in trouble (Newman & Fox, 2009). Police and law school administrators were well aware of his unpredictable temper; yet, they were unable to prevent the tragedy (Newman & Fox, 2009). Later, he was found to be suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. The courts sentenced him to six life sentences because of his actions.

Biswanath Halder was a 62 year old former Case Western Reserve University student who was born in India. He discharged hundreds of rounds of ammunition in the business school on May 9, 2003 (Newman & Fox, 2009). Over a seven hour period he killed one person, injured two, and was shot himself (Newman & Fox, 2009). His reason for the shootings was that he
believed an employee tampered with his email account and destroyed vital files. As a long time student at the institution, Halder had demonstrated bizarre behavior throughout his time at Case Western. His paranoia had been well documented on campus (Newman & Fox, 2009).

Newman and Fox (2009) found that many of the college mass murder shooters varied in age, usually acted without any notice of the impending attacks, and at times exhibited characteristics of mental illness. Coincidently, a few of the college shooters were members of marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities or international students (Newman & Fox, 2009). Campus community members must be trained to look for cues to mental health issues in students such as facial expression (stare, glare, or anger), subtle threats, tone of voice, aggression, hearing voices, hallucinations, delusional thinking, social isolation, and poor hygiene (Gecker, 2008). Being attuned to these kinds of behaviors may result in a student receiving help earlier.

In relation to this research study it is important to note that all of the recent high profile attacks that resulted in student deaths occurred in university academic buildings where faculty members teach and have offices. Furthermore, these attacks often injured or killed both faculty and students. Providing more education and training specifically to faculty members about recognizing students in crisis might lessen these occurrences of death and help create a campus community that supports the learning environment and cares for its members. Threat assessment and management teams may be an important vehicle for recognizing and intervening in the lives of students in crisis.

The Journey to Threat Assessment and Management Teams in Higher Education

Although TAMTs recently have been used widely, their existence came as a result of other works. For instance, Delworth (1989) created a model to aid in assessing student needs and interventions in the 1980’s. Moreover, government agencies conducted studies following the
grade school shootings (Vossekuil et al., 2002) as well as the Virginia Tech massacre (Drysdales et al., 2010). Although TAMTs have become a prevention tool used to identify and aid students in crisis (Deisinger et al., Sokolow et al, 2011), the researcher must first acknowledge a few precipitating occurrences.

**Delworth’s Assessment Intervention of Student Problems (AISP).**

In the later 1980’s Delworth created a model to help those in higher education effectively, efficiently, and justly work with students who display dysfunctional behavior (Delworth, 1989). Her model was called the Assessment Intervention of Student Problems (AISP) model (Delworth, 1989). When assessing a student’s issue and determining an intervention plan, the model provided easy common language for those on campus to use (Delworth, 1989). Delworth’s (1989) model had three elements which were the “assessment of the students, the campus intervention team, and the intervention” (p. 4).

The first element of AISP is the assessment of the students. The model assessed students by determining their placement in one of three categories which was disturbing, disturbed, and disturbed/disturbing using information provided by those in the campus community (Delworth, 1989). Delworth (1989) described disturbing students as either controlling/manipulative or causing problems on campus because of their immaturity, struggles with college life, and inability to establish close age appropriate relationships. Disturbed students were students whose college experience was impacted because they exhibited patterns of behavior that did not co-incide with the actions of their peers or societal norms (Delworth, 1989). Disturbed students can exhibit emotions directed inward like depression and/or outward like anger (Delworth, 1989). Disturbed/disturbing students show signs of behavior that disrupts the institution and themselves
Characteristics of both disturbed and disturbing behavior must be flagrantly shown for a student to be labeled in this manner (Delworth, 1989).

The second element of the AISP was the campus intervention team which was a group of individuals who were responsible for managing an organized system that involved both student conduct and psychological departments on campus (Delworth, 1989). The teams operated as a decision making group or an advisory group (Delworth, 1989). According to Delworth (1989), at minimum the team should be comprised of representatives from “(1) campus mental health service, (2) campus security, (3) the student services administration, (4) the institution’s legal counsel, and (5) the student services judicial or discipline office” (p. 9). The team has three main functions: (a) to create guidelines and protocol to assess students, (b) be continually informed of the how the student was doing and the intervention he/she was receiving, and (c) develop assessment programs and educate others on campus (Delworth, 1989).

The third element of the AISP was interventions. The two types of interventions discussed were interventions that caused a student to be removed from campus and those that allowed them to remain enrolled (Delworth, 1989). Interventions that led to voluntary or involuntary removals must follow recognized policies, procedures, and due process (Delworth, 1989). Interventions that allow students to stay on campus involved referrals to the judicial affairs, mental health, or both (Delworth, 1989). During interventions, the team was responsible for assisting students with integrating into campus life by providing opportunities for social/interpersonal intervention and/or development of college skills and competencies (Delworth, 1989).

Although Delworth’s model was created more than twenty years ago, it has remained relevant to today’s students pursuing higher education (Dunkle, 2009). Dunkle (2009) supported
the use of the AISP model to meet the needs of today’s institution. Although various laws have changed and today’s student demographics are vastly different, the AISP model can still serve as a simple tool for faculty, staff, and administrators who are working to identify and assist students in trouble.

**Study Conducted as a Result of Grade School Shootings.**

In 2002, the United States Secret Service (U.S. Secret Service) and the United States Department of Education (U.S. Department of Education) reported the findings of a study on school violence conducted in June 1999 called the *Safe School Initiative* (SSI) (Vossekuil et al., 2002). The SSI study was in response to a rash of grade school shootings in the 1990s, most notably Columbine in 1999, that left parents, students, administrators, and community members baffled regarding what could have been done to prevent those horrific attacks (Vossekuil et al., 2002). The study examined 37 incidents of school based attacks from December 1974 through May 2000 in which a school environment was intentionally chosen as a site of an attack (Vossekuil et al., 2002). In addition, the researchers conducted extensive interviews with ten individuals who carried out the attacks. Vossekuil et al.’s (2002) reported that “The focus of the SSI was on examining the thinking, planning, and other behaviors engaged in by students who carried out school attacks” (ii). Vossekuil et al. aimed to detect “pre-attack behaviors and communications that might be detectable-or ‘knowable’-and could help in preventing some future attacks (p. ii).”

The SSI study yielded ten major findings. The findings influenced how strategies were developed to address targeted violence in schools. Vossekuil et al. disclosed the following from this study:

1. Incidents of targeted violence at school rarely are sudden, impulsive acts.
2. Prior to most incidents, other people knew about the attacker’s idea and/or plan to attack.

3. Most attackers did not threaten their targets directly prior to advancing the attack.

4. There is no accurate or useful “profile” of students who engaged in targeted school violence.

5. Most attackers engaged in some behavior prior to the incident that caused others concern or indicated a need for help.

6. Most attackers had difficulty coping with significant losses or personal failures.
   Moreover, many had considered or attempted suicide.

7. Many attackers felt bullied, persecuted or injured by others prior to the attack.

8. Most attackers had access to and had used weapons prior to the attack.

9. In many cases, other students were involved in some capacity.

10. Despite prompt law enforcement responses, most shooting incidents were stopped by means other than law enforcement intervention. (p. 31)

The study concluded that the use of fact based threat assessment which addressed what the attacker was saying rather than how the attacker was looking might be a prevention tool for future attacks (Vossekuil et al., 2002). It is paramount that educators offer students a safe environment to talk about any concerns they have or observations they have made regarding another student (Vossekuil et al., 2002). As a result, the information gathering technique required training for administrators and law enforcement, in order to be effective in school settings (Vossekuil et al., 2002).
Study Conducted After Virginia Tech Shooting.

Dunkle, Silverstein and Warner (2008) labeled the Virginia Tech tragedy as the “‘9/11’ of higher education” (p. 586). After the Virginia Tech shooting and the release of the federal government’s initial review of the incident, the U.S. Secret Service, the U.S. Department of Education, and the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) conducted a study through the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) that investigated 272 incidents of violence at 218 campuses or to members of institutions of higher education between 1900-2008 (Drysdale et al., 2010). The name of the report was *Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education*. The study’s purpose was to “understand the nature of this violence and identify ways of preventing future attacks that would affect our nation’s colleges and universities” (Drysdale et al., 2010, p. iii). The information gained from the study was intended to help better inform campus safety and threat assessment teams at institutions of higher education about violence (Drysdale et al., 2010).

The researchers gathered data from specific case information and qualitative observations via open-source reporting derived from media reports on the internet (Drysdale et al., 2010). Afterwards, at least three researchers reviewed and confirmed the data (Drysdale et al., 2010). Drysdale et al. (2010) found that targeted violence took place in every month of the year and ranged from domestic violence to serial killings. These incidents occurred on, off, and in non-campus locations such as: residence halls, administrative buildings, academic buildings, service buildings, parking lots, and campus grounds (Drysdale et al., 2010). Therefore, Drysdale et al. reported that campus security needed to be knowledgeable of how to confront attacks in various locations on campus. Furthermore, the researchers recommended that campus security form
strong bonds with municipal law enforcement to ensure sound communication (Drysdale et al., 2010).

Drysdale et al. (2010) also found that violence was triggered by academic performance, workplace matters, personal relations, and individual stressors. Moreover, the researchers found that in 73% of the incidents the attackers were fixated on a specific person(s) (Drysdale et al., 2010). In the instances that specific individuals were targeted, 13% of attackers made verbal and/or written threats to the target or a third party, 19% stalked or harassed their targets, and 10% demonstrated aggression (Drysdale et al., 2010). In 31% of the violent incidents, other people observed concerning behavior prior to the attack (Drysdale et al., 2010). Often, questionable behaviors and plans of attacks are known by someone and if shared with the proper entities could prevent incidents (Drysdale et al., 2010).

Although firearms were used in 75% of the incidents, other weapons or means of attack were reported such as “strangulation; blunt objects; poison; vehicles; explosives; incendiary/arson methods; or physical assaults without a weapon” (Drysdale et al., 2010, p. 24). Therefore, consideration must be given to an individual’s access to these items. Finally, the large age span of the attackers (16-62) suggested that a multidimensional approach to risk factors was necessary because the attackers were in different stages of life (Drysdale et al., 2010).

Indeed, the practices of the U.S. Secret Service and K-12 schools provided institutions of higher education with a substantive foundation for how these teams can take shape on campuses. Following the Virginia Tech tragedy, more than 80% of the higher education security reports generated suggested TAMTs be utilized as a prevention tool on college campuses (O’Neill, Fox, Depue, and Englander, 2008). Although a threat assessment model for higher education has not been created to date, Keller, Weisbach, and Hughes (2011) believe it is imperative for a model to
address the intricacies of the higher education setting like the “fluid geographical boundaries, open organizational culture or decentralized operating environment associated with most institutions of higher education” (p. 78).

**Threat Assessment and Management Teams.**

Although Delworth’s AISP model had existed for a number of years, Dunkle (2009) asserted that most institutions were not compelled to make significant changes to address violence on college campuses until after the Virginia Tech and NIU tragedies. He said: While violence has been a concern on campuses across the country for some time, arguably the Virginia Tech and NIU tragedies have resulted in what Malcolm Gladwell (2002) termed a tipping point. Specifically, those campus shootings tipped the attention of administrators, lawmakers, and others to an unprecedented and intensified focus on resource allocation for preventing violence at colleges and universities. (p.6)

Threat assessment and management teams were born out of a need to support students with care while creating and encouraging a campus culture of early reporting (Sokolow et al., 2011). A TAMT is “a multidisciplinary team that is responsible for the careful and contextual identification and evaluation of behaviors that raise concern that may precede violent activity on campus” (Deisinger et al., 2008, p. 5). Assembling a multidisciplinary team is important because it allows the group to be comprised of individuals from various departments on campus (Fox & Savage, 2009).

Surprisingly, some college campuses have had a formal or informal model of TAMTs for several years (Deisinger et al., 2008). However, these efforts should not be confused with a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) or Emergency Management Team (EMT), which many campuses formed to respond in emergencies such as natural disasters (Sokolow & Lewis, 2008).
In contrast, TAMTs focus on preventative measures by gauging threats and recommending to administrators specific interventions for individual students (LaBanc, Krepel, Johnson, & Herrmann, 2010). The work of TAMTs assists in preventing suicide, violence, and alcohol/drug abuse (Deisinger et al., 2008; Fox & Savage, 2009). In addition, TAMTs follow up on open cases to assess the positive or negative progress of the student (Hoover, 2008b). Although all TAMTs are different, the primary functions of these groups should be to “centralize reporting and records about potentially concerning student behavior, triage these reports, assess if there is any risk or threat, perform interventions when needed, coordinate follow up” (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009, p. 4). Sokolow et al. (2011) asserted that behavioral intervention is predicated on four concepts which include:

1. Targeted violence toward one’s self or others in the college and university setting (and arguably in the K-12 and workplace settings) is often preventable

2. The focus of a behavioral intervention team (BIT) should be proactive early prevention

3. “Threat assessment” exists within a Behavioral Intervention Team’s framework

4. Doing behavioral intervention right can save lives, save money, save time, and save reputations. (p. 6)

Although TAMTs can provide assistance when faculty members, staff, administrators, and students exhibit questionable behavior, this study will only focus on the student aspect of the services they provide. Lewis (as cited in Hoover, 2008b) described the uniqueness of TAMTs in this way, “It’s the only group on campus that has the 50,000-foot view. A hall director or roommate may see a snapshot of a kid’s life. We see the whole movie” (A 10). In this way,
TAMTs work to connect disparate indicators from a variety of sources. Sokolow et al. (2011) put forth ten primary functions of TAMTs:

1. Educate the community about behaviors of concern and reporting procedures.
2. Provide consultation and support to faculty, staff, administration, and students in assisting individuals who display concerning or disruptive behaviors.
3. Serve as the central point of contact for individuals reporting aberrant student behaviors or behavior that deviates from an established baseline.
4. Triage reports – identify patterns of aberrant behaviors which might suggest the need for an intervention.
5. Assess threat/risk.
6. Assess available resources.
7. Follow a formalized protocol of instruction for communication, coordination, and intervention.
8. Coordinate follow-up – Connect individuals with needed campus and community resources.
9. Observe ongoing behavior of individuals who displayed disruptive or concerning behavior.
10. Assess long-term success. (pp. 7-12)

As mentioned in chapter one, TAMTs have numerous names. Sokolow and Lewis (2008) believed that the name given to a TAMT should be intentionally chosen because a name can influence an individual’s perception. For instance, a Students of Concern Team may be perceived very differently than a Student Intervention Team. One should be careful to avoid attaching a stigma to the name (Deisinger et al., 2008; Sokolow & Lewis, 2008). The Jed
Foundation advised against using “threat assessment” in the name of the team unless the team only focused on threat assessment and it had experts to do so (p. 11).

In addition, the teams are mostly comprised of individuals already employed at the institution which has proven to be a low cost method of getting students access to needed resources (Deisinger et al., 2008). Though institutions have found savings from this efficiency, the team proved to be taxing because team members already have their main work responsibilities to fulfill at the institution (Keller et al., 2011). For some members, it may feel like they occupy two positions at the institution. However, Sokolow et. al (2011) argued that, if TAMTs are used as a prevention mechanism, eventually there will be fewer crisis situations which will result in more time, and the ability to do more prevention work. This long term goal may be actualized after an institution pays keen attention to the infrastructure in place to support the work of TAMT (Sokolow et al., 2011).

Threat Assessment and Management Team Structure.

It is very important that the role and training of TAMTs be established from the onset. The team should have a mission and its strategic plan should co-incide with the institution’s campus wide safety protocol (Deisinger et al., 2008). One or more members should have received professional training on threat assessment (Hoover, 2008a). A TAMT should be clear about its level of authority which is established with clear policies and procedures (Cornell, 2010). Some TAMTs only make recommendations; while other TAMTs are empowered to take actions, such as notifying parents, making referrals to student conduct, issuing interim suspensions, initiating involuntary leave or withdrawals, and mandating psychological assessment (Sokolow et al., 2011). Although TAMTs should share some commonalities, each campus should configure its TAMT based on its campus community (Deisigner et al., 2008).
In addition, TAMTs have given renewed usefulness to case management. Having its roots in social work and psychology, case management in a higher education setting aims to support students, help with problem solving, and offer resources (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Although case managers can work in other areas such as conduct and housing, TAMT case managers can collect information, track patterns, and manage any follow-up needed (Van Brunt et al., 2012).

Furthermore, TAMTs are usually chaired by a high ranking student affairs administrator with authority and knowledge of how to work with faculty, staff, and administrators (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009; Dunkle et al., 2008). An institution can have one big committee with possible representation from the following entities: judicial affairs, law enforcement, counseling center, academic affairs, human resources, dean of students, legal counsel, health services, disability services, media relations, residence life, graduate/professional schools, custodians, and local agencies (Deisinger et al, 2008; Flynn & Heitzmann, 2008). Deisinger et al. (2008) expressed that having a diverse team also helps to alleviate institutional communication/information silos. The key is to get the right people around the table without having so many people present that things become too cumbersome. If an entity is not represented on the committee, a relationship should be established and maintained should a need arise for its assistance (Deisinger et al., 2008). Moreover, Dunkle, Silverstein, and Warner (2008) and Desisinger et al. advised that the mental health care representative on the team be someone who is removed from having treatment relationships to avoid any conflict of interests and privacy issues, someone like the director of the counseling center.

An alternate committee setup that Sokolow and Lewis (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009) and Sokolow et al. (2011) suggested was to have a small committee of three to five people who serve as the core group, the inner circle. This group would regularly convene to discuss
student cases at least twice a month and meet in emergency situations as well (Sokolow et al., 2011). In addition, Sokolow and Lewis (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009) said that the committee could have a larger group of individuals from various departments who serve in the outer circle such as legal counsel and the registrar. These individuals could be called upon as needed. Furthermore, multi-campus and multi-site institutions should have a central team that assists a representative from an affiliated site or campus (Sokolow et al., 2011). Regardless of setup, the success of TAMTs is related to the support they receive from leadership, the information provided to the entire university community by the team, and the skills and mutual trust held by the members of the committee (Cornell, 2010).

Sokolow and Lewis (“Behavioral Intervention Teams”, 2009) and Sokolow et al. (2011) also suggested that TAMTs publish a summary report of actions taken periodically, disclose the names of the committee members, and develop an informative website that outlines the mission, reporting steps, policies, procedures, and potential results. Any campus that has a TAMT should work to educate and widely publicize information about the committee’s function, and its ability to assist (Deisinger et al., 2008). In addition, Deisinger et al. (2008) suggested that TAMTs maintain communication with on campus departments (e.g. student conduct, housing, etc.) and some off campus agencies concerning student behavior and available resources. Furthermore, the success of the team depends on getting community members to be aware of their surroundings, to consistently make reports without the fear of retaliation, and to attend campus trainings (Deisinger et al., 2008). In return, TAMTs must aid those who report by providing advice, helping with problem solving, and helping faculty members identify when they should manage, refer, or report a student’s questionable behavior (Sokolow et al., 2011).
Some TAMTs make decisions regarding a students’ risk of harming themselves or others using a threat assessment model. For example, the National Behavioral Intervention Team Association (NaBITA) developed a tool with three scales (Sokolow et al., 2011). The model was designed to help users, often laypeople, speak the same language while making a determination about a threat assessment (Sokolow et al., 2011). The first scale, known as the D scale, assesses the individual’s mental health as distress, disturbance, dysregulation, or medical disability (Sokolow et al., 2011). The second scale, classified as general risk, determines an individual’s level of risk to harm or threaten (Sokolow et al., 2011). The scale has five risk levels which range from mild to extreme (Sokolow et al., 2011; Sokolow & Byrnes, 2008). The third scale characterized an individual’s propensity to harm others, termed aggression (Sokolow et al., 2011; Sokolow & Byrnes, 2008). The aggression scale has nine levels which range from hardening to lose/lose (Sokolow et al., 2011; Sokolow & Byrnes, 2008). Based on the details known at the time, a TAMT may choose to use one, two, or all three of the scales when assessing a student’s risk.

An example of the overall effectiveness of these teams has been demonstrated in a recent situation involving Pima Community College and Loughner. Loughner is responsible for killing six people and wounding fourteen at a political gathering in Tucson, Arizona (Cloud, 2011). Faculty members at Pima Community College were instrumental in identifying questionable behaviors and expressing concern regarding Loughner’s strange behavior in class and around campus which led to his suspension (Longstreth, 2011). Although the TAMT at Pima Community College was praised for lessening the threat posed to its own campus, it was criticized for not doing more to alert the local community.
An example of the mishandling of a student in crisis would be the situation involving Cho at Virginia Tech. The Care Team, which is a student assistance team, at Virginia Tech was unsuccessful in identifying Cho as a threat to himself and the community. The 2007 Virginia Tech Panel Review (as cited in Keller et al., 2011) disclosed that Cho had exhibited questionable behavior 31 times to various members of the campus community. However, Cho’s name had only been brought before the student concerns group once. The Virginia Tech Panel Review (2007) reported that the team lacked appropriate personnel on the team for the student matter and failed to investigate the situation thoroughly. Hoover (2008a) and Hoover (2008b) said that the team lacked the presence of a campus police officer. This representative could have disclosed the police department’s interaction with Cho. Arguably, lives were lost because the team was unable to successfully identify the student as troubled, offer adequate assistance, or connect disparate parts regarding the case. Today, Virginia Tech has a functioning Care Team and a TAMT (Virginia Tech, 2012).

Most recently, a TAMT was accused of taking no action. James Holmes, a former doctoral student at the University of Colorado, is allegedly responsible for a mass shooting that took place on July 20, 2012 during a midnight showing of the movie, “The Dark Knight Rises” (Rowlands & Spellman, 2012). During the shooting spree, Holmes took the lives of 12 people and wounded 58 others (Rowlands & Spellman, 2012). Although the psychiatrist that Holmes was seeing on campus alerted members of the institution’s behavioral evaluation and threat assessment (BETA) team, the team failed to move forward on the case because Holmes had begun to withdraw from the institution (“Report: Holmes’ Psychiatrist”, 2012). Although the withdrawal process had not been completed, the BETA team allegedly took no action to address Holmes’ condition or alert the local authorities (“Report: Holmes’ Psychiatrist”, 2012). This case
now poses two questions which are: what is an institution’s obligation to address a student’s behavioral concern even if the individual is leaving and when should local authorities be alerted?

Although limited information exists regarding TAMTs, Keller et al. (2011) has suggested that a model of threat assessment be developed. The model should specifically address the unique nuisances of institutions of higher. The new model that Keller et al. proposed should include:

Components necessary for gathering information, identifying and assessing the nature and degree of the threat, a means of alleviating the threat or managing the crisis if it is not averted and a feedback loop that allows the system to be improved and refined as experience grows… The model we propose for the higher education environment involves five fundamental components: data sources, data collection, data analysis, incident response and incident response evaluations evaluation and feedback. (p. 84)

In addition, Keller et al. (2011) suggested that institutions develop a means to track a student’s questionable behavior to help TAMTs gain a broad view of what is happening.

**Recent Changes to FERPA and the Clery Act.**

Sharing information that would help connect disparate and knowledgeable sources on college campuses has been a concern for many faculty and staff at institutions of higher education because many do not know what they can or cannot share with others, internally or externally. This became very evident during the Virginia Tech investigation. As a result, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Statistics Act (Clery Act) have been amended so that institutions can share vital information with TAMTs, law enforcement, other administrators on campus, and parents/guardians.
FERPA protects the privacy of student records and guards against inappropriate disclosure of personal information (Mawdsley, 2005). This federal law applies to students who are 18 or attend a postsecondary institution (FERPA, 2011). Students are allowed to review and ask that corrections be made to their school records. Parents are allowed to review their student’s academic records if the student has signed a release waiver or if the parent has verified that the student is a legal dependent (FERPA, 2011; Kattner, 2009).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act has been in existence since 1974 and applies to any institution that receives federal funding (McDonald, 2008; Rinehart-Thompson, 2009). If an institution is found to consistently be in violation of FERPA, it could stand to lose its federal funding, though this has never happened (McDonald, 2008). Although, institutions are permitted to make mistakes, many institutions have used the fear of losing federal funding as a reason to err on the side of not disclosing information.

Following the shootings at Virginia Tech, FERPA was amended because of the confusion many administrators had regarding what could and could not be shared (McDonald, 2008). The amendments that took effect on January 8, 2009 were an attempt to clarify areas of the law that were hindering the sharing of information (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009). Overall, the amendments addressed three areas “school safety (health/safety emergencies and disclosures to parents); better access to education data for research and accountability; and safeguarding privacy and education records” (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009, p. 56).

The amendment for school safety enabled institutions to more easily share a student’s personal identifiable information with other school officials at the institution and law enforcement authorities without the student’s consent, when there is a threat to health and safety (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009). Furthermore, Rinehart-Thompson (2009) reported that
administrators were now allowed to contact parents in cases of health or safety emergencies. In addition, identifiable information could be released to parties using a rational basis as a guideline for decision-making (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009).

With regard to better access to education data, Rinehart-Thompson (2009) and Kattner (2009) reported that the amendment has allowed institutions to share personally identifiable information with educational agencies when particular conditions are met, and other institutions that a student is seeking enrollment without the student’s consent. This change opened the door for researchers to obtain data needed for research purposes and academic achievement (Rhinehart-Thompson, 2009). As a result, institutions should develop procedures for receiving and sending information (Kattner, 2009).

Finally, the amendment updated the definition of personally identifiable information to encompass a biometric record. It also gave boundaries relating to the re-disclosure information from education records. According to Rinehart-Thompson (2009) personally identifiable information now encompasses the following:

Date and place of birth, mother’s maiden name, and other information that, alone or in combination, is linked or linkable to a specific student would allow a reasonable person in the school community, who does not have personal knowledge of the relevant circumstances, to identify them with reasonable certainty. (p. 57)

In addition to disclosing the FERPA amendments, Rinehart-Thompson (2009) gave insight regarding FERPA and HIPAA on a college campus. Student health/treatment records held by an institution that receives U.S. Department of Education funds are a part of student’s educational record and are subject to be governed by FERPA not Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act ([HIPAA]; 42 U.S.C. §§ 300gg) which provides confidential handling of
medical records among other things. A student’s documents are governed by FERPA because the services are being rendered as a result of student enrollment (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009). In this way, HIPAA does not apply. However, if a student received treatment at a university hospital, HIPAA would go into effect and FERPA would be void because the relationship with the school would not be immediately applicable (Rinehart-Thompson, 2009).

Besides adhering to FERPA, any campus that receives Title IV funding, such as Pell Grants, Federal Work Study, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOG), must also adhere to the Clery Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). This federal statute came into existence after FERPA was amended in 1990 (Harshman, Puro, & Wolff, 2001). The Clery Act was named for Jeanne Clery a 19 year old student at LeHeigh University who was assaulted and killed in her residence hall room in 1986 (Gross & Fine, 1990). Henry, her attacker, entered the residence hall through a propped door (Gross & Fine, 1990). Jeanne Clery woke up as Henry was stealing some items and he killed her (Schackner, 1995). Her parents declared that if Jeanne Clery had been better informed about the institution’s recent crime problems, she may not have attended that institution (Gross & Fine, 1990). Furthermore, Clery’s parents found the security breaches that gave Henry access inside the building to be of major concern (Gross & Fine, 1990). The parents of Jeanne Clery filed and won a lawsuit against Lehigh University for negligence (Gross & Fine, 1990). They later formed the Clery Foundation.

To be in compliance with the Clery Act, an institution must submit an annual report in October of each year detailing fire safety, campus safety, and criminal activities to the U.S. Department of Education (Roberts, Fossey, & DeMitchell, 2005). The campus criminal activities are defined as on-campus, off-campus, and public property areas (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). The Clery Act also mandated that specific crimes be reported, namely “criminal
homicide, forcible and non-forcible sex offenses, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, arson, and violations of alcohol, drug, and firearms laws” as well as hate crimes (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, p. 33-34). The three most recent consecutive years of crime statistics must be published in the public domain via the website and through a paper copy for staff, students, and potential students. Institutions that are not in compliance with the Clery Act are assessed fines based on the type of violations found (Sieben, 2011). The U.S. Department of Education can assess a maximum fine of $27,500 for each violation (Sieben, 2011).

Most recently, the Clery Act was amended during the Higher Education Re-authorization Act of 2008. Some of the revisions and new requirements were identified in the Handbook for Campus Safety and Security Reporting (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). These included:

1. New categories to the list of hate crimes all institutions must disclose;
2. A new disclosure regarding the relationship of campus security personnel with state and local law enforcement agencies;
3. Implementation and disclosure of emergency notification and evacuation procedures for all institutions;
4. Implementation and disclosure of missing student notification procedures for institutions with on-campus student housing facilities;
5. Fire safety reporting requirements for institutions with on-campus student housing facilities;
6. Text clarifying the definition of an on-campus student housing facility; and
7. A Program Participation Agreement (PPA) requirement concerning disclosure of the results of disciplinary proceedings to the alleged victim of any crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense. (pp. 1-2)

Although the FERPA and Clery Act were never designed to prevent the sharing of vital information, the revisions to both laws assisted institutions by clarifying vague areas and developed newer, up to date policies. Now administrators must work to ensure that the entire campus community is well aware of the changes and additions to these two laws. If faculty and staff are not educated about the changes, an institution could run the risk of losing federal funding. More importantly if faculty, staff, and administrators are unfamiliar with the laws and their amendments, information that could be shared may continue to be held within various departments instead of being shared in a manner that would allow staff to connect disparate pieces.

**Conclusion**

Current students are finding it more difficult to cope with life’s challenges than past generations. As a result, faculty members are being asked to act in the best interest of students by collaborating as well as identifying and helping students in crises. Although this is yet another task added to an already long list of things to get done, faculty must find time to observe students and report questionable behavior. Bertram (2010) explained that everyone is responsible for helping to address campus safety because:

Distressed students live and work in tight communities where they can negatively impact their roommates, lab partners, coworkers, and friends. As a result, the psychological health of one affects the health and safety of all, and if preventative intervention does not
occur, a cycle of crisis will perpetuate. Everyone has the opportunity to help break this cycle but they must understand how to do so in comfortable and appropriate ways. (p. 31)

One resource designed to help faculty members with students in crisis is TAMTs. Threat assessment and management teams are interdisciplinary endeavors between academic and student affairs divisions. Although these teams have become more prevalent on college campuses since the Virginia Tech massacre, the work that they perform to prevent violence on campus and to limit student crises is critical to the long term success of institutions of higher education. Keller et al. (2011) asserted that it is imperative that faculty members become familiar with the purpose of TAMTs and use these groups to effectively address the needs of students in crisis and support students in their academic performance.

Unfortunately, little is known about TAMTs’ success in equipping faculty members with the necessary skills to identify, refer, and support students in need of assistance. In addition, the effectiveness of TAMTs as an intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs units has not been investigated. This study will address these gaps.
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This qualitative case study uncovered faculty members’ perceptions of the college and university threat assessment and management team (TAMT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs at one institution. Qualitative research seeks to understand the meaning an individual(s) makes of a social or human problem (Creswell, 2009). In this case, the experiences of faculty members were obtained using in-depth one-on-one interviews. The questions were open-ended so interviewees were free to formulate their own answers that described their experiences (Creswell, 2008). The interviews were semi-structured which meant that I had questions prepared but additional questions could be asked based on the information shared by the interviewees (Gall et al., 2007). In addition, I gained additional perspective by interviewing three individuals who served as TAMT administrators; one of them was the chairperson. I also interviewed any deans or department chairs who had assisted a faculty member with a referral to the TAMT. Furthermore, I observed the TAMT in session on three occasions. Finally, I analyzed several documents that pertained to the institution and the TAMT. Data was tested for trustworthiness through triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and feedback from an expert in the field.

Research Questions

The inquiries that were answered through my investigation were called research questions (Creswell, 2008). These research questions were the result of narrowing the purpose
statement (Creswell, 2008). In addition, the conceptual framework was considered when formulating the research questions.

There were two central questions, one of which had two sub-questions, which this qualitative case study examined:

1. How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?
   a. How do faculty members describe their expectations of the TAMT?
   b. How do faculty members work with the TAMT to address crisis with individual students?

2. What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

**Qualitative Research**

A qualitative methodology was used in this case study to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university TAMTs. Creswell’s (2008) definition of qualitative research succinctly described the components of this method of inquiry as:

A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants; asks broad, general questions; collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants; describes and analyzes these words for themes; and conducts the inquiry in a subjective, biased manner. (p. 46)

Qualitative research focuses on processes, meanings, and qualities of an entity; whereas, quantitative research focuses on measurements and analysis of variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The use of qualitative research for this study allowed me to gain an understanding of how participants made meaning of their experiences by collecting thick rich descriptions in the
participants’ natural setting (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative researcher collects detailed insights from participants without being bound by set categories (Creswell, 2008; Patton, 2002).

In qualitative research, text is usually the bulk of the data collected via interviews, observations, and documents (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). This type of research is considered nonjudgmental (Williams, 1986) and is also known as naturalistic inquiry because the real-world events were unfolding in an emergent manner and lacked constraints (Patton, 2002). Providing participants an opportunity to share their views in their space/environment is one of the key characteristics of qualitative research (Patton, 2002). In addition, I had the opportunity to experience phenomena that could not be completely explored through interviews such as feelings and emotions (Patton, 2002). At times, qualitative research takes on an emergent design which allows for flexibility as conditions changed in the field (Gall et al., 2007; Merriam, 1998).

Case Study as Research Design.

As indicated, the research was conducted as a case study. Case studies commonly occur in qualitative research (Gall et al., 2007). Gall et al. (2007) provided a thorough definition of case studies that encompassed four elements: “(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon” (p. 447). Case study design is an appropriate research method when the emphasis is on answering questions of “why” and “how,” when the researcher focuses on contemporary issues, and when the researcher has little to no control of events (Yin, 2003). Gall et al. revealed three purposes why a researcher might use case studies: “to produce detailed descriptions of a phenomenon, to develop possible explanations of it, or to evaluate the phenomenon” (p. 451). Achieving one or more of the aforementioned reasons is precisely what I achieved through interviews, observations, and analysis of documents.
In addition, Merriam (1998) characterized case studies as “particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic” (p. 29). Case studies are particularistic because they have a specific focus – be it a phenomenon, program, or event (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are descriptive because they reveal thick rich descriptions of what is taking place by using quotes and prose (Merriam, 1998). Case studies are heuristic in that they aid the reader in potentially grasping a new understanding of the phenomena or confirm what the reader already knows (Merriam, 1998).

Often, information derived from a case study can have a profound impact on “policy, practice, and future research” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). This fact was especially important to me because very little was known about TAMTs or the faculty perceptions about this group. Hence, this research could impact future policies and practices. Therefore, capturing the perspectives of participants in this study required that I take on an etic perspective, the observer/outsider’s view, regarding the phenomenon while in their environment (Gall et al., 2007; Patton, 2002). Maintaining the observer’s role was crucial when making theoretical and conceptual sense of the case study (Gall et al., 2007).

**Collective Case Study.**

There are three types of case studies, intrinsic; instrumental; and collective (Stake, 1995; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). An intrinsic case study is the result of a researcher’s interest in exploring a topic in an effort to learn more about a case (Stake, 1995). An instrumental case study allows the case to be secondary (in a support role) as the researcher attempts to uncover the meaning of something else (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Finally, a collective case study is when a researcher chooses to study a number of individual cases to learn more about a “phenomenon, population, or general condition” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 437).
This qualitative study was a collective case study, or can be viewed as several instrumental cases. Although one program at an institution was being studied, there were a number of faculty members who told their stories. The individual cases associated with this study were similar in that each had referred a student to TAMT, or was involved in a referral. However, the cases were different because the student concerns varied. The collection of cases aided me in understanding faculty perceptions of TAMTs. I used thick, rich descriptions gathered from open-ended, semi-structured, one-on-one interviews to understand a complex phenomenon.

**The Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is critical to the success of the study. One role that I assumed was logistics because I needed to obtain approval to conduct the research study from the University of Mississippi Institutional Review Board and from the research site (Patton, 2002). In addition to these tasks, Patton (2002) concluded that one of the primary roles that the researcher assumes is that of an instrument for any qualitative inquiry; therefore, the credibility of the qualitative method “hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork – as well as things going on in a person’s life that might prove a distraction” (p. 14). Hence, I needed to be proficient in how to conduct interviews, perform observations without disrupting the environment, and effectively analyze documents.

Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Merriam, 1998) claimed that the human instrument is distinguished from other data collection tools because the human is afforded the opportunity to adapt techniques as needed, clarify and summarize data throughout the study, follow up on unusual responses, and process data right away. As the human instrument, I did all of those
things. Furthermore, I interacted with participants and used empathy to obtain the meaning of the phenomenon from participants (Gall et al., 2007).

**Professional Position.**

Having worked as a housing administrator for nine years, I enjoyed solving problems and helping students succeed. I believed in approaching my work with students from a holistic standpoint. My goal was to help students maintain a healthy social and academic balance that contributed to their overall academic achievement and personal development. Therefore, I was no stranger to helping students in crisis situations.

In addition, my work in housing caused me to collaborate with faculty members on many projects with varying degrees of success. Through these projects, I formed strong relationships with several faculty members. As a result, faculty members occasionally called on me to consult and/or help them with student problems/crises. During those encounters with faculty members, I realized a couple of things. First, I noticed that many faculty members really embraced interacting with students in a more informal manner. Next, I realized that faculty members were not adequately trained to respond to or aid in solving many student concerns which left them frustrated and discouraged. Consequently, faculty members called on a student affairs practitioner, like me, to assist them in helping students resolve their problems because they did not have the knowledge of resources or training. I often wondered why faculty members had not received the training they needed to support students.

Following the 2007 tragedy at Virginia Tech, I became more interested in violence prevention efforts on college campuses. While employed at the University of South Florida, I watched the TAMT (Students of Concern Assistance Team) take shape from a distance. A couple of years later, when I arrived at The University of Mississippi to pursue my doctorate, I
shared my interest in TAMTs with the Dean of Students, Dr. Thomas “Sparky” Reardon. Following that conversation, I was granted an opportunity to observe the multidisciplinary Student Intervention Team (SIT) at The University of Mississippi. My observations and interactions with SIT helped me solidify my dissertation topic. My deep commitment to helping students succeed, my curiosity regarding how faculty members are assisted with and educated about TAMTs and students in crisis, and my pervasive desire to learn more about intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs, has driven my desire to conduct this study.

Although my primary goal as the researcher was to gather and analyze data, it was equally important for me to acknowledge the potential for human error in my research. The reality was that, inadvertently, information could be missed, mistakes could occur, and my personal biases could manifest themselves (Merriam, 1998). I kept these unfavorable occurrences to a minimum by intentionally creating interview questions that were piloted and reviewed by a peer debriefer. During interviews, I endeavored to not allow my own feelings, values, beliefs, and opinions to be made known. In addition, Patton suggested that the researcher maintain a level of *empathetic neutrality* which means that the researcher is careful not to be too close, and cloud her judgment, or too far from the study to understand what is happening. Patton also encouraged researchers to be fully present which is called *mindfulness*. As the researcher, I captured information within context, was balanced in conveying positive and harmful findings, and looked for multiple perspectives (Patton, 2002). As the human instrument, it was necessary for me to identify, disclose, and acknowledge my assumptions, or worldviews and biases, before the research began.
Assumptions.

When not recognized, assumptions can be very harmful to a qualitative study. It was very important that I acknowledged my assumptions. There were six assumptions that I needed to be aware of throughout my study:

My first assumption was that faculty members were open to participating in training(s) offered by an institution regarding identifying and helping students in trouble. After the grade school shootings in the 1990s, recent college shootings in academic buildings, and the general incivility occurring in college classrooms, I believed that faculty members were receptive to helping identify students who were in trouble.

My second assumption was that faculty members were not being required to attend trainings on how to identify students in crisis. As a result, it was the responsibility of the faculty member to seek out opportunities to learn more about violence prevention. I believed that some faculty members were not seeking out training.

My third assumption was that more graduate students taught classes at large research institutions. Many times, these student teachers were inexperienced in teaching and working with students, which also yielded less focus on the students’ holistic needs. In addition, graduate student instructors were students and were often stressed because of the demands of teaching and their own academics. Like faculty members, I assumed that graduate student instructors were not automatically receiving training to identify students in crisis and, in fact, may have less of an opportunity to obtain such training due to their overall lack of experience in teaching.

My fourth assumption was that institutions that have chosen to develop TAMTs were genuinely attempting to address the issue of safety on their campuses. Although those teams may
have been in their infancy stages, I believed that each year those teams would become more refined about the services they provide and more intentional about protocol.

My fifth assumption was that academic and student affairs at some institutions had been able to successfully join forces and work together to create strong TAMTs. Both groups were likely devoted to creating a healthy and safe environment for students. Ideally, helping students experience a seamless learning environment without major interruption was the goal for both academic and student affairs personnel.

My sixth and final assumption was that administrators were choosing to educate faculty members as well as the campus community primarily through pamphlets and websites. Although these passive tools may be less expensive than hiring a campus safety expert or scheduling on-campus presentations, when used alone, these tools may not fully address the needs of faculty, staff, and students. It was my assertion that employing a number of different training approaches was better.

**Research Bias.**

Throughout a study the researcher must be aware of personal biases because, if left unchecked, they could impact the investigation (Merriam, 1998). I was aware that participants also had biases. As a result, I worked to make participants feel comfortable, but was careful not to disclose too much personal information or make facial expressions when responses were made. Therefore, I am compelled to share my biases to ensure that my study will not be affected by them. I have listed my biases below:

1. Although the literature suggested that TAMTs should be comprised of a minimal number of members, I thought that larger teams consisting of members from key areas such as housing, registrar’s office, dean of students, police, academic affairs, student affairs, legal
counsel, and the counseling center were more effective. This bias originated from the fact that I had most recently been exposed to a TAMT with this make-up. That group appeared to be very efficient and effective because individuals from various departments on campus were present and tasks were divided among the members at the meeting. I believed that having fewer people around the table left more work undone and greater room for error.

2. I believed that some faculty members failed to accept that students with mental health issues had a right to be educated, if reasonable accommodations could be made. From time to time, faculty members were unfamiliar with accommodations. I believed that some faculty members were hesitant at times to cooperate, and were occasionally unwilling to comply, when student disabilities services contacted them regarding students’ needs.

3. I believed that large research institutions were less student-focused than smaller institutions. It appeared that professors at that type of institution were more focused on research and publishing, which caused them to pay less attention to the individual needs of students. Therefore, increased interaction was often not welcomed and faculty reporting was lacking.

4. Finally, I believed that TAMTs that were chaired by upper level student affairs administrators were more effective. As a student affairs administrator, I believed that we are well versed in student services, and are familiar with students’ developmental needs. As a result, I thought that the learning curve for student affairs practitioners was shorter than it would be for an academician. Hence, having a student affairs administrator as the chair of the committee was a good practice.
To limit assumptions and biases, I conducted a self-check. When appropriate, I asked follow up questions of the participants regarding their responses to accurately reflect the participants’ meaning, and to limit the need for me to interpret what the participant said. In addition, I relied on my peer debriefer and faculty advisor to aid in limiting the effects of bias. Furthermore, the use of a process known as bracketing helped me set aside my assumptions and biases leading me to equally review all data throughout data analysis to find patterns and discrepancies in the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Piloting the Interview Questions

Once I gained permission to conduct the study from my dissertation committee, proper IRB approval was secured from The University of Mississippi. I piloted all interview questions at The University of Mississippi. The institution had a TAMT which it called the Student Intervention Team (SIT). I chose this institution because when Brett Sokolow, campus safety consultant, was asked by Student Affairs Leader to share the names of a few institutions that had developed good processes to prevent crisis, he listed The University of Mississippi as one of those campuses (“What Should We Focus”, 2008, p. 7). Another reason I chose to pilot the study at The University of Mississippi is because I was enrolled there as a doctoral student. Hence, the close proximity and possible ease of use contributed to my decision. Ms. Leslie Banahan, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs at The University of Mississippi and former SIT chairperson, communicated with and later provided me the names of four pilot participants: (a) the chairperson of SIT, (b) two faculty members, and (c) one department chair who had been involved in a student referral.

I conducted a pilot test of the interview questions to limit bias in data (Gall et al., 2007). When discussing pilot testing the interview questions, Gall et al. (2007) suggested, “the
interview guide and procedures should be pilot-tested to ensure that they will yield reasonably unbiased data” (p. 253). Gall et al. also recommended that pilot interviews be taped and reviewed. I asked participants of the pilot study to provide me with feedback on the questions I asked them (Creswell, 2008). Data derived from the pilot interviews was not used in the findings of the official study. Piloting a study is a formative process that gives the researcher an opportunity to tweak the study, to test the data collection technique, and to ensure that questions clearly reflect what the researcher is asking (Yin, 2003). In addition, research questions may be modified or replaced if the original questions are ineffective and/or new issues arise (Stake, 1995). I used the feedback from participants as well as my own observations to tweak the interview questions.

Site Selection

The site for this research study was one public four year institution, Big University (BU), in the southeast that had a TAMT, at minimum, for the last four years. The institution had a TAMT, with both academic and student affairs members represented on the team. In addition, the TAMT possessed a structured and interactive process. I also wanted six to eight faculty participants who were willing to participate in the study. I interviewed nine faculty members and seven academic administrators. While at the site, I managed the level of disruption I brought to the institution’s campus. Confidentiality was monitored closely and heavily enforced throughout the study.

In the fall of 2012, the chosen research site had a total enrollment of 19,810 students on its main campus. The Carnegie Foundation (2012) classified it as a large public residential comprehensive doctoral research university with very high research activity. The vast number of majors offered provided a diverse student population that is representative of today’s students.
Moreover, during the fall 2012 semester, the institution employed more than 700 faculty members who were tenured professors, pre-tenure assistant professors, associate professors, professors, and full-time clinicians. An institution with such a large number of faculty members provided me with an adequate number of participants. Furthermore, the vice-president of student affairs and TAMT administrator’s willingness and commitment to the research study was a major deciding factor.

Once IRB had approved the study at my home institution, I attempted to complete the necessary paperwork at the research site. However, BU’s IRB told me that before my study could be approved I had to get permission from the vice president of student affairs. As a result, I phoned the vice president of student affairs and briefed him about my desire to conduct a study at that institution. I also arranged a time to meet with the vice president of student affairs and the chairperson of the TAMT in October 2012 to speak about the research study more in-depthly.

During the meeting with the vice president of student affairs and the TAMT chairperson, I shared with them why I was interested in this study, the benefits for the research site, more details regarding how the study would be carried out, and asked them a few questions that confirmed that the institution was a viable research site. The questions I asked were about team composition and the number of years the TAMT had been in existence. In addition, I provided the vice president of student affairs and the TAMT chairperson with the information sheet (Appendix A) and IRB approval from my institutions (Appendix B). I informed the vice president of student affairs that my IRB paperwork at BU had been initiated, but would not be finalized until he sent written consent that he was allowing the research to be done in the division of student affairs. During this meeting, I received verbal consent to perform my study from both the vice president of student affairs and TAMT chairperson. I then provided them with a follow
up letter (Appendix C) that detailed what was discussed during our meeting. After our meeting, the TAMT chairperson introduced me to the man who would serve as the gatekeeper for the study. Before I left campus that day, the vice president of student affairs emailed me a letter granting me permission to conduct my study. The letter was shared with BU’s IRB and then the study was approved there.

**Population, Sample, and Participants**

**Population.**

A population consists of a group of individuals who have the same characteristics (Creswell, 2008). The population for this qualitative study was tenured and pre-tenure faculty members who were assistant, associate, and full professors currently employed at BU. In addition, I included full-time clinical faculty members, and later submitted an addendum to IRB to include instructors.

**Sample.**

A sample is the target group identified from the population (Creswell, 2008). The sample was purposeful. According to Merriam (1998), a purposeful sample gives the researcher the opportunity to be very particular about who is chosen to be in the sample. These individuals were identified with the assistance of the gatekeeper. The purposeful sample for this study was tenured, tenure track, and clinical faculty members, who had referred a student to the TAMT. All participants were chosen because the researcher suspected that individuals representing faculty and administrators would give adequate responses to the researcher (Merriam, 1998). I thought that these individuals would help me understand the central phenomenon best based on their experiences.
Participants.

Once the research study had been approved at BU, the gatekeeper began to contact individuals who had referred a student or assisted in the referral of a student to TAMT via telephone or email within the last four years. He briefly introduced me and assured participants that the study was legitimate and had been approved by the institution. Once the potential participant agreed to take part in the research study, the gatekeeper provided me with contact information (email address, physical address on campus, and a telephone number) for the participants in an ongoing fashion. Within a week of receiving a participants’ contact information, I called or emailed each participant (Appendix D). If they agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled their interview date and time. Later, I contacted participants via email to re-introduce myself and the study as well as confirm the date and time of the interview (Appendix E). If I was unsuccessful in reaching a potential participant on the first attempt, I followed up with an email, phone call, or office visit.

Faculty Members.

The participants involved in the study were primarily faculty members who had referred a student to the TAMT at BU. For the purpose of this study, a faculty member was defined as an assistant, associate, and full professor who was either tenured or tenure tracked. In addition, full-time clinical professors and an instructor were interviewed in the study. I interviewed nine faculty members.

Chairperson of the TAMT.

The TAMT chairperson is referred to as one of the TAMT administrators. I chose not to use the term TAMT chairperson to ensure a greater level of confidentiality, as there is only one TAMT chairperson at BU. I established an interview date and time with this TAMT
administrator during my initial visit to campus to discuss my study with he and the vice-
president of student affairs. I interviewed the TAMT administrator first because I wanted
background information that would help me better understand the history of the TAMT at BU.
He provided information about the team’s make-up, outlined procedures of the TAMT on that
campus, and offered context for some of the information later shared by faculty members during
their interviews.

**Additional TAMT Administrators.**

In addition to speaking with the chairperson of the TAMT, I also interviewed two
additional TAMT administrators. One individual was a student affairs employee who
coordinated the logistics of the TAMT. He investigated reports, maintained the database,
attended meetings, and provided follow-up communication to students and faculty members. The
other TAMT administrator was a retiree who created both an informal and formal TAMT at BU.

**Deans and Chairpersons that Have Aided Faculty With a Student Referral.**

On occasion, deans and chairs of departments are called upon to aid faculty members
with a student(s) in crisis. In this study, they are referred to as academic administrators so as to
not identify them as a department chairs or directors, which could have compromised
confidentiality. I included these individuals in my participant list because of the support and
resources they provided to the faculty member(s) in need. Speaking with them about the TAMT
at BU offered a different perspective regarding the process. I interviewed six academic
administrators and one academic advisor who worked closely with faculty to refer students to
TAMT.
Data Collection

Yin (2003) suggested that qualitative data is captured in the following ways: “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (p. 85). According to Yin, a researcher should seek to employ as many of these methods as possible. This qualitative research study mainly collected data in three ways: interviews, observations, and document analysis.

In an attempt to add to the literature and gather faculty perceptions, a collective case study design was used to gather data via interviews, observations, and documents. These three data collecting techniques were employed because no single source of information should be trusted to give a comprehensive view of a phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Although interviews, observations, and document analysis have individual strengths and weaknesses (Patton, 2002); Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Patton, 2002) explained triangulating the three can result in overall increased validity. Moreover, having different data sources gave me an opportunity to cross check findings (Patton, 2002).

Interviews.

In qualitative research, the interview questions should be open ended questions and allow the participant an opportunity to formulate his/her own response to the questions (Creswell, 2008). Patton (2002) declared that interviews gave a researcher the opportunity to gain an individual’s perspective by asking questions about things that could not be observed. Most importantly, using the interview technique for data collection provided me face time with the participant, which limited the amount of discarded responses due to not understanding what the participant was sharing. In addition to the interviews, I observed the body cues/language of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).
Although labor-intensive, the interview approach allowed me to focus on one participant at a time and the answers that he/she gave. I had a pre-determined list of questions in the interview protocol (Appendix F) for all participants. Moreover, questions addressed present, past, and future matters (Patton, 2002). The open ended interview questions pertained to the research questions, literature review, document analysis, pilot study, and the conceptual framework. I used probing questions to obtain additional information or to clarify points from the participants’ interviews (Creswell, 2008).

Before each interview began, I reviewed a consent form with the participant. The consent form informed participants of their rights and was an indication of their agreement to participate in the study (Creswell, 2008). Afterwards, I asked each participant to sign the consent form. I conducted interviews in a confidential space that the participants identified on campus such as an office. Each participant was asked to provide a pseudonym or choose a pseudonym from a list that I provided. They assumed that pseudonym for the remainder of the interview. Although I prepared questions for the participants, I followed up on a participant’s response by asking unscripted questions due to the semi-structured interview design. I digitally recorded participants’ interviews using two devices. During the interview, I took descriptive and reflective notes.

Once each participant’s interview was completed, I wrote summary notes about the interview in a journal. Afterwards, all interviews were transcribed verbatim by an outside transcriptionist. Although researchers are encouraged to transcribe their own interviews to increase their familiarity with the information (Merriam 1998), I chose to hire someone to perform this task, in the interest of time. The transcriptionist was made aware of the need to maintain confidentiality and privacy of participants.
Later, I replayed all interviews with the transcripts in hand. Narratives were reviewed and checked for accuracy. At times, the transcripts had errors. The errors were corrected while listening to the transcripts. Interviews were housed on my computer and secured in a locked desk in a locked room when not in use.

Although participant names were provided to me by the gatekeeper, I also used snowball sampling as a means to get additional participants. Snowball sampling is a technique that involved asking participants to provide the names of other professors I should speak to regarding this study (Creswell, 2008). I asked participants if I could reference them when I made contact with the prospective participant they referred. They agreed. In addition, I encouraged faculty members to speak with the individual about the research project prior to me contacting them. Although snowball sampling helped me obtain the names of more potential participants, I took measures to ensure that those referred were actually eligible to participate in the study by confirming the participants’ names with the gatekeeper (Creswell, 2008).

When my sample size continued to be small and I had not achieved saturation, I completed an addendum with the IRB to include an additional group of participants, instructors. I also visited the office space of one faculty member that I had not been able to reach. This technique was successful because I made contact with the faculty member and was able to schedule an interview date and time.

**TAMT Observations.**

I observed the TAMT in action three times. An observation protocol was developed and followed (Appendix G). Observation is one of the key elements involved in all research methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I partook in naturalistic observation because I studied the participants in their own environment without interfering with people or the activities (Denzin & Lincoln,
Patton (2002) revealed that effectively conducting an observation should “consist of detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experiences” (p. 4). I gave attention to things such as speech, gestures, and silence. Observing the group in action assisted me in understanding the team’s group dynamics and meeting protocol. I sought to learn if the process was effective and exhibited collaboration. Observing the group gave me an opportunity to see how cases were reviewed by the group. I did not participate in the discussion in any way. However, I took descriptive and reflective field notes. Summative notes were written after each observation.

Before my first observation, the TAMT was informed about my study and my desire to observe the group. To ensure that confidentiality was upheld and to lessen the impact of my presence as the group discussed sensitive information, the gatekeeper gave each TAMT member a list of students’ names and pseudonyms to be used during that meeting. For example, Jane Doe was Student A. I was not given a list. Before each of my observations, the TAMT administrator would first address the group and distribute the list while I waited outside. Afterwards, I was invited into the room and the meeting began. Throughout the meeting, the team referred to their key when speaking about the students.

**Document Analysis.**

Finally, I used documents to help familiarize me with the institution and its TAMT. According to Patton (2002), document analysis provides insight that is unobtainable via interview or observation. It led me to ask additional questions that I may not have asked on my own (Patton, 2002). Document analysis gave me an opportunity to link documents with observations and interviews (Patton, 2002). I collected any public literature disseminated by the
TAMT, as well as pertinent information from the institution, such as mission statements, reports generated after any substantial incidents on campus regarding students in crisis, relevant publications, training information on the topic of crisis prevention, pertinent website information, TAMT committee charges, pamphlets/brochures, information used during training, etc. I asked the gatekeeper and the TAMT chairperson to aid me in gathering public documents.

The research questions and the conceptual framework influenced the documents that I analyzed. Although the use of document analysis helps the researcher formulate a clearer picture of what is being studied; Patton (2002) proclaimed that document analysis can present challenges such as “getting access to documents, understanding how and why the documents were produced, determining the accuracy of documents, linking documents with other sources, including interviews and observations, and deconstructing and demystifying institutional texts” (p. 499). I scrutinized each document heavily. I sought counsel from an individual(s) who had firsthand knowledge of the document for clarification.

**Data and Interview Analysis**

Once transcripts had been obtained, I assessed the accuracy of each transcript by playing the interview while reading the transcript. All errors were corrected at that time. Afterwards, I listened to interviews several times during data and interview analysis.

When a researcher conducts data analysis the purpose of the study should be kept in the forefront of his/her mind. For this study, interviews, observations, and documents served as the data. In addition, Merriam (1998) revealed that data analysis and collection should occur at the same time. As I continued to collect data, I reviewed past interview transcripts by making notes regarding hunches, ideas, and questions that I wanted to include in the next interview. Each transcript was carefully read and re-read, and then a summative evaluation was written.
In addition, a one page participant profile was generated for each participant. Merriam suggested that the data be compared as the interviews occur. As the reflections and questions built on one another, the end result was that the researcher had some very basic categories outlined because of her notes (Merriam, 1998). The categories that emerge served as the “answers” to the research questions posed in the study (Merriam, 1998, p. 183). Merriam said that categories demonstrated the following qualities: be “exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent” (p. 184). From these categories, themes emerged. Later, I used direct quotes from the data to illustrate themes and to convey the perspectives of the participants using their own words.

**Coding.**

Coding allows the researcher to organize into categories text and pictures gathered at data collection (Creswell, 2009). Coding systems can be simple or complex. Coding lets the researcher quickly locate specific data by using a word, phrase, or number (Merriam, 1998). I used words, phrases, categories, subcategories, and patterns to organize the data. During coding, I looked for instances of overlap and/or redundancy which led to categories and themes.

**Qualitative Computer Software.**

NVivo10 is a computer software developed by QSR International. In addition to manual coding, the software was used to aid me in organizing the data into major themes (Creswell, 2008). The software was built to help a researcher simplify complex information. I re-examined transcripts and listened to interviews again which helped me to create subthemes. Nodes and documents were used to organize data. Nodes represented central ideas that were later subdivided. This software allowed me to compare the themes I manually identified against the themes created using the software. As a result, the use of this software increased accuracy.
Enhancing Trustworthiness and Validating Findings

Instead of using the term validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that trustworthiness be used, which can be defined as how a researcher persuades his or her audiences (including self) that the results of an inquiry are noteworthy. To enhance the trustworthiness of this study, before the study began, I conducted a pilot of the interview questions to test the interview protocol and ensure that the questions used in the study were understood by participants.

Once the official research study was completed, I triangulated the data to ensure trustworthiness. I also used peer debriefing, and member checks (Creswell, 2009). In addition, I solicited feedback from an expert in the field of student affairs.

Triangulation.

To ensure accuracy and trustworthiness in the findings, I triangulated the data which Creswell (2008) explained “is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research. The inquirer examines each information source and finds evidence to support a theme” (p. 266). As themes were identified, I developed subthemes when three participants referenced the same concept during his/her interview. Triangulation allowed me to identify converging lines of inquiry and support findings (Yin, 2003). Using multiple sources of data collection helped with construct validity because it allowed the phenomenon to have multiple measures taken (Yin, 2003). Hence, I used data from multiple participant interviews, observations, field notes, and documents in the triangulation process. When multiple data collection methods were used, it was important for me to be proficient in all of them (Yin, 2003). Failure to master each of the
techniques could have had profound consequences on the data collected and the results of the study.

**Peer Debriefing.**

I enlisted the assistance of a peer debriefer as a second means of ensuring trustworthiness. This individual had no attachment to the study and had limited knowledge regarding the phenomenon. Lincoln and Guba (1985) wrote that the peer debriefer’s role was to help maintain the researcher’s honesty by reviewing data for accuracy and bias, listening as the researcher processed, providing feedback on next steps, and playing the role of devil’s advocate. Dr. Adrienne Mustiful served as the peer debriefer for this study. Dr. Mustiful currently serves as a school psychologist with the Natchitoches Parish School Board in Natchitoches, Louisiana. Dr. Mustiful was chosen as a peer debriefer because of her doctorate in higher education, her knowledge of and experience with qualitative research, and her limited knowledge of the research study topic.

**Member Checks.**

Every faculty participant received the emergent themes of this study. In addition, all participants were offered an opportunity to review his/her transcript for accuracy and completeness. Accuracy was paramount because the themes derived from the interviews with participants helped to inform future practices for TAMTs, and gave insight into faculty members’ lived experiences. These procedures were known as member checking (Creswell, 2008 & Gall et al., 2007). This helped ensure that facts were correct and any additional noteworthy information that faculty wanted to share or clarify were revealed to me.
**Expert in the Field.**

For this research study, I consulted with an expert in the field. Dr. Thomas “Sparky” Reardon fulfilled this role. Dr. Reardon serves as the dean of students at The University of Mississippi and had recently been appointed the chairperson of the SIT. Dr. Reardon’s knowledge of students, years in the profession, and training on TAMTs made him an excellent resource for this study. Dr. Reardon reviewed this document and provided feedback.

**Ethical Considerations**

First, I remained in compliance with standards set forth by the IRB regarding working with human subjects at both my home institution and the research site. Ethical issues were evaluated throughout the process (Creswell, 2008). I assumed the role as guest at the research site and gained access to the site in the manner outlined by the vice president of student affairs. My goal was to leave the research site undisturbed (Creswell, 2008; Creswell, 2009). In addition, I solicited the gatekeeper’s assistance in identifying participants for this study.

I respected the rights of participants by disclosing the purpose of the study, how results would be used, and made them aware of any consequences the study might have on them as participants (Creswell, 2008). A consent form was distributed to each participant once his/her interview was scheduled. Before each interview began, I reviewed the consent form with the participant and asked him/her to sign it. I was open and honest with participants at all times. I was sensitive to any emotions that the participants displayed such as anger or tears (Creswell, 2009). Furthermore, participants knew that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
All research data collected was kept in a locked desk inside a locked room. I was the only person who had a key to the locked desk. Data was reported accurately and honestly (Creswell, 2008). If asked, I will provide the research site a copy of the findings (Creswell, 2008).

I used pseudonyms to identify the institution and all participants throughout the interview process, and in the reporting of the findings. At the beginning of the interview, I asked the participant to share the pseudonym that he/she would like to assume. The pseudonym was used to address the participant throughout his/her interview with me. And once interviews had been transcribed, each participant was offered an opportunity to read the transcript of his/her interview.

**Delimitations**

This collective case study focused on faculty members’ perceptions of the TAMTs as a model of intra-collaboration between academic and student affairs units. This study was delimited to participants from one potential reporting group – faculty members who were tenured, tenured-track, clinical professors, and instructors. I interviewed nine faculty members at one institution in the southeastern region of the United States who had referred students to the TAMT at that institution within the last four yours. I also interviewed three TAMT administrators and one academic advisor who worked closely with faculty on student behavioral issues. In addition, I also interviewed six academic administrators who were department chairs and directors who assisted faculty members with a student referral. The information from this administrative group added to the richness of the study. Moreover, using a single site approach allowed me an opportunity to immerse myself in the institution’s culture, interact with the participants, and spend extensive time on site gathering data.
When choosing a research site, I looked for a research institution that had a functioning TAMT committee for at least four years. The four year period was within the timeframe that TAMTs became more prevalent at institutions of higher education. Using this timeframe as a guide, I avoided collecting data at an institution that recently had established a TAMT.

**Limitations**

One limitation of the collective case study was that I have watched TAMT meetings in action at the University of Mississippi on several occasions. As a student affairs professional, I have interacted with many faculty members and participated in collaborative endeavors. As a result, I was careful not to show bias when observing the TAMT, when speaking with faculty members and the TAMT administrators, and when reviewing documents.

Another limitation was that as an outside researcher and observer, faculty members were unfamiliar with me and I was unfamiliar with them and the institution. Therefore without my knowledge, participants had the ability to embellish their story, forget the sequence of events or vital details, and/or fear retaliation for the information shared (Patton, 2002). To limit this occurrence, I disclosed all safeguards that had been put in place to protect the participants’ identity. I also exercised extreme prejudice in disclosing information that could be identifiable.

**Conclusion**

This qualitative case study explored faculty members’ perception of the college and university TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs. The study occurred at one southeastern public institution. Faculty members who reported a student to the TAMT within the last four years served as a purposeful sample. The TAMT administrators, one academic advisor, as well as deans and department chairs who had assisted in a student referral, were interviewed. Data was collected via interviews, observations, and
document analysis. Data analysis was completed through coding and NVivo 10. I used triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks, and feedback from an expert in the field to ensure trustworthiness in the research findings. Chapter four provides the results of the study. Chapter five discusses conclusions, implications, and recommendations.
CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university threat assessment and management team (TAMT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs units at one southeastern institution. This collective case study used Kezar and Lester’s (2009) stage model of higher education collaboration as the theoretical framework. The following primary and secondary research questions guided this study:

1. How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?
   a. How do faculty members describe their expectations of the TAMT?
   b. How do faculty members work with the TAMT to address crisis with individual students?

2. What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

First, a description of the research institution is presented. Next, detailed narratives of the participants are given. Finally, I identified and discussed the themes that emerged from the individual interviews.

Research Institution

Big University (BU) is a public four-year institution in the southeast. The Carnegie Foundation classified BU as a large public residential comprehensive doctoral research
university with very high research activity (Carnegie Foundation, 2012). In the fall of 2012, the main campus of BU enrolled nearly 20,000 students. Undergraduate students represented 80.5% of the student population, while graduate and professional students made up 19.5%. Of the students enrolled, 47.8% identified as female and 52.2% identified as male. Big University enrolled a racially diverse student population, as minority students comprised 24.9% of the student population.

In addition to having a large and diverse student population, BU employed more than 1,300 part-time and full-time faculty members in an array of disciplines. Moreover, BU also had an established TAMT, which was critical to this research project. A formal TAMT had existed at BU for more than five years. Furthermore, BU initially formed an informal team two years before the formal TAMT was established.

Participants

Data from this research project was gathered from nineteen participants. Eighteen participants were currently employed at BU during the 2012-2013 academic school year. These participants included faculty members (n = 9), academic administrators which included mostly department chairs and one academic advisor (n = 7), and student affairs practitioners associated with facilitating the TAMT (n = 2). In addition to current employees, I interviewed one university retiree who was responsible for conceptualizing BU’s informal TAMT and later its TAMT.

The vice president of student affairs at the research site requested that potential participants be contacted by a TAMT administrator, who later became the gatekeeper. As a result, the gatekeeper contacted potential participants to share information about the study, assure them that the institution was permitting the research, and obtain permission to share their name
and contact information with me to promote privacy. Although this process yielded welcoming participants who had been involved in a student referral to the TAMT within the last four years, names of participants slowly trickled in over a three month timeframe.

Initially, the proposal sought to include tenured, pre-tenure, or clinical professors serving in faculty roles. However, low numbers and an inability to reach saturation caused me to submit an Institutional Research Board (IRB) addendum which enabled me to widen my participant pool to include instructors. According to Creswell (2008), saturation is “a state in which the researcher makes the subjective determination that new data will not provide any new information or insights for the developing categories.” However, participation eventually increased in the original categories. As a result, I interviewed one veteran instructor who also served as a supervisor to graduate students and adjunct instructors in the department.

Furthermore, none of the faculty members and academic administrators had served on the TAMT. However, nearly all had referred a student to the TAMT or assisted another faculty member in doing so. There was one faculty participant who had not referred a student, but had served as a mental health consultant to the TAMT. He evaluated students at the request of the TAMT.

**Demographic Data.**

In an effort to protect the identity of the participants, I provide limited demographic information about each participant. In addition, I gave general information about each individual because of the TAMT administrator’s involvement in identifying and contacting them. Table 1 details the participants’ pseudonyms, gender, rank, and academic discipline. Pseudonyms were used to assist in protecting the identity of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Participants chose their pseudonyms before the interview began. I used the titles Mr. and Ms. for all
participants to maintain confidentiality because some participants received their doctoral
degrees, as required by their field, and other participants worked in professional disciplines that
did not require a doctoral degree. Furthermore, I withheld the names of academic departments
and programs. Instead, I chose to use very general terms to identify academic disciplines. Table 2
furnishes the length of time each participant worked in higher education, at BU, and the
estimated number of referrals they submitted to the TAMT within the last four years.

Table 1

*Background data of participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Rank/Tenure</th>
<th>Area</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
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<td>Tenured Faculty</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Professional School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Colbert</td>
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<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Liberals Art &amp; Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Professional School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>TAMT Administrator</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Retired TAMT Administrator</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holcomb</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>TAMT Administrator</td>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Full-time Instructor/</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<td>Supervisor</td>
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<td>Mackie</td>
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<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Professional School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcell</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Academic Administrator</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<td>Academic Advisor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<tr>
<td>McMurtry</td>
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<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<td>Paine</td>
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<td>Professional School</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pseudonym</td>
<td>Years Worked in Higher Education</td>
<td>Years at BU</td>
<td>Number of Referrals Made in Last 4 Years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bond</td>
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Annotated Narratives

The participants in this study seemed willing to share the details of their TAMT experiences. This section includes an annotated narrative for each participant. The narratives appear in alphabetical order by participant. In addition, each narrative includes non-identifying demographic data to protect the identity of each participant, a summary, and a direct quote that further capture the essence of each participant’s experience with the TAMT.

Mr. Anderson.

“I did not expect them to physically show up… I really appreciated him [sic] coming over.” Mr. Anderson was a tenured professor in liberal arts and sciences, and had been employed at BU for 15 years. He also possessed a professional license. He taught two classes each semester. In years past, he held a position as an academic administrator within his department. Mr. Anderson referred three students to the TAMT and had helped faculty members refer students while in his academic administrator capacity.

Mr. Anderson worked to maintain “pretty significant boundaries” with students. He helped students having academic difficulty. However if a student experienced problems of a personal nature, he spoke with the student to help them identify the “stressor” and then directed them to the appropriate resources. Although he remained open to making student referrals, Mr.
Anderson felt like some of his colleagues wanted nothing to do with helping a student in crisis because “they perceive themselves as busy, that they should be doing what they are good at, that there should be other people on campus who can follow up appropriately with students.” In his colleagues’ defense, Mr. Anderson thought that larger classes made it difficult to track student concerns.

Mr. Anderson trusted the TAMT. He believed that they would follow-up with him in an appropriate fashion and give him “useful responses.” He also found that the TAMT offered compassionate solutions, went above and beyond when assisting with a situation, and showed respect for both the faculty members and students. Mr. Anderson’s encounter with the TAMT made a sizeable impression on him. He commented about his positive interaction:

I have been very impressed with how they support me as a faculty member and how they have supported my colleagues when they have had issues. Right now, I trust that I can pick up the phone and call them and not worry that I will suddenly get a student flushed out of here for no reason. I don’t fear over-reaction at all and, also, I haven’t had them under-react. That is a pretty good thing to be able to say about your dean of student’s office.

Mr. Bond.

“They kept everybody in the loop, they kept everybody informed. They remained on top of the situation.” Mr. Bond was an academic administrator in a professional school in which the curriculum was “very, very stressful.” He had been employed at BU for more than 25 years and taught no courses that fall semester. He built “good relationships” with many administrators in academic and student affairs units. He served as a resource to all faculty members in his department by mentoring them about research and helping with student relationships.
Mr. Bond believed that his faculty members got to know students “as human beings” because of small class sizes and the time spent with students. As a result, students felt comfortable speaking to faculty members about issues; and in turn, faculty members were willing to report concerns because of the “care” that they had for their students. To assist in the reporting process, Mr. Bond said faculty members needed to receive published information about the TAMT that is easy to locate and is written “so simple that you get to the idea.”

He suspected that his faculty members are more attuned, but not overly so, to reporting questionable student behavior because of Virginia Tech, similar high profiles incidents, and a recent violent incident on BU’s campus. He also recognized that one sign of the times is that he has become increasingly comfortable referring students to the counseling center. He considered today’s students to be “both emotionally and academically ill prepared.”

His numerous interactions with the chairperson of the TAMT have caused Mr. Bond to develop great trust in him. He was impressed with the work of the TAMT, the knowledge of the TAMT members, and the counseling center. He realized that one of the best ways to help support the work of the TAMT and student affairs was by finding ways to educate faculty about reporting incidents.

**Ms. Colbert.**

“I think they were very good at listening to circumstances and at communicating with the student in a calm and reasonable way what is expected…. And they are very timely.” Ms. Colbert was an academic administrator in liberal arts and sciences. She began her time at the university as an assistant professor fourteen years ago and has held a number of positions within the department. She taught doctoral classes. She received TAMT training during a university
wide training effort and during training for the position she now holds in the department. Ms. Colbert helped one faculty member make a student referral.

Although she described her work environment as comfortable and relaxed, she admitted that nowadays faculty members in her discipline seemed more observant and looked out for one another. Recently, this was put to the test when a disoriented individual wandered through the hallway and someone immediately reported the situation. Ms. Colbert appeared confident that staff members in her department would report questionable student behavior because the reporting practice was in keeping with the expectations of her profession.

In her new administrative role, Ms. Colbert intended to create a manual and provide education on recognizing questionable student behaviors. She acknowledged that she needed to do more to expose and educate faculty members about all of the resources on campus. She said that she no longer was willing to leave things to happenstance, or operate in a “haphazard” manner, so she vowed to ask a staff member of the dean of students office to make a presentation on the resources their office provides to faculty members in the department.

Mr. Ellis.

“I can say they were very, very supportive of the administration and faculty.” Mr. Ellis was an academic administrator in a professional school and had been employed at BU twenty-two years. During this span of time, he has held a variety of positions within the department. He helped faculty members report at least three students to the TAMT.

Mr. Ellis realized and accepted that faculty members had varying levels of involvement when making student referrals. However, he wanted to get faculty members to approach him with student concerns instead of “trying to make everybody a therapist.” He believed that he and other faculty members did not enter the profession to manage student issues. Furthermore, he did
not want his faculty members bogged down in situations they had not been trained to confront. Consequently, he appreciated that the TAMT helped to remove him and his faculty members from being viewed as the enforcers of policy. In his opinion, when the TAMT took on a student matter, it demonstrated that the matter was “a university issue.”

In addition to having faculty members report concerns, he also maintained close contact with student leaders in the department. He encouraged them to approach him if they had concerns. He believed that getting students in his department to share in reporting would assist in identifying students in distress. He maintained an open door policy because he hoped to be a resource to everyone in the department.

Moreover, Mr. Ellis believed that there were other pressing issues that needed to be addressed in higher education. For instance, the current debate on concealed weapons on college campuses was of great concern to him and fellow faculty members. He also wanted a professionally staffed 24-hour information hotline established on campus that would “talk them [students, faculty, and staff] off the cliff” and answer questions that they posed. Finally, Mr. Ellis wanted to ensure that his junior faculty members maintained an appropriate teacher-student relationship. In his opinion, social media contributed to the blurring of those lines because it allowed faculty members, particularly younger faculty, an opportunity to be “too close to the students.”

Mr. Grant.

“You try to do no harm, you do the best you can for the students.” Mr. Grant had been employed at BU for five years. He has referred approximately 60 students to the TAMT. He acquired his role, as one of the TAMT administrators, due to the professional position he held at BU in student affairs. His assistance became necessary because the chairperson’s primary work
responsibilities coupled with his TAMT responsibilities generated more work than one person could handle.

Mr. Grant invited faculty members to “dump” student issues onto the TAMT. Mr. Grant viewed the TAMT as a means to “help students, support students, and prevent incidents.” He followed up with individuals, often faculty members, once an initial report was made, in an effort to clarify existing information or gather additional information. Also, Mr. Grant disclosed, “I meet with most all of the students prior to their name being discussed [at a TAMT meeting] …and coordinate those dots and then help the [name of team] come to the resolution.” Mr. Grant wanted to learn everything that he could about a student before the team was faced with making a decision about appropriate action. Furthermore, he completed paperwork, database maintenance, and followed up with all involved parties once the case reached conclusion.

Mr. Grant admitted that the Virginia Tech tragedy, and a mandate from the state’s higher education governing board, caused the TAMT to formalize its practices at BU. In addition, he spoke in-depth about the TAMT’s past and present make-up. The initial team had grown too large and somewhat ineffective, so it was disbanded. As a result, a smaller team was assembled. The new team added an influential academic administrator from the provost’s office. Mr. Grant believed that the addition of an executive administrator from academic affairs proved to be invaluable to the TAMT’s success and efficiency. Mr. Grant predicted that the team would continue to evolve to meet the needs of its campus community as best practices emerged.

Mr. Grant also recognized the stress of dealing with the numerous and varied student issues, and the impact it had on him and the chairperson. On one hand, he wanted to see a limit on the number of years served and a system developed that would rotate members off the team.
On the other hand, he recognized “the only problem with that is you lose the trust that the previous person has built and you lose the flow” which he thought was detrimental to the team.

**Mr. Hank.**

“Your goal has got to be to identify and provide assistance to the student who’s at risk.” Mr. Hank was a retired executive in student affairs and former TAMT administrator at BU. He worked at BU for 39 years. He fashioned both the informal TAMT and TAMT at BU. During his nearly four decades, he witnessed a tremendous evolution in the BU student body. At the beginning of his career, Mr. Hank viewed BU students as activists who “were better read and they probably involved themselves more in issues” like the Vietnam protests. By the end of his career at BU, he noticed that students were more “docile,” service focused, and possessed a “volunteer spirit.”

In addition to changes in the student body’s demeanor, he also witnessed how Section 504 of the American’s Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990) “cracked the [college] doors open for many, many students, especially disabled students, physically and mentally.” According to Mr. Hank, these laws diversified the student population substantially, and have required student affairs divisions to evolve to keep up with student trends and needs. As a result, student affairs at BU, particularly the office of the dean of students, expanded substantially over time. While at the university, Mr. Hank reported that he established many services to support the needs of students.

Mr. Hank also reported that he “never had a problem with collaboration” at BU because he “had the respect of the faculty for many reasons.” As a student affairs administrator, he instilled a philosophy into those who worked for him, “We support the academic mission. That’s our job. That’s our duty. We are not out front. The faculty are the most important.” This was necessary because he noticed an attitude among student affairs professionals that troubled him.
He explained, “A lot of times student affairs people get the idea that they’re the queen bee of universities. And they’re not.” He believed that he and his staff members maintained good relationships with faculty members and the office of the provost because he insisted that they “don’t lose sight of our role at a university.”

Establishing relationships was very important to Mr. Hank. Although he could work with most anyone, Mr. Hank preferred to “work with somebody who I am going to drink whiskey with when I am through.” Mr. Hank desired to have lasting professional relationships with others rather than simply finding a means to complete a task.

Approximately two years prior to the Virginia Tech massacre, Mr. Hank began his own form of a TAMT, an informal TAMT. He explained that “classroom behavior, disruptive students” and “a lot of students who feel a great entitlement… they are not used to hearing the word no” contributed to his desire to form this group. He believed that students viewed themselves “equal” with professors; there was no fear or respect. He quipped about the imbalance of power he once felt existed between he and students at BU:

Most students who come to [institution’s name] now have a team. They bring themselves of course. They bring their momma. They bring the lawyer, and they bring the doctor. I didn’t have a team. So I said I am going to get me a damn team too.

He created an informal unknown team of nine individuals to serve as a consultation group when a student was on the brink of being dismissed from the institution, so that he was not the only one making the final decision. Yet, first and foremost, Mr. Hank wanted the team “to identify a student at risk, and then apply all of the expertise we had over here to helping that student.” Maintaining a student-centered approach to helping students was very important to Mr. Hank.
Prior to the Virginia Tech tragedy, the informal TAMT Mr. Hank created had been scheduled to receive training from a well-known TAMT training consultant. During that training, which happened shortly after the Virginia Tech incident, Mr. Hank made a few changes such as changing the name, fine tuning existing processes, and adding team members. He realized that his model aligned with what the consultant recommended and thus, the foundation for the official university TAMT was underway. After the training, the TAMT became a formal group at BU and had well thought out processed to match their action plans. Mr. Hank demonstrated exceptional foresight as a student affairs practitioner.

Before the TAMT training, Mr. Hank generally received reports from the police, resident assistants, and resident directors. After the training, a website was developed to allow members of the campus community, namely faculty members, an opportunity to submit reports. Mr. Hank wanted faculty members to refer students as needed. Consequently, he avoided setting parameters about what could be reported. He was comfortable receiving minor submissions that ranged from a complaint about a very inquisitive student in class to the more serious behavioral issue. To get faculty to report students in distress Mr. Hank said, “You have to cast a large net. You don’t want to get so specific to faculty members.” This philosophy of openness about what can be reported to the TAMT continues at BU.

Additionally, Mr. Hank believed that a TAMT must be staffed appropriately to be effective. He also declared that any TAMT must operate with “courage” because of the decisions they made. Finally, when asked about the future of higher education, he responded that institutions of higher education will shoulder more responsibility for students once they have been dismissed from the institution, that TAMT members should be guaranteed amnesty for acting in what they deemed was the best interest of the campus community, the fear of violating
an individual’s civil rights is not a viable reason to not take action, and security will become more of a priority at many institutions of higher education.

Mr. Holcomb.

“All we are doing is engaging in care for the student.” Mr. Holcomb was an adjunct instructor and an executive student affairs administrator who had been employed at BU for more than 15 nonconsecutive years. He served as a member of the TAMT and is now a TAMT administrator. He estimated that he made 40 student referrals to the TAMT within a four year period.

Mr. Holcomb asserted that his institutional knowledge and high rank had helped the team gain respect at the institution. In addition, he strongly attributed the success of the TAMT at BU to the knowledge and investment of members of the team, the strong relationships they have developed with each other as colleagues, and the relationships they had cultivated with other individuals and entities on and off campus. Under his leadership, the TAMT experienced an increase in support from members of the campus and local communities.

Mr. Holcomb explained that he fostered strong relationships with executive academic administrators and looked for opportunities to connect with faculty members and resident assistants as well. For example, Mr. Holcomb attended resident assistant training. He also mentioned connecting with faculty members during department and faculty meetings, new faculty orientation, and when a faculty member made a report. He identified faculty members and resident assistants (RAs) as valuable resources to the work of the TAMT. He posited that RAs and faculty members were most important reporters of concerning student behaviors:

And I think faculty and RA’s are the two single most important entities you have on campus to deal with changes of day-to-day behavior because they see them [students]
every day. An RA knows the residents and they know when someone is acting
differently. The faculty member sees that student at least two to three times a week
usually, and they are in the position to see a behavior change more than anyone.

Moreover, Mr. Holcomb expressed that it was easier to address new faculty members
about the TAMT than it was a “tenured faculty member… they are hard to break through, they
either get it or they don’t.” However, he continued to identify new ways to educate faculty
members about the TAMTs. His newest means of reaching faculty members was by cultivating
stronger relationships with department heads because they worked closely with faculty members.
In fact, he recently was invited to speak to them during department head training.

Ms. Houston.

“They are good student advocates…. And so I think we work and we compromise and it
is a good relationship.” Ms. Houston was an academic administrator in liberal arts and sciences
and had been employed at BU for twenty-four years. She taught two seminar classes during the
fall semester. As an administrator, she helped faculty members refer four students to the TAMT.
She is convinced that had she followed a traditional path through the academic ranks, she would
not have been aware of many campus resources such as the TAMT. Although she knew that the
office of the dean of students was available to help with student concerns, she realized that there
was a TAMT in recent years.

Ms. Houston reported that it was not uncommon for parents to alert her and/or her staff
members that a student was experiencing difficulty because “parents are more and more
involved… and the helicopter term is very appropriate for some parents” because they hovered
over their college-aged children. In addition, Ms. Houston instructed faculty to contact her when
there were concerning student issues. She attributed faculty members’ willingness to report with
“some of the cases that you read about in the media. And so people sort of say, ‘I don’t want the same thing to happen here.’” She viewed the increased reporting positively because faculty members are likely providing information that they once “may have previously written off as just being odd” or insignificant. She thought faculty members exhibited “more of an appropriate level of concern” about students demonstrating questionable behaviors. Although Ms. Houston supported faculty members submitting reports, she reiterated that she does not want “faculty to be called upon to intervene or do things where they don’t have the training to be involved.”

Ms. Houston admitted the TAMT has been good to work with because they often posed different options “in terms of dealing with situations and even sort of the pro’s and con’s of approaching things from different ways.” However, the inconsistent communication regarding the status or next steps of a case(s) frustrated her. Ms. Houston remembered one occasion that the TAMT failed to communicate pertinent information to a student. Ultimately in that case, she believed her office shouldered some of the blame because “we felt like we had really kind of dropped the ball on telling them [student and his family]” the decision, although the dean of students’ office had been asked to do so.

In the future, Ms. Houston wanted the TAMT to pro-actively identify potential signs that a student would likely become distressed. She believed academically at-risk college students can be identified using grade point average, class attendance, and American College Testing (ACT) scores. Although she disclosed “I don’t know how you would identify people at behavioral risk,” Ms. Houston promoted the development of behavioral predictors for emotionally distressed students.
Ms. Kiger.

“They reacted quickly. And I think given this particular situation, the response was probably appropriate.” Ms. Kiger had been an instructor in liberal arts and sciences at BU for more than 25 years. She taught one class in the fall and referred to class sizes in the department as “fairly small.” In addition to teaching, she also served as a supervisor for graduate students and adjunct instructors. Although she has not had any student incidents that caused her to refer students, she assisted her instructors in making at least eight referrals.

Ms. Kiger prided herself on being student centered and “invested in the success of students.” She also believed that it was an expectation of the institution that all employees served students. Over time, she learned of numerous campus resources that she relays to students when needed. By making “a point to know them as human beings and individuals,” Ms. Kiger demonstrated to students that they belonged at the institution rather than treating them like a number.

She considered herself and other faculty members to be an “ally” in the student’s education. To further connect with students, she required her students to have “one-on-one conferences” with her about their work throughout the semester. Inevitably during these interactions, students shared “personal aspects of their lives” with Ms. Kiger. Ms. Kiger believed that she balanced her parenting and professional skills in those situations, but was cautious because “I can’t cross a line” of ethical behavior.

As a supervisor, Ms. Kiger provided one week of intensive training for all graduate students and new adjunct instructors on pertinent departmental policies, campus resources, and syllabi creation. Although the group was knowledgeable of course content, she wanted to ensure that they were equally aware of the “human interaction” aspect of being an instructor. She
invited representatives from numerous offices to be guest speakers. Consequently, a representative from the dean of students office discussed the resources they offered.

As a result of the training, graduate students came to her, as situations unfolded in their classrooms, for “support” and guidance. Often, those that participated in the training thanked her after they encountered situations that required use of the knowledge acquired. This confirmed for Ms. Kiger that “we are on the right track. We are doing a good thing here.” She believed the training she provided really worked and needed to continue. Consequently, she continually asked those that she supervised to avoid “blowing off” situations. She explained:

You know, if it raises a red flag, let's talk about it because I would so much rather be embarrassed for overreacting than to sit back and just think I didn't do what I should do and I have regrets, et cetera.

In addition, Ms. Kiger shared that she has seen changes on campus as a result of the tragic incident at Virginia Tech. While handling a student situation just prior to Virginia Tech, Ms. Kiger said, “I saw various people, including people in the dean's office, kind of blow it off in part because it was a female.” Directly after the massacre, she noticed “it definitely lit a fire under people on this campus.”

However, Ms. Kiger appreciated the TAMT’s willingness to address classroom behavioral issues. In her opinion, higher education lacked disciplinarians that faculty members could send students to, like in primary and secondary schools. In Ms. Kiger’s opinion, the work of the TAMT met that need. She asserted that the TAMT fills an important gap in institutional resources:

You know, in our situation, we have no principal to send our kids to if they are disruptive in the classroom. We don't really have the same administrative resources that you might
see in a K through 12 setting. So, in some ways, I think this behavioral intervention team functions in that capacity… [because] sometimes it needs to go beyond me.

Ms. Mackie.

“They were calm, collective, and professional and caring, very caring.” Mackie was an academic administrator in a professional school and fairly new to the institution. She had been at BU for four years. She taught a beginner’s level course for her discipline with 12-15 students. She made two student referrals to the TAMT.

Ms. Mackie learned about the TAMT while attending new faculty orientation. She distinctly remembered the dean of students briefly discussing the services available through his office, and the TAMT was one of them. Later, Ms. Mackie invited a representative from the dean of students office to make a presentation during a department meeting. She wanted to equip faculty members with information that allowed them to reasonably maintain a safe learning environment. In addition, she hoped the knowledge of the team would eliminate the possibility of faculty members feeling as though they had to manage student concerns themselves.

Ms. Mackie generally applauded the work of the TAMT. Each time she reported a student concern she believed the team quickly addressed the matter in a “calm, collective, professional and caring” manner. She also appreciated the fact that once she made a report, the TAMT followed up and provided information regarding next steps. On the other hand, she expressed some concern about “if it [an incident] had happened in someone else's class, I'm not sure if I would have been contacted.” In her opinion, faculty members are encouraged by the dean of students office to “report it [student concerns] to whomever they feel comfortable reporting it to,” but ultimately may neglect to tell her. As an academic administrator, she worried that this kind of omission could hinder her from taking measures to address situations within the
department. Therefore, Ms. Mackie wished that the TAMT would share reports with academic administrators as a courtesy to ensure that they were aware of what was going on in their departments.

**Mr. Marcell.**

“And so, am I happy? Are my expectations being satisfied? I guess. Yeah. It is a tough job they have.” Mr. Marcell was an academic administrator in liberal arts and sciences and had been employed at BU for more than twenty-five years. Mr. Marcell taught no classes during the fall semester. He made himself available to his faculty members daily by chatting over coffee, visiting their offices, and maintaining an open door policy. He described the atmosphere in his department as being “very relaxed.” Yet, he helped to refer more than 20 cases to the TAMT over the last four years.

Mr. Marcell portrayed the collaboration within his college and department as “superb.” Furthermore, he characterized his experiences with student affairs to be “excellent.” Yet, Mr. Marcell said that he and other academicians would like to see “more funding and emphasis on the academic side of the university” experience than student affairs.

Mr. Marcell aimed to prepare faculty members and students for emergency situations. Hence, he scheduled a yearly presentation from an individual in the office of dean of students for faculty members in his department. In addition, he took special care to provide extensive training and support to those faculty members in his department who accompanied students on study abroad trips. For example, Mr. Marcell gave faculty members enough of his business cards for students and parents prior to leaving the country. He believed that his team was ultimately responsible for students on trips associated with their department, so he wanted to be contacted if there were any incidents. Overall, Mr. Marcell declared that “there is more oversight and more
care being given on a study abroad” trip by faculty members than when students were on campus “because we have student affairs and other people in charge” on campus.

Mr. Marcell wanted to personally “filter” student behavioral issues before those matters reached the dean of students office because he wanted to preserve the “effectiveness” of the TAMT. He believed that some student concerns reported by faculty member were actually a faculty member’s inability to master classroom management. Therefore, he wanted to work with his faculty members to handle those situations rather than inundate the TAMT with such matters.

Mr. Marcell revealed that he was accustomed to contacting the dean of students office when he had student concerns. He described members of the staff to be very knowledgeable and helpful. However, he, like some other individuals interviewed, did not recall knowing the name of the multidisciplinary group that addressed student behavioral issues, i.e. the TAMT. Mr. Marcell said, “I knew there was intervening and I knew that there was behavior and I knew there were several people over there” but the name of the team escaped him.

Ms. McIntyre.

“I think they take things really serious [sic].” Ms. McIntyre had served as an academic advisor in liberal arts in sciences for nine years, although she had been employed at BU for fifteen years. While assisting students with academic matters, she often identified various student issues. Students depended on her for mentoring and casual conversation. Ms. McIntyre viewed helping students as a “moral obligation” that she was happy to fulfill. In addition to helping students, Ms. McIntyre served as a resource to faculty members who often consulted her about student issues, classroom space, and paperwork. She referred as many as five students to the TAMT.
Initially, Ms. McIntyre reported that she failed to realize the magnitude of the work she was undertaking in her current position. In her “naiveness,” Ms. McIntyre encountered a very serious student incident that changed how she arranged her office furniture to give access to the door and caused her to request that a different door be installed to allow people to hear and see inside her office.

She used a frightening incident as a catalyst to learn more about the emotional needs of students. Ms. McIntyre articulated that she had no formal training to recognize students experiencing difficulty. However, she independently equipped herself with numerous skills by reading, consulting with professionals in other areas such as counseling and medicine, attending presentations and workshops on campus, and attending relevant trainings during professional conferences. Ms. McIntrye wanted to provide the best service to students and faculty members that she possibly could. As a result, I found Ms. McIntyre to be flexible, eager to learn, and passionate about helping students.

Ms. McIntyre realized that the amount of time she spent with students differed from the amount faculty members in the department were able to spend. In large part, she attributed this to her not being expected to teach, research, and serve like faculty members were. Addressing student needs became her main concern. As a result, she went above and beyond her required duties to ensure that faculty members were not overwhelmed, and students were well served.

Mr. McMurtry.

“I think the main thing [sic] initiating contact with the student in a way that was courteous and nonconfrontational but also very, very prompt and rigorous.” Mr. McMurtry was a full professor in liberal arts and sciences who had been at BU for nine years. Although he taught one class each semester, he alternated between teaching an undergraduate and graduate class.
Based on undergraduate senior exit interviews he said that students regarded him as “fairly approachable, supportive, welcoming, and interested in their careers.” In addition, he attempted to maintain student relationships on a “professional basis and not too personal.” He made one referral to the TAMT. Mr. McMurtry characterized the TAMT as re-enforcement, but only when needed. He said, “It’s like the police department. You don’t really appreciate them unless you need them.”

Although Mr. McMurtry expressed a desire to be “purely professional” with students, it was quite evident to me how much he cared for his students beyond academics, as he described his involvement in the student case he referred to the TAMT. Through his words, Mr. McMurtry illustrated for me his steadfast dedication to students, and his willingness to go above minimal expectations to help them. In addition, he saw reporting students to the TAMT as part of his position. However, he also disclosed that he had not been trained for this additional responsibility:

I have never received any formal training at all. From time to time, faculty will be forwarded information in literature that we are left to read on our own that would list potential warning signs of students in need of the behavioral intervention team.

Moreover, Mr. McMurtry expressed a desire to learn more about Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Specifically, he would like to know when he can contact parents. During the time he made the referral of a student to the TAMT, he wished that he could have contacted the student’s parents but feared violating FERPA. He commented:

I think we are pretty well versed that we are not allowed to discuss grades or anything with parents unless the student waives the right to privacy. But on matters pertaining to student health and safety, it would be nice to know what the ground rules are.
Ms. Paine.

“They worked quickly… And I felt very confident it was submitted, it was reviewed, and it was followed up on.” Ms. Paine was a tenured faculty member in liberal arts and sciences. She had been employed at BU for eleven years. She taught only one class in the fall semester because she received release time to complete university wide and department tasks. She offered that her normal teaching load was three classes each semester. She advised students on academics, accompanied them on a study abroad trip, supported them at after-hours events, and instructed them. Although academics were her primary focus, she also recognized, “There are those times where you have to drop just worrying about the academic, because the personal life or other things that are happening have a major impact on them [students].” Therefore, she believed, “It’s part of my role to give them the guidance to find the help they need, if we offer those services on campus.”

Ms. Paine referred two students to the TAMT. She believed that it was her “human responsibility” to help others and that the TAMT helped facilitate that obligation in a non-intrusive manner. In Ms. Paine’s opinion, the TAMT enabled the university to address student issues that were not academic or disciplinary. The TAMT gave faculty members a “mechanism” to share information with people who can investigate student matters, rather than have faculty members risk “overstepping” their professional boundaries or “getting in something that we are not trained to handle.”

Ms. Paine viewed BU as a collaborative campus. In her opinion, collaboration was expected. Interestingly, she mentioned that when the most recent provost interviewed for his position, he shared his “commitment to break down the silos that are typically a part of an academic institution, and that we shouldn’t replicate [sic] efforts when we have experts in
different groups” on campus. According to Ms. Paine, executive administrators have demonstrated collaboration. Furthermore, she positively experienced collaboration as a faculty member chairing a multidisciplinary committee on campus.

Ms. Paine desired to make clear that faculty members do care about their students, “Of course we care. These are our students.” Ms. Paine believed that “old dusty faculty” members are migrating off the scene and that younger faculty members are realizing the importance of addressing the holistic needs of students, which is something that often is not taught in graduate programs.

Mr. Saddler.

“They have been very quick to respond, they are not letting things drag out. I have been very impressed by their student focus.” Mr. Saddler was a pre-tenure professor in liberal arts and sciences who had been at BU four years. He taught two courses each semester, one undergraduate and one graduate. He identified himself as a professionally licensed mental health professional. To date, he has not referred any students to the TAMT. However, he served as a consultant for the TAMT administrators during investigations of student cases when the student concern was beyond the purview of the counseling center staff.

Before accepting the role as consultant for the team, he clearly outlined his boundaries and limitations for serving in this capacity. For instance, Mr. Saddler told the TAMT administrators, “I am only going to report back about the question they [TAMT administrators] asked” unless the student consented, or he deemed the information to be vitally important. When working with the student, he acknowledged that he is very upfront about his role because it “actually departs from regular clinical work in a lot of ways.” He described his unique situation in this way:
I have the dual expectancy to be providing information to the client about what's going on but then also they have to understand that I am not purely there for them alone, that my job is also to report back to the behavioral intervention team to say what I recommend.

The student has the ability to refuse Mr. Saddler’s assistance, but will be required to find an individual with the suitable credentials to perform an evaluation. This is difficult given BU’s rural location. Following his evaluation of a student, Mr. Saddler creates a report that he first shares with the student, and then with the TAMT. He submits the final report within two weeks of the evaluation meeting with the student. Once Mr. Saddler reveals his professional recommendation, his work with the student issue may continue, end, or be re-engaged by either the student or the TAMT.

Mr. Saddler appreciated the “smooth professional process” the TAMT provided him. He also thought that the TAMT offered a valuable service to students and the campus community. Mr. Saddler complimented the TAMT’s work in this way:

They are much more concerned about the student, the safety of the student, and that making sure what happens as a part of the process is in the student's best interest, rather than necessarily what would be easiest or safest [regarding liability] for them.

Mr. Saddler viewed the consulting he did with the TAMT as completely separate from his faculty role. He saw the consulting as his contribution to the health of the campus community, and to the professional training within his department. Mr. Saddler expressed that, in the near future, the consulting he provided may count towards his service requirement in the tenure process, or in some other way.
Mr. Spalding.

“They were very responsive. They followed through and they kind of explained to me what they would look for.” Mr. Spalding was a tenured faculty member in liberal arts and sciences. He had been at BU for fourteen years. He taught one “large class” in the fall semester. He shared that he interacted more with his research students and student workers than the students in his courses. He characterized his research students as being “strong” and “good students” so he felt they were in “no danger of dropping out.”

Mr. Spalding referred one student to the TAMT. Prior to the student incident, he gave the team very little thought; although he had seen the emails and announcements about the TAMT come to his inbox. When a student matter arose in his class, he consulted with an administrative assistant who told him “better safe than sorry” before he completed the paperwork. Mr. Spalding wanted the TAMT to “figure out if he [student] was just goofy, or if he was a threat to himself or others.” Thus, he greatly appreciated the TAMT’s help. He was relieved that the group was able to quickly determine the student’s mindset. Most importantly, the team freed him from having to address the student concern alone.

Mr. Tucker.

“The professionalism sort of stands out to me…. I think they are approachable.” Mr. Tucker was a tenured faculty member in liberal arts and sciences at BU. He had worked at BU for seven years. He taught three to four classes each semester under an “interactive” model where students “create.” Mr. Tucker admitted that his approach to working with students has changed over the years because of student behavior and his development as a professor. As a result of his experiences, he indicated that he has become “far more formal now” professionally.
and more apt “to keep a real clean paper trail” to document situations that arise. Mr. Tucker has referred at least three students to the TAMT in the last four years.

Mr. Tucker attended out of class functions and field trips to support students. Although he had never been told to have informal interactions with students, he felt that the culture of the department suggested that faculty members should support students outside the classroom. Mr. Tucker helped students when they approached him. He believed reporting questionable student behavior was a part of his job responsibilities; although he thought he lacked knowledge of the “in and outs of it [TAMT].” Nevertheless, he wanted to help students because it had become clearer to him over the years that the stresses of the college experience can negatively affect students’ ability to thrive and succeed.

Mr. Tucker remembered hearing about the TAMT in a faculty meeting. Yet, he still desired a better understanding of which incidents to send to the TAMT because “recently I was told that actually I should do that [report injuries] through the police department, but then the police department didn't seem to know what I was talking about either.” Despite his confusion, Mr. Tucker remarked that his experience with the TAMT had been “positive.” Through his interactions with the BU TAMT, he saw the team as “compassionate” and “very important…. I can’t imagine a university this size not having something like that” because of “national trends,” “Virginia Tech,” and a recent incident at BU.

In addition, Mr. Tucker reported being pleasantly surprised that the team “had the teeth to actually do things if they needed to” to handle situations. Furthermore, Mr. Tucker also enjoyed the fact that he was able to consult with a member of the team before any action was taken because he described more drastic measures as “calling 911 [which] means that I am starting a chain of events that I can’t stop.” He believed the dean of students office could be a department
where faculty “are scared to call” because if they were to do so, it would “start this whole chain.” However, he recognized that the dean of students staff were actually quite the opposite and were there to support faculty. He explained, “I feel they will have a conversation and help you decide if this is really something that you really need to [address]... before the sirens start going off.”

Mr. Tucker hoped to gain a better understanding of FERPA. Most importantly, he wanted to see to an occasional memo to faculty members that reminds them, "Hey don't forget that these kids are young and this may be the first [time the students have been away from home]." In his opinion, faculty forgot “how traumatic it is to leave home and do all that stuff. We start thinking they should be grown up immediately.”

Ms. Williams.

“I think communication is what they do really well. I think they care. It’s not just a job.” Ms. Williams was a full professor in liberal arts and sciences at BU. During the fall semester, she taught two classes with 40 to 60 students each. In the spring, she taught one course with 250-330 students enrolled. She had been a member of the faculty for 17 years. She made at least three referrals to the TAMT and revealed “I call all the time” to consult with someone in the dean of students office regarding a student situation. She regarded the TAMT as an outlet for faculty members who wanted to help students, but may not know how to do so. Ms. Williams viewed the TAMT as “a reassurance to faculty. I don't have to handle this on my own.”

In addition, Ms. Williams was ‘highly involved” in the lives of students both inside and outside of the classroom. Students frequently asked her to assist them with personal situations including financial matters and roommate conflicts. She believed that her parenting skills and years of teaching have aided in her approach to helping them. She proclaimed her dedication to students:
I care deeply about our students, I place students first, and I try to establish a professional, personal relationship with the students that I care about their needs, that I hear their concerns, and that I hold them to very high expectations.

When a student came to her, she enlisted the assistance of the TAMT because the group “consolidates” resources for faculty members. She offered an example of how easy it was to get help to a student who was suicidal. In this instance she recognized that, had she acted alone, she would have had to make many calls. Once she recruited the help of the TAMT, she reported, “I just had to call this one office, file that form, and they made phone calls that helped get services for this individual. So, it kind of puts it in one office.”

Ms. Williams admitted that she is unwilling to suffer in silence or fail to get a student the help they needed. She wanted to help students, and in doing so, understood that at times she needed to count on the knowledge of others. Through a variety of situations posed by Ms. Williams, the TAMT has proven to be a great resource to her. Moreover, she was eager to be a team player because she wanted to contribute to the positive experience of students who attend the institution. One tool that she used to help her achieve this goal was the TAMT. She had developed a very strong work relationship with the TAMT’s case investigator. She recalled her belated but positive reaction after the first time she used the team when she said:

I remember the first time I went through that process, I was like, “Man, how come I didn't know about this sooner? You know, why weren't we doing this a long time ago? Bring everybody together, wow, what an idea.” You know, not that it wasn't going on, but that ah-ha moment, “Man, we should have been doing this a long time ago.” That's what I remember thinking.
Mr. Wise.

“Well, they worked very quickly and immediately removed the problem as far as we personally were concerned.” Mr. Wise was a full professor in liberal arts and sciences and had been at BU for twenty-four years. He served as an academic advisor, student organization advisor, and instructor for four courses in the fall semester. He remarked that his interactions with students often continued throughout their time at the institution. As a result, students depended on him as a mentor, counselor, and “father figure”. These were roles that he did not shy away from, or take lightly. He reported two cases to the TAMT.

Mr. Wise conveyed that he was happy to help students with academic matters. However, he channeled students with psychological issues to the academic coordinator within the department. Afterwards, Mr. Wise had limited knowledge of how things unfolded. He wanted to avoid any instances of possibly stepping out of his role as an academician.

Although Mr. Wise knew that the TAMT existed on campus, he initially “wondered if they could really be effective, or did we really need this. And the answer to both of those questions I learned is, yes.” Looking back on the first incident he referred to the TAMT, he reported, “Well, I do want to say I really do appreciate what they did and [am] glad we have that organization.” In hindsight, he realized that he should have reported his first student’s case earlier and that there were other student situations where he should have enlisted the TAMT’s assistance.

Analytic Themes

Three themes emerged from the one-on-one interviews conducted with the TAMT administrators, academic administrators, and faculty members about their perceptions and experiences with the TAMT at their institution. The themes reflect the differences in their roles
and describe perspectives of one, two, or all three groups of participants. The three themes were: (a) **Collaboration at BU**, (b) **I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First**, (c) and **It Takes a Village so Count Me In**.

The first theme, **Collaboration at BU**, detailed the existence of collaboration on BU’s campus. The theme explored campus-wide collaboration and the collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions. Although participants commented that campus-wide collaborations existed, a limited number of faculty and academic administrators offered examples. Collaboration between academic affairs seemed strained. In addition, fewer participants knew about specific collaborations between academic and students affairs units. Based on participants’ responses, the researcher identified three potential barriers to collaboration between academic and student affairs. The three barriers were: (a) the perceived imbalances in funding, (b) philosophical differences regarding the role of academic and student affairs, and (c) silos created within each division.

However, all faculty members and academic administrators associated with this study reported that there was one program within student affairs that worked well for those in academic affairs, the TAMT. Academicians found that the TAMT addressed their student concerns in a caring, supportive, and prompt manner. At times, faculty members learned valuable skills from the TAMT.

The second theme, **I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First**, revealed that most faculty members in this study had knowledge of the TAMT’s existence. Yet, many faculty members had no true understanding of how to access the team for help or had knowledge of how the team worked until they faced an occurrence that warranted making a report to the TAMT. Lacking the training and skills needed to address student concerns, faculty members and academic administrators
contacted the TAMT because they did not want to go beyond their comfort zones when helping students. After interacting with the TAMT, faculty members and academic administrators gained trust in the work of the team and became supporters by making additional referrals and/or by telling colleagues about the TAMT.

The third theme, *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, demonstrated academic administrators and faculty members’ commitment to students’ academic success. In addition, they were also willing to assist in non-academic aspects of the students’ lives because they realized students needed help. Although faculty members stumbled across students in need of assistance based on a conversation or an interaction, they were also approached by students and contacted by parents/guardians who alerted them to the needs of students. Overall, faculty members and academic administrators appeared to want what was best for students and were willing to participate in keeping them safe and sought assistance from the TAMT to do so.

**Collaboration at BU**

Although time consuming and often complicated, Schroeder (2003) reported that collaborations between academic and student affairs strengthen the undergraduate educational experience and learning. A successful collaboration between academic and student affairs can lead to more engaged students (Nesheim et al., 2007). In addition, collaborations can yield higher productivity than individual work (Rodem, 2011). Consequently, collaboration in higher education also served as the conceptual framework for this research study. As a result, it was important to explore participants’ perspectives on the level of collaboration at BU throughout the institution and between academic and student affairs units. Three subthemes that describe the levels of collaboration were: (a) existing collaboration, (b) strained collaboration, and (c) intentional interactions.
**Existing collaboration.**

All participants were asked how they viewed overall collaboration at the institution. At each level, participants regarded collaboration at BU as occurring. The current administrators of the TAMT, Mr. Holcomb and Mr. Grant, confidently shared that they thought collaboration existed. When reflecting on campus-wide collaboration, Holcomb stated that collaboration at BU was “probably the best of any place I have ever been.” He reported that respect contributed to cooperation:

> We [student affairs] have a very high level of cooperation from academic affairs, from business affairs, from all the different aspects, and it just seems to work. And a lot of it has to do with, not necessarily just by title, but by just respect. You know, you earn your stripes. You have to go in there and you do it and you have to be fair.

The other TAMT administrator, Mr. Grant, shared that collaboration existed at BU because of a shared goal. He explained, “We have a level at this university where people want to do what is best for the student.” Mr. Grant alleged that working for the overall success of students was engrained in the campus culture and served as a pivotal point for collaborative efforts.

Faculty members and academic administrators continued the positive sentiments about fostering campus-wide collaboration. For instance, Ms. Colbert described the environment as “a very healthy collaborative milieu.” She believed the level of collaboration at the institution had increased over time. She furthered, “I have seen a real effort for cross-college research, cross-college instructional efforts” which has caused the groups to learn more about each other.

Ms. Williams responded that “there is a tremendous amount of collaboration.” She thought that it would be easy for a faculty member to “over-volunteer, over-collaborate” because
there were so many opportunities to work together with others. In addition, Ms. Paine shared that she had worked with various offices on campus and “had always found it to be incredibly positive,” largely because everyone “was working for the same mission.”

However, the responses of Mr. Spalding, Mr. Saddler, and Mr. McMurtry seemed vague but mostly positive regarding collaboration at BU. Mr. Spalding characterized collaboration as “pretty good,” but added that it “depends on the department and it depends on the individual.” However, Mr. Saddler described campus collaboration as “hit or miss” because he believed “there is not a lot of opportunities to meet someone outside of your discipline” which limited collaboration opportunities. The lack of interactions seemed to contribute to silos on campus which yielded fewer collaboration opportunities. Though Mr. McMurtry saw the campus environment as “collegial,” he could not speak to campus collaboration. He responded, “I don’t know. We tend to be very insular” in the department in which he worked.

Mr. Marcell and Mr. Wise intertwined their positive comments about collaboration with one additional element, budget. It appeared that collaboration goes well until groups find themselves competing for university funding. This is not surprising because funding was noted as a barrier when collaborating (Martin & Murphy, 2000). When Mr. Wise was asked about collaboration on campus he admitted that competition for resources caused dissension:

There's more collaboration now than there used to be. There also seems to be… more fragmentation or groups battling against each other, but we are competing for dollars and recognition and things like that and that tends to produce conflict.

Mr. Marcell also spoke of collaboration describing it as “okay overall and again superb in the areas that directly affect this department.” He also believed improvements in collaboration were the results of personnel changes in the provost’s office. On the other hand, Mr. Marcell
specifically mentioned how budget allocations affected the work being done on campus. He posited, “And of course budgetary, are they collaborative, no, they are more of, ‘Here's what you are going to get. Work with it.’” He believed that academic departments had to “do a lot for nothing or close to nothing [money]. So [there are] a lot of frustrations that everybody is feeling, especially in these tough budgetary times.”

In summary, collaboration at BU existed and participants perceived it in a positive light. However, faculty members and academic administrators varied in their ability to describe what collaboration looked like campus-wide. It appeared that most felt that collaboration was possible and could be facilitated when relationships were established. However, limited resources appeared to divide the campus because groups wanted to secure the largest amount of funds for their constituents, programs, or departments. Nevertheless, participants perceived that financial matters had not squelched collaboration on campus.

**Strained collaboration.**

In addition to being asked about overall campus collaboration, participants were asked about the collaboration between academic and student affairs units. Faculty members’ responses regarding collaboration between the two divisions varied greatly. Some faculty members answered like Mr. Wise, “I am not aware of the degree of collaboration. There probably is some, I'm just not aware of what it is.” Like Mr. Wise, Mr. Tucker divulged that he had “no real sense of that for some reason. I don’t get any sense that there is warfare there… I don’t really interact in that world very much.” Conversely, Ms. Kiger thought, that at the “administration” level, there was a “nice collaboration between academics, academic administrators and student affairs.” Although “the outreach and public information” about student affairs for faculty members was available, Ms. Kiger had no sense of “how often they [faculty members] take advantage of the
resources made available to them.” Yet, Ms. Williams felt that, as a faculty member, she was “all up in student affairs” because she utilized the fitness facility and was keenly aware of other aspects such as “student elections.” Mr. Saddler gathered that “there were fairly direct lines of communication” between the two divisions which allowed them to be “fairly collaborative.”

In addition, academic administrators were questioned about collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions. Mr. Bond, an academic administrator, responded positively. He told me that academic and student affairs collaboration was “very good” because he believed “the academic affairs office recognizes the expertise in student affairs, in part, because student affairs is much more knowledgeable of federal regulations. I hate to reduce it to legalese, but that’s the nature of the beast.” However, other academic administrators provided responses that indicated that the relationship between the two entities was strained at BU. As with the existing collaboration subtheme, money appeared to be a barrier for collaboration, as well as philosophical differences.

An example of a philosophical difference between the academic and student affairs divisions was orientation at BU. The two divisions seemed to differ regarding the purpose of the orientation program. Orientation sessions encompassed information from the academic and student affairs divisions, which could make the event collaborative. Yet, Ms. Colbert and Mr. Marcell both referenced how orientation was perceived by faculty members as having too strong of a student life emphasis, rather than an academic focus. Mr. Marcell communicated the minimal role that he perceived academic affairs played during orientation:

These orientations for students and parents, I have also been told, and it's kind of my impression, the emphasis is on all of the student life, with just a smidgen of the attention
given to the academic side. Now, I hear more about where's [the mascot’s name], than I do, “Could you describe your program?”

Mr. Ellis, an academic administrator, claimed that collaboration between the two divisions “complement each other pretty well.” However, he also had some philosophical differences regarding the role of academics in the college experience. He noted that “over the last 10 or 20 years, the size and scale of student affairs and the activities involved have probably grown at an exponential rate, [greater] percentage wise, on a campus than actual academic affairs has.” In Mr. Ellis’s opinion the expansion of the student affairs division with regard to “dormitories, student unions, and all the other kinds of services provided to students” has “dwarfed the academic side.”

Furthermore, Mr. Ellis thought “the hard core academics” would “say no” it was not a good thing to have student affairs in the forefront because academic affairs should be out front. In the end, Mr. Ellis adopted the attitude of “that’s just the way it is.” In his opinion, when non-academic events such as football games “impact the work that they [academic disciplines] may be doing,” that confirms for him that student affairs is more of a priority. He assured me that there was no “bitterness about it or a resentment, but frustration probably is the better word.”

Ms. Colbert, another academic administrator, was posed the same question regarding collaboration between academic and student affairs. She admitted that the separation between academic and student affairs was still present despite what was being done to inform members of the academic division about the work of student affairs. She candidly explained, “I think that’s probably where there is still the biggest gulf.” Despite efforts to educate faculty members “to let people know what’s going on” between academic and student affairs divisions “there may still be a lot of not knowing sort of what one is doing or the other.” In the end, Ms. Colbert believed that
the student affairs staff continued to “think this stuff happens in orientation” and “academics
think this stuff should happen at orientation.” No compromise had been reached.

Mr. Marcell echoed Mr. Ellis and Ms. Colbert’s sentiments when describing academic
and student affairs collaboration at BU. He commented that he believed that collaboration
between the two divisions was “let's say good to excellent” but by his estimation of what faculty
members were saying, “fair to midland would be too strong. Could be greatly improved.” Mr.
Marcell proceeded to explain that there was a perception that “student affairs gets a whole lot of
money…. the bulk of the money.” He believed the money was used for “Greek life, the football,
the basketball, the baseball, the fun things, and the daily not-so-fun things” associated with
student affairs.

Mr. Marcell continued to re-iterate that this was speculation. However, speculations and
perceptions may have led some faculty members to believe that budget allocations were unfairly
dispersed between academic and student affairs divisions. In addition, Mr. Marcell also
conveyed that some higher level academic administrators shared the same sentiment regarding
the lack of perceived financial support for academic affairs when compared to student affairs.
About the imbalance of resources, he recalled, “From people above me I have heard things that
just -- a whole lot of money goes there [student affairs] and not as much goes, say to hiring
faculty.” Mr. Marcell wanted to see academic affairs receive increased financial attention and
support.

Like Mr. Marcell, Mr. Ellis mentioned how funding was allocated. He explained that
although the work of academic affairs was ultimately the reason why students attended BU, the
budget allocations did not reflect it. At times, this caused Mr. Ellis to ask himself, “Which one is
driving which right now?” He seemed dissatisfied with the answer that he identified. He
explained that, in his opinion, budget items show other areas as more important than academic affairs:

> It seems like the whole reason for a university to exist in theory is academics. But when you look at that as just a budget item and look at athletics and look at student affairs and look at alumni foundation, that kind of stuff, academics might be the minority player in that combination.

Conversely, when the question of collaboration was posed to those associated with student affairs who facilitated the TAMT, they were able to speak very positively about collaboration between academic and student affairs while providing several examples. Mr. Holcomb, the TAMT and student affairs administrator, cited that he was invited to participate on the academic deans’ council at BU, which he acknowledged as “pretty unheard of.” He disclosed that he did not take this opportunity lightly and that it came to him, he believed, as a result of the good relationships he forged with members of academic affairs.

When asked about collaboration between academic and student affairs units, Mr. Hank, the former TAMT chairperson and retired student affairs administrator, quickly listed projects that the two entities had successfully worked on together including establishing a veteran’s center and a crisis action team. Yet, he acknowledged that it was not always easy to convince faculty members to collaborate, but he often prevailed. For example, giving academic credit to veterans was “a little harder nut for the faculty to accept because they weren't familiar with military schools.” However, Mr. Hank said, “Once we explained it and once we brought people in to explain the curriculum that military schools provided to these students, I hadn't heard any complaints.”
Collaboration between academic and student affairs seemed to be less positive and participants’ responses varied greatly. Faculty members articulated few examples of collaboration between the two divisions. While academic administrators generally thought that collaboration was occurring between the two divisions, they expressed concern with budget and differences in philosophy. Yet, two of the TAMT administrators responded positively and readily provided examples of collaboration. Collaboration between academic and student affairs appeared strained in many ways.

**Intentional interactions.**

Although academic and student affairs personnel viewed collaboration between the two divisions differently, there was one area of student affairs that all of the academic participants resoundingly agreed yielded a good measure of satisfaction for those in academic affairs, the TAMT. The TAMT facilitated intentional interactions between academic and student affairs because faculty members were instructed to report student concerns to the TAMT. When utilized, faculty members and academic administrators applauded the work of the TAMT. This subtheme also provides three reasons intentional interactions were possible between academic and student affairs divisions: (a) here, you take it, (b) follow the chain of command, and (c) past occurrences and media influences.

**Here, you take it.**

The first reason that intentional interactions occurred was because faculty members and academic administrators had been encouraged by the TAMT to submit reports about questionable student behavior to the team. The TAMT administrators recognized that faculty members needed to make referrals to the TAMT as soon as possible and as often as needed. Mr. Holcomb, a TAMT administrator, replied, “We want faculty to report even if it may be a more
frivolous report or a non-report.” Mr. Grant, a TAMT administrator, asked that faculty members “push it to us and let us handle it.” Mr. Hank, a former TAMT administrator, encouraged making reports to the TAMT. He understood that faculty members had different standards for acceptable behavior and therefore differing tolerance levels. Mr. Hank expressed that “younger professors may let it [poor behavior] slide” whereas “some of our professors have been teaching 35 to 40 years… don't want to deal with disruptive students and so they were very willing to refer them.” All of the TAMT administrators wanted the reports to be passed along to their office for investigation.

The current TAMT administrator, Mr. Holcomb, also recognized that sometimes faculty members had no other alternative than to make a report which he believed made the relationship between the two divisions “a bit contentious but there is a lot of law and a lot that mandates that [they] do these things.” Mr. Holcomb believed that faculty members were shocked to know that they “have no ability to grant confidentiality to a student.” Mr. Holcomb also relayed to faculty members that “if they [students] are a victim of a crime, if they [students] are victim of sexual harassment, once you are aware, the university is aware. And once you know the best thing you can do is tell me.” Mr. Holcomb conveyed that faculty members “have a level of responsibility.” It appeared as though the dean of students staff and the TAMT stood eager to help faculty members get the information to the appropriate place.

Faculty members heard and heeded the message from the office of the dean of students. Mr. Spalding, a faculty member, admitted that he was willing to pass along a student concern because he “wasn't going to really provide any assistance” to a potentially suicidal student. He submitted a report to the TAMT to investigate the student matter because he was unfamiliar with
handling that kind of situation and had “no interest in dealing with disruptive or problem students.”

In addition, Mr. Bond, an academic administrator, acknowledged that he encouraged faculty members “to feel more comfortable about making the necessary phone calls” because “one [a faculty member] might have a tendency to not want to contact [TAMT].” To combat faculty members’ reluctance, he reminded them that “there are experts on campus and for them to feel very comfortable about contacting them” for assistance. In Mr. Bond’s opinion, the “accessibility and immediacy of the response is paramount” when addressing student concerns. He wanted faculty members to share student concerns early-on, before the situation grew in magnitude.

Mr. McMurtry had never enlisted the help of the TAMT until he was faced with a student he believed to be suicidal. He was pleased that the TAMT was there to help. In his estimation, things had gone well. He recounted his experience with the TAMT in this way:

And they were very good, very prompt, very professional. I didn't have to dillydally finding out what a course of action was. I think I immediately was put in contact with the right people and it was a very efficient system. I think the main thing is that I was really happy that they were there. They were fantastic, provided a great service.

Ms. Williams is another faculty member who highly regarded the behavioral intervention team. She worked with a student on a very complicated financial matter. Once she enlisted help from the TAMT, she was amazed at how well the team addressed the students’ financial and emotional needs. She remembered, “It was a pretty amazing thing for me to watch that happen. And that was non-threatening [situation]…. The student needed help and I didn't know what all
was available to them.” The TAMT connected the student to resources. Ms. Williams was amazed at how well TAMT addressed a situation that did not involve violence.

Moreover, one of the instructors that Ms. Kiger supervised encountered a disruptive student who was “very verbal and very opinionated” and had “used light profanity in class.” One day the student “went ballistic” after he received an unfavorable grade on an assignment. Ms. Kiger asked the instructor to submit a report to the TAMT. The TAMT administrator quickly connected with the student. By the “very next class meeting,” Ms. Kiger heard from the instructor that the “student’s behavior improved drastically” and that “his tone became far more respectful.” Ms. Kiger believed the situation “worked out very effectively.”

However for one academic administrator, it went beyond getting the information into the hands of the TAMT. As an academic administrator, Mr. Ellis wanted to pass on referrals to avoid the perception that his department served as a disciplinarian for students. He explained how making referrals to the TAMT distanced faculty members from student concerns, and allowed them to fulfill their roles as academicians:

And it also takes the pressure off of faculty and myself so we are not the ones making the rules that the student might be upset about. It is kind of like, it is bigger than our department. It is a university issue. And I think that’s what’s most valuable. I didn't get into this world to be dealing with these kinds of problems. I came into this world to teach young people how to become professionals. Right? And so the more that [behavior concerns] can be taken off my plate, the more effective I can be doing the job that I was hired for. And understanding then what the best protocols are so we can efficiently do what we need to be doing relative to those concerns and issues and be able to report them
up the administrative chain so that professionals can consistently and properly address them and keep us in the loop.

Feelings of appreciation and relief were reiterated frequently by other faculty participants. Faculty members made the call and filed the report to the TAMT which helped students receive assistance. When asked about their overall TAMT experience, the faculty and academic administrator participants used words like “positive,” “impressed,” “helpful,” “great,” “good,” “excellent,” “smooth,” and “professional.” Table 3 represents a referral made by each faculty member and academic administrator. The table identifies the participant, the student concerns, and answers about whether the faculty member is open to making a future student referral.

Table 3

*Faculty members and academic administrators’ student referrals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Student Concern</th>
<th>Would you make a future referral?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anderson</td>
<td>Emotional issues</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbert</td>
<td>Inappropriate email</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellis</td>
<td>Relationship Break-up</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston</td>
<td>Inappropriate email</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiger</td>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mackie</td>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marcell</td>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntyre</td>
<td>Student aggression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McMurtry</td>
<td>Change in behavior</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paine</td>
<td>Possible self-harm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddler</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spalding</td>
<td>Possible self-harm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucker</td>
<td>Behavioral</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>Financial</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wise</td>
<td>Student aggression</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Follow the “academic chain command”.*

The use of the academic chain of command was the second reason that intentional interactions between faculty members and the TAMT occurred. Faculty members were encouraged, but not required, to follow the hierarchical structure of the department. The act of reporting up the chain of command was another way to get situations out of faculty members’ hands. Jervis (2002) characterized chain of command as “a militaristic paradigm for staff organization” in which there is a supervisor and a subordinate relationship (p. 12). Jervis (2002) suggested that problems go up the chain and solutions come down. Although designed to promote accountability, clarity, and communication; the chain of command can slow down processes (Kabuye, 2013).

When following the chain of command, faculty members often consulted with the academic administrators about student concerns. Although this seemed like additional work, the academic administrators appeared open to hearing about these student concerns. Furthermore, four of the seven academic administrators received additional training regarding the TAMT because they attended department chair training offered by the Office of the Provost. This helped to better equip academic administrators for their resource roles.
Academic administrators understood that faculty members needed guidance. As a result, Ms. Houston encouraged her faculty members to “use the normal academic chain of command.” Once approached by a faculty member, Ms. Houston would “work with them to report things.” Knowledge of the student issue helped Ms. Houston determine if the incident needed to go to the dean of the discipline or the dean of students office.

Mr. Marcell also encouraged faculty members to report their concerns up the chain of command in an effort to absolve themselves from any further responsibility. Like Ms. Houston, Mr. Marcell wanted to be in charge of directing the concern to the proper location. He saw himself as a “filter.” He revealed that reporting up the chain of command passed on the responsibility. He said, “If you report it to me, I'm responsible. And if I report it onto a higher level, the responsibility goes to the higher.” He believed “that’s the beauty of chain of command.”

Ms. Kiger acknowledged that graduate assistants and lecturers were encouraged, but were not required to report student behavior to her before contacting the TAMT because “it is not a rule.” However, they often approached her because she provided their job training and was their supervisor. They wanted to ensure that they were following the procedures correctly. She responded, “They come to me any way…. And sometimes it is a simple, okay, here's how you are going to find the form and write it up, but they typically check in with me first.”

*Past occurrences and media influences.*

The third reason that motivated participants to have intentional interaction with the TAMT was reports from the media regarding gun violence at institutions of higher education. The media’s coverage of incidents of school violence at primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions had heightened faculty members’ awareness. Faculty members had seen and/or read
about incidents involving individuals who had exhibited questionable behavior but had not received proper medical treatment.

Mr. Marcell shared that, on occasion, faculty members would talk amongst themselves about these tragedies. He said the conversations entailed, “Did you hear about what happened at Virginia Tech? Did you hear? Thank God it hadn't happened here.” I was able to witness similar conversations at BU after a school shooting. While collecting data at BU in December, participants learned of the terrible tragedy that befell twenty third grade students and six teachers/administrators at Sandy Hook Elementary School at the hands of reported gunman, Adam Lanza (Christoffersen & Apuzzo, 2012). As I visited various offices, faculty, administrators, and staff watched the aftermath of the shooting on television, internet, and social media. They appeared glued to their seats or in huddles talking to each other. They seemed to be having a hard time processing Lanza’s motivation for his actions.

Ms. Houston believed that media information as well as concerns of having incidents of campus violence at BU contributed to faculty members’ willingness to report behaviors “that they may have previously written off as just being odd.” She said, “All faculty are perhaps a little more aware or I guess they are more willing to and open with reporting identified student behavioral issues just because of some of the cases that you read about in the media.” She believed this was the case because “people sort of say, ‘I don't want the same thing to happen here.’”

Mr. Marcell indicated that he felt quite safe on BU’s campus. He said, “People are very relaxed, as they should be. This should be an open place.” However, the media caused him to be more aware that violence was lurking. Mr. Marcell disclosed, “I do feel danger coming in from all sides from what I hear in the news, but not my personal experience.” Although campus safety
did not appear to be an issue on BU’s campus, Mr. Bond, Mr. Hank, Mr. Holcomb, and Ms. Kiger each referenced a recent occurrence that resulted in violence on BU’s campus. Ms. Kiger called the incident an “anomaly.” However, the fact that the incident happened on BU’s campus raised awareness for some faculty members and academic administrators about the importance of violence prevention measures on campus.

Another past occurrence that played out in the media and seemed to stick with faculty members was Virginia Tech. Although the Virginia Tech tragedy happened in 2007, it was referenced by Mr. Bond, Mr. Marcell, Ms. McIntyre, Ms. Paine, and Mr. Tucker during our conversation. Faculty members and academic administrators were paying attention. They had not forgotten about incidents of violence and seemed willing to do their part to lessen the chance of anything similar happening at their institution.

Yet, as a TAMT administrator, Mr. Grant shared a different perspective on the media’s influence in his office. In his opinion, media coverage led to questions that the TAMT had to address regarding their procedures. Mr. Grant believed that the TAMT had to re-establish itself and re-assure people that they were prepared to respond, if needed, after a major event occurred. Mr. Grant explained:

We will always have issues from the media. The media produced a level of outside pressure because every time we have a national incident, Aurora, Gabby Gifford, for example, then the [acronym for team] team has come back out [sic] with an educational pamphlet [and] marketing efforts to say, “Hey, we have been there all this time.”

Although all of the participants suggested that today’s students require an “it takes a village” approach to be successful, they indicated that they might rethink their level of involvement if students were allowed to have weapons on campus. Some faculty and academic
administrators at BU believed that institutions of higher learning supported the exchange of ideas and guns had no place in that equation. Faculty members and academic administrators had seen images of crime scenes, faces of victims, and heard the stories of families affected. Gun violence had grabbed their attention. As more states addressed concealed weapons legislation, faculty members and academic administrators at BU were paying close attention to the decisions being made for their campus community.

For example, Ms. Kiger seemed to enjoy her work. Yet, she has vowed, “If that [allowing guns on campus] happens, I’m leaving this job.” Ms. Kiger believed that nowadays “college students in general” had a “stronger tendency toward violent behavior for whatever reason and I think you are dealing with a bunch of young adults who are more likely to be volatile and act before thinking, and so that does concern me honestly.” As a result, Ms. Kiger feared retaliation from students because “I feel like in my job, I make a lot of students angry” because of her critiques of their work. She said, “I say things nicely but I say things they don’t want to hear.”

Conversations about allowing concealed weapons on campus and the possibility of students storing hunting weapons in their vehicles have contributed to unrest according to two academic administrators. Although not at a fever pitch, there are noticeable grumblings from academicians. As an academic administrator, Mr. Ellis had heard the concerns of faculty members regarding the issue of concealed weapons. He stated that faculty members knew that there were talks about a student’s ability “to carry a concealed weapon on campus if they have a permit” but it was Mr. Ellis’s understanding that BU had “finally said that they can’t.”

In addition to concerns regarding concealed weapons, Mr. Ellis also thought that BU faculty and academic administrators were anxious gun legislation would allow students to “have weapons in their vehicles.” This was worrisome to some because BU had “a percentage of our
student body that are hunters.” Mr. Marcell also commented about the number of hunters at BU, “There is a large hunting element, and not that hunters want to kill people, but there are a lot of guns around.” Hence, faculty members and academic administrators worried that if students were allowed to have weapons in their vehicles there might be an increased chance of gun violence because the weapons were on campus and accessible.

Although Mr. Ellis did not “know if the faculty dwell on that [guns],” he recognized that the idea of weapons on campus “is not a very comforting thought” for faculty members. Mr. Marcell disclosed, “I get nervous when I hear that guns might be allowed on campus. I don’t like that idea, but that’s just me.” Based on these responses, permitting weapons on campus may alter faculty members’ perceptions about campus safety and reporting threats.

Summary.

Collaboration was occurring at BU both campus-wide and between the two divisions. When assessing collaboration campus wide, it appeared that collaboration was being fueled by an institutional commitment/value to do what was best for students. Although responses varied, I found indicators that collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions was strained. There appeared to be three barriers that could hinder authentic collaboration at BU, those barriers included the perception of imbalance in funding between academic and student affairs, philosophical differences regarding the roles of academic and student affairs divisions, and departments choosing to continue to act independently.

In addition to finding collaborative environments, I also discovered that the academic and student affairs divisions shared intentional interactions because of the TAMT which was housed in student affairs. Faculty members were encouraged by academic administrators, the staff in the office of the dean of students, and TAMT administrators to report student concerns no matter
how “frivolous” the report might appear. However, academic administrators suspected that faculty members were more open to reporting because of the media attention given to incidents and because BU had recently had its own incident of violence on campus. These incidents also caused some faculty members and academic administrators to follow the proposed gun legislation for the state more closely. There was concern about how allowing guns on campus might affect the educational environment at BU all of which came together to justify the TAMT as a legitimate operation.

**I didn’t grasp the TAMT at first**

Faculty members reported that they learned about the TAMT during new faculty orientations, email notifications, presentations held in their departments, faculty meetings, leaflets, and workshops offered on campus. Although exposed to information about the TAMT in numerous ways, few faculty members described knowledge of its particulars initially. Often, faculty members reported that they did not grasp the concept of a TAMT until there was an incident that warranted the TAMT’s involvement. After involving the TAMT in the student matter, faculty members reported that they learned more about the TAMT and found it to be “necessary” and “important” when addressing student concerns. This theme has three subthemes that further expound upon this concept: (a) it took an incident, (b) realization of the effectiveness of the TAMT, and (c) one call and complete a report – that’s all.

**It took an incident.**

Although Ms. Paine wished that more faculty members understood the TAMT like she did, she speculated that “if you have not had those type [sic] of issues [student concerns]” a faculty member likely has no idea what to do “until the rubber hits the road.” Although faculty members had knowledge that the TAMT existed, Ms. Paine believed that faculty members would
still be prone to think “what do I do even though you probably already have been told.” Indeed, Ms. Paine’s assumption proved to be true for some of her colleagues.

Mr. McMurtry, Mr. Spalding. And Mr. Wise knew that the TAMT existed, but had not taken the initiative to learn more about the team because as Mr. McMurtry explained, “I never had reason to need them.” Mr. McMurtry shared that he “was loosely aware that such an entity existed.” He received campus wide emails from the provost to faculty members even though he tended to “really not pay attention to those notifications.” As a result of not fully understanding the role of the TAMT, Mr. McMurtry acknowledged that he had a “natural reluctance” about involving the TAMT in a student concern for fear that it “would reflect poorly” on the student. Mr. McMurtry admitted that initially, “I wasn't sure who they were, what they were about, what their operating procedures were. I just knew that I needed help with an individual student.” Once he involved the TAMT, Mr. McMurtry was able to conceptualize the TAMT more clearly as he worked with them. He proclaimed, “I was really happy they were there.” Although the TAMT proved to be instrumental in addressing the student concern he had identified, Mr. McMurtry admitted, “I can honestly say I didn't give them much consideration before this incident and haven't too much since then.” Although the TAMT made an impression on Mr. McMurtry, his comments suggested that he would only interact with them when there was a student need.

Mr. Wise felt similarly to Mr. McMurtry. He recalled hearing about the TAMT through campus-wide emails as well. “When the first serious case came up, I learned a lot more about it [TAMT],” he recalled.

Likewise, Mr. Spalding remembered, “I'm sure that some e-mails have gone out and the standard [institution’s name] announcement -- that nobody reads.” Despite receiving communication, Mr. Spalding had not familiarized himself with the website and reporting
mechanism thoroughly. However, when faced with a student concern he was able to successfully navigate the TAMT website. When reflecting on his experience with creating a report he shared, “But when I needed it [TAMT website], it was pretty easy to find in student affairs and within five minutes I found the form on their website.”

Although Mr. McMurtry, Mr. Wise, and Mr. Spalding had knowledge of the team’s existence, each of them required additional assistance before accessing the resources needed to report the student issue. For example, Mr. McMurtry consulted the academic department chair in the department, Mr. Wise consulted the academic coordinator in the department, and Mr. Spalding consulted with an administrative assistant in the department. Afterwards, all three believed that involving the TAMT was the best solution for the student situations.

**Realization of the effectiveness of the TAMT.**

Although filing a report with the TAMT was the first step to getting the help faculty members believed the students needed, faculty members were still uncertain as to the level of authority and help the team could provide. Again, some faculty members needed to experience it firsthand before they were able to grasp the authority and resources that the team had at its command. Mr. Tucker did not know the TAMT “had the teeth to actually do things if they needed to” until he needed them to help a student he identified as having financial concerns. He explained how initially he felt alone and left to sort things out on his own to assist the student. He did not realize that the TAMT had the knowledge or grasp upon resources “to give that student some food vouchers or housing or to say you are going to be academically withdrawn from this university.” He admitted, “I wish I had known that earlier” because he would have sought the TAMT’s help when working with other student situations.
Mr. Wise also had reservations about the TAMT’s capabilities. He confessed, “I guess when I first heard about it, I wondered if they could really be effective, or did we really need this.” Once the team helped to address the student concern he identified, Mr. Wise expressed “yes” that the team was both effective and needed. Mr. Wise also voiced that the TAMT was not “just another layer, but it is definitely worth it.”

Although Mr. Saddler had not reported a student to the TAMT, he interacted with the TAMT administrators about student assessments the team asked him to make. Initially, he also did not know how effective the team was at addressing students’ needs. Through his interactions with the group as a mental health consultant, he gained more knowledge of the decision making process. He concluded that the administrators of the TAMT had been “empowered from the individuals who would be in upper levels of administration” to do what is best for the student and the university community. He believed this authority was an indication that students’ behavioral concerns were a “priority for us [institution’s name] to handle.”

The effective manner in which the TAMT addressed student concerns were noticed by other faculty and academic administrative participants. As a result, participants expressed gratitude and positive feelings regarding the need for the TAMT at BU. Participants found the TAMT to be helpful to students, as well as faculty members. For example, Ms. Williams valued the service that the TAMT provided. She commented, “I think it is very necessary and I think it is very important….I think it helps to resolve concerns.” Although she expressed a personal willingness to help students, she also recognized her limited helping skills and knowledge of campus resources. Therefore, enlisting the TAMT’s assistance helped the student she was working with receive the assistance the student needed, and allowed Ms. Williams to step away
from the situation. Ms. Williams said, “I also think it's [TAMT] a reassurance to faculty. ‘I don't have to handle this on my own.’”

“Very important” was how Mr. Tucker characterized the TAMT. He said, “I can’t imagine a university this size not having something like that [TAMT].” Ms. Paine also described the TAMT as being “important” and “really useful.” She appreciated that the TAMT “gives faculty, who are not trained to understand what might be happening, a way to pass on useful information without feeling like they are narcing on someone or getting them in trouble; that really it is a passing on of concerns.” She viewed the TAMT as “one step” in preventing a major incident at BU.

Mr. Spalding commented that the TAMT was “pretty important.” He felt this way for three reasons. First, his knowledge of past occurrences regarding “incidents that can turn into something tragic” led him to view the TAMT as valuable. Second, Mr. Spalding deemed the TAMT as important because he felt unprepared “to handle a student's problem, they don't teach you that in graduate school. I know how to do my research, I know how to teach my topic.” Mr. Spalding was unfamiliar with addressing the holistic needs of students based on his educational experience. Third, Mr. Spalding communicated, “I have no interest in dealing with disruptive or problem students. I'd rather give a referral to a place that can actually help them because that's not skills that I have.” Mr. Spalding had no desire to push what he viewed as his professional boundaries as a professor.

Ms. Kiger saw the TAMT as “absolutely critical, absolutely essential” in the higher education setting. Ms. Kiger believed that “we [those in higher education] don’t really have the same administrative resources that you might see in a K through 12 setting.” Although she made
it clear that she was not suggesting that the TAMT was the principal’s office, Ms. Kiger believed “in some ways, this behavioral intervention team functions in that capacity.”

Once faculty members grasped how effectively the team addressed student concerns, they became more willing to refer students to the TAMT. In addition, faculty members valued how the TAMT allowed them to step away from the student concern. Moreover, faculty members appreciated how they were able to avoid compromising their boundaries as academic professionals.

**Lack of extensive training.**

Furthermore, faculty members appreciated the TAMT’s existence and effectiveness because they thought they lacked the training needed to identify or help a student in crisis. Faculty members reported that they were not comfortable handling these student situations and had received little to no training from the institution or their departments. This was often the response despite their admissions that they had read email notifications, sat through presentations, and had visited the TAMT website. Yet, no one shared what they expected the ideal training to look like. Mr. Spalding admitted that he had no training. He later confessed that training “may be offered,” but he had not “looked for it.” Ms. Williams disclosed that she might have attended an informational session on campus. Yet, she seemed to doubt her abilities to identify and help a student in crisis. She disclosed that she was not trained to address psychological concerns, but she could direct students to the TAMT:

I'm not trained as a counselor or a psychologist. I don't really know what's going on, I just have a big heart and care for students, and that may be an enabling behavior and not a good behavior. So, I think that it [TAMT] brings a professional dimension with the individuals who are trained to do that to the table where I don't have that.
In addition, Mr. McMurtry admitted that he had vague knowledge of the team and had not received any training. He was grateful that the TAMT, “the trained professionals,” intervened and “got [him] out of the loop” during his very serious student situation. He considered the TAMT to be a “real God send.” He recalled:

You know, I think that I was ill-prepared to deal with these sorts of student problems, hadn't dealt with anything like that in the past. I soon realized that common sense was not necessarily a good guide and so I was appreciative that the dean of students and the behavioral intervention team intervened in the way that they did.

However, there appeared to be a discrepancy between how faculty members and one TAMT administrator, Mr. Holcomb, viewed training. Mr. Holcomb viewed presentations, website information, and literature as a training tool. When asked if faculty members were given training to identify students in need of assistance, he reported:

Oh, definitely. And that's all the part of things we put out, the little folders, identifying behavior that may be concerning, what that behavior is, things to look for and that is all part of our presentation and it is up on our website and stuff like that.

Mr. Holcomb provided many passive training tools. However, it seemed that faculty considered the materials to be resources, not training. Furthermore, it seemed that faculty members viewed the resources as too lengthy. While speaking with Ms. Colbert about the TAMT, she commented that one of the standard pieces of information offered by the TAMT, a resource folder, had “lots of information.” She then commented that she wished the TAMT would come up with a “postcard” or “bookmark.” This sentiment seemed to be shared by others. As Mr. Grant worked to revise a TAMT publication, one of the pieces of feedback he received from those in academic affairs was that the document needed to be shorter.
One call and complete a report - That’s all.

Although faculty valued the work of the TAMT once they encountered them because of a student concern, participants also commented positively about the reporting process. Faculty members appreciated the fact that once their student issue reached the dean of students office, the matter was handled with little to no additional help needed from them. Staff in the office of the dean of students received the reports, reviewed the reports, and was then responsible for addressing the matter. In most cases, faculty members removed themselves from the equation. Ms. Kiger reported, “Make one phone call and let them [TAMT] reach out to the appropriate resources.” Ms. Williams felt similarly that “I just had to call this one office, file that form, and they made phone calls that helped get services for this individual.” Ms. Williams recognized that if she had attempted to address the matter on her own, she would have been stumbling through the process whereas the TAMT “consolidated” the process for her in that, “it kind of puts it in one office.” Although faculty members were not required to phone over to the dean of students office first, seven of the nine faculty participants made a call before submitting their report. This was mainly to talk through observations before submitting a report that would get the TAMT involved.

To further demonstrate how easy and effective the reporting system seemed for faculty members and academic administrators, I described three outcomes associated with reporting a student concern to the TAMT. The three results were: (a) support and learning, (b) confidence and trust, (c) and peer reporting.

Support and learning.

The first outcome was support and learning for faculty members and academic administrators who reported a student concern. During Mr. Tucker’s incident with a non-
compliant student, he was coached by a staff member in the dean of students office on how to
develop a classroom agreement. He explained, “I feel like I have sort of learned from them on
how to create these letters and these expectations.” He expressed that not only was his student
matter resolved but he was provided valuable feedback that might lessen the likelihood of similar
future occurrences.

Likewise, Ms. McIntyre received personal support from the TAMT as a student referral
unfolded. The team was concerned for her safety. “For a couple of days I could not come on
campus unless the police department knew I was here,” she remembered. In addition, the team
decided that the department she worked in needed to “provide a safer environment for her.” As a
result, Ms. McIntyre relocated her office until the department addressed the safety concerns. She
described, “Yeah. My door is different and my office is set up differently…. I remodeled. But for
about a month or so, I stayed in the front office and had my own desk” because that area was
deemed safer than her office space prior to the changes to the door and the re-arrangement of the
furniture.

Mr. Wise also felt that the TAMT provided “a lot of support” during “a serious
situation.” As a student referral unfolded, Mr. Wise said, “The locks were changed and he [the
student] was forbidden by the university to be on this floor and actually in this building.” In
addition, the TAMT “immediately got police involved.” Initially, Mr. Wise thought that he
“didn’t really need any support,” but quickly learned that he did and that the TAMT had lots of
support to offer him.

Ms. Colbert, academic administrator, also regarded the TAMT as supportive. Yet, unlike
Mr. Wise, she had expectations of what their support would look like. When dealing with a
student situation, she expected the TAMT “to back her up,” and she was satisfied that they did.
A TAMT administrator spoke with the student about the inappropriate communication she had with her online class instructor. The TAMT administrator also explained to the student why her behavior was unacceptable. In addition to what the TAMT administrator had done to support her, Ms. Colbert wanted continued support from the TAMT administrator “on the policy level” if the situation continued to escalate and resulted in “dismissing her or writing her up.”

Confidence and trust.

The second outcome, confidence and trust, was fostered because of the support and learning that faculty members received from the TAMT. Whether faculty members made one referral, made repeated referrals about one student, or submitted a number of different student referrals; all faculty members appreciated the initial response of the team. Each time a report was made via the website or email, a staff member from the dean of students office called to clarify or follow up on the initial report. An investigation ensued and afterwards the faculty members believed the students received helped. This consistency helped to bring about trust in the TAMT and encouraged the faculty members to make future reports based on the favorable outcomes they had already witnessed. Mr. Anderson revealed why he developed trust in the TAMT:

They followed through on every single phone call, e-mail, contact that I had with them.

I've developed a trust that they will respond to anything I present to them. They are going to call me back, they are going to e-mail, they are going to try to help.

The initial contact that Ms. Paine received from the TAMT made her feel “confident it [student behavioral report] was submitted, it was reviewed, and it was followed up on.” As a result, she commented that the “efficiency made me confident about potentially having to do another one [student report].” She appreciated that someone followed up with her, legitimatized her concern, and demonstrated that the process was not a waste of time.
Ms. Williams stated that it was “a real benefit to my job to have that service [TAMT].” She enjoyed knowing that the dean of students staff was “almost immediately” responsive, could be reached “via email, phone number,” and “hear what I’m saying.” It appeared as if she felt like a valued member of the team.

*Encouraged peers to report.*

The third outcome of an effective reporting system at BU was that faculty members began to spread the word. Faculty members and academic administrators were pleased with the support shown to them and the assistance provided to students. As a result, faculty members have thanked members of the team personally and paid them one of the best compliments a group could receive; they were spreading the word to others. Faculty members reported that they often gave peers solicited and unsolicited information about the TAMT. Ms. Paine exclaimed, “My experience has been positive….Though I have not had the need to report anything else, I have advised colleagues to do so.” Mr. Wise also helped to share information about the team among his colleagues. He commented, “I certainly let them know about the [name of the team]. So when I know they [colleagues] are experiencing a problem, I make sure they know about it [the team].” Likewise, Ms. McIntyre is frequently asked to give her opinion on whether a situation should be reported. Her responses were usually, “That needs to be reported and this is how you report it” or “my response is if it made you uncomfortable, it probably made someone else uncomfortable. And it is better to report than not have it reported, because it could be a behavior that has been exemplified in other places.”

*Summary.*

For some faculty members, grasping the TAMT had to be a hands-on endeavor. The memos and presentations did not persuade them to take note of, or further research this campus
resource. This was mainly because faculty members did not imagine themselves needing to use the services or doubted its effectiveness. Yet, when faced with a student situation that tested their limits, Mr. Wise, Mr. Spalding, and Mr. McMurtry were guided back to the campus resource that they previously dismissed.

After experiencing the TAMT firsthand, faculty participants became proponents of BU’s TAMT. Participants reported that the TAMT was a good resource for addressing student concerns. However, the kinds of student concerns that faculty encountered caused them to become acutely aware that they lacked the training and knowledge of the resources needed to aid students in trouble. In the end, eight of the nine faculty participants voiced relief to have had his/her student situation managed by someone else.

Finally, faculty members commented on the ease of submitting a report to the TAMT. Once reports were submitted, faculty members reported that they received follow-up communication. I found that follow-up communication indicated to faculty members that their report was being taken seriously. Furthermore, faculty members felt supported and often learned classroom management techniques from the TAMT. In addition, faculty members developed confidence and trust in the TAMT’s ability to help students. Thus, the positive interactions compelled faculty members to advise their peers about using the TAMT. Faculty participants at BU had gone from being skeptics, to being promoters of the TAMT.

**It Takes a Village So Count Me In**

Faculty members and academic administrators described their comfort and confidence about fulfilling their roles as academicians. However, they also explained that they recognized that some students have needs that go beyond academics. More frequently, faculty members were being involved in student concerns based on their own observations, calls from concerned
parents/guardians, and/or students who expressed a need for assistance. Participants in this study reported that they did not mind assisting students because faculty members realized that students needed help navigating academic and non-academic matters. Faculty members reported a willingness to assist students as long as they were not asked to assist a student in ways that they deemed were outside their customary duties. The theme, *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, includes the following four subthemes: (a) faculty members supported students inside and outside of the classroom, (b) “moral obligation” (c) helping students, and (d) I want to protect them if I can.

**Faculty members supported students inside and outside of the classroom.**

Faculty members reported supporting students’ academic endeavors both inside and outside of the classroom. Although not a requirement, Ms. Paine and Mr. Tucker admitted that their involvement might be a result of their department’s culture. When asked about the effects of their interactions with students, five of nine faculty participants felt that their connection contributed to the students’ positive academic experiences and retention at the institution. For example, Ms. Paine was known to have connections with students inside the classroom. She prided herself on creating an environment that encouraged students to approach her with academic matters. She said, “As a faculty member, my primary role at the institution is to work with students” and being an academic advisor gave her the opportunity for “mentoring or academic counseling.” In class, Ms. Paine tried “to maintain a very professional, but friendly, environment” which “encouraged students to talk to me about issues in class.” She further explained, “I try to really encourage them to come see me to create an environment where they feel comfortable talking to me about the progress in the course or in their academic career.” Her approach was built on the notion that “students will persist and be successful generally if they
feel a connection or feel that they are a part of an institution.” Ms. Paine hoped the relationships she cultivated with students contributed to their sense of belonging, and ultimately their persistence at the institution.

Like Ms. Paine, Ms. Kiger believed that student success was a “primary goal.” She thought that she and “people all across campus” felt as though helping students succeed “is what we do” and they were “invested in the success of our students.” She also believed that serving students was an institutional mindset, “from the top down,” especially in the “last 10 to 20 years” because “there's been a real strong idea that we are here to serve the people of the state of [name of state], and I think that message has been made clear.”

Mr. Anderson supported students academically “through undergraduate advising.” He assisted “students that are either at risk or actually on academic suspension or probation” with academic planning. Although he will not “reteach the content of the class,” he replied, “I will meet with student, go over study skills approaches.” At times, he has suggested that “students get evaluated for student support services” based on “learning disabilities or they have had some exceptional medical circumstances.”

In addition to interacting with students inside the classroom, faculty members like Ms. Paine, Mr. Tucker, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Wise interacted with students outside of the classroom as well. Ms. Paine attended events that showcased student work. In addition, she has taken students on field trips and to “study abroad” for six weeks. Like Ms. Paine, Mr. Tucker mentioned accompanying students on “university field trips.”

Ms. Williams believed in putting the needs of her students before other components of her position, such as service and research. She believed that her approach to working with students made her look like a “dinosaur” because she preferred to place more emphasis on
teaching. As she reflected on how differently some of her colleagues approach their work with students, she appeared visibly overcome. Ms. Williams also shared a number of stories about her out-of-class interactions with students and often laughed aloud when discussing the details. However, she asserted, “I place students first, and I try to establish a professional, personal relationship with the students that I care about their needs, that I hear their concerns, and that I hold them to very high expectations.” One of the informal interactions that Ms. Williams recalled was with students in an organization that she advised. She invited them to her home for a social gathering. She said that students were able to see her in a different setting:

I think for them to be able to come to my family's home on Christmas or during the holidays for an end of year celebration… they are able to come and see me in a different environment than they see me during the regular year. I think that that helps them to understand, wow, this is very different, that I'm not just a person standing up in the classroom and I come back over and do my research. I try to build a connection with them.

In Mr. Wise’s case, he was one of the first instructors that students experienced when they entered the department. Many gravitated to him because of his dedication to their success. This was evident because, when I walked into his office, there were at least six students crowded around him laughing and talking. Moreover, as I emerged from his office an hour later, those students were still there. The group was eager to pick up their conversation where they left off. He explained that “I'm very involved with the students. In fact, there is a large crowd of them out there that are all my students. We have a close working relationship.” He also worked with a student club.
One academic administrator weighed in on getting to know students as individuals as well. Mr. Bond explained that this occurs “because our classes tend to be much smaller” and because the very nature of the majors in the department causes faculty and students to interact and bond differently than in other departments. He believed smaller classes and these student/faculty interactions were much needed for students to be successful within the curriculum. He asserted that he and other faculty members made a human connection to students:

We get to know our students very well. We know almost all of them by name. For some cases we have even met parents. We get to know them probably more... as human beings rather than just student faculty relationship.

In her role as an academic advisor, Ms. McIntyre chose to approach her work with students in a manner that addressed the holistic needs of the students. She invited students to see her “if they have a problem.” Over time, she explained that students realized, “Oh, she's not just saying that. I have a problem. Let's go see what she can do about it.” As a result, Ms. McIntyre revealed, “I have spent half a day in here talking to a student” about academic and non-academic issues. Ms. McIntyre commented that she gave her time because she believed there was a need and she understood that faculty members did not have the time to devote to students in the same way that she did.

“Moral obligation.”

Although all faculty participants and the academic advisor commented that reporting questionable student behavior was perceived to be a part of their faculty position, Ms. Paine, Ms. Williams, and Ms. McIntyre’s reasons for reporting ran deeper. Their need to make reports seemed to be at the core of who they were as individuals. They viewed referring a student as a “moral obligation,” “human responsibility,” or “care.” Ms. Paine asserted, “It is almost a human
responsibility when we see someone who might be demonstrating some issues that we do something to recognize it, to be of help. Sometimes, I think the challenge is knowing how to do that.”

While Ms. Paine feels she has a human responsibility to help others, she does worry that her attempts to help others in society may be met with strong opposition or long-lasting consequences for her. She said that “it is our human intuition to want to help people” but she also recognized that her good intentions could be misconstrued. As a result, she had begun to ask herself, “Well if I say something, am I treading on their rights? Will I be sued? Will I be violating a policy?” However, the creation of the TAMT has caused her to worry less. She can make a report and not worry about offending anyone because of her approach or assumptions, does not have to “know their [person she is reporting] business,” and does not have to “get involved” because the TAMT will investigate the case. Ms. Paine could refer someone to the TAMT and not worry about what will ensue afterwards.

Likewise, Ms. McIntyre deemed helping others as her “moral obligation.” She proclaimed, “I believe that if someone needs help, you help them get help. So I don't feel like it's me snitching.” When she intervenes because of a student concern, she has done so because “I feel like I'm stepping in to help somebody that doesn't know they need help themselves.”

Furthermore, Ms. Williams viewed helping others as caring. She also believed it was “a learned behavior” that she gained from others who helped her. She suggested, “It is a gift and you have it or you don't have it. I have it because my parents valued it and they taught me that from day one.”
Helping students.

Faculty participants reported an increase in student mental health concerns, disruptive classroom behavior, and aggression. They acknowledged that students needed assistance beyond academics at times. Moreover, all of the faculty members in this study agreed that connecting students to resources was something that they were willing to do. For instance, Ms. Williams spoke of a student who she suspected was having “financial limitations and that he probably is hungry.” Although her suspicion had never been confirmed, Ms. Williams provided a level of support to the student that allowed her to give him “the fruit on my desk” as a snack and provided her with opportunities to “just say, ‘hey, how's life going, what's happening, what's your next step.’” Ms. Williams believed that the fruit helped to facilitate the “informal conversations” she wanted to have with the student to gauge how he was doing.

Another faculty member also revealed that non-academic situations surfaced during academic settings. Although it often was not comfortable to have students bring up non-academic issues, the faculty members said that they would listen to the student and help them connect with the necessary resources. Ms. Kiger disclosed that she had experienced this during scheduled one-on-one meetings with her students in class. Although most of the meeting was spent on “academic discussion,” Ms. Kiger found that because she and the student were in “sort of [a] relaxed” environment and “know each other pretty well… personal aspects of their lives come up.” Typically, she regarded the information as “a matter of interest and it helps me understand who this person is. On occasion, it does drift into something more serious. And depending on the issue, I typically sympathize.”

The academic administrators were not exempt from encountering students in need of support outside of the classroom. Mr. Bond spoke of how he reached out to a homesick out of
state “17” year old “young freshman” after he had spoken “to his mother a half a dozen times on the telephone.” Mr. Bond did “not fear that he [the student] might do anything” but he wanted “to try and understand where the problems lie.” As a result, Mr. Bond and the student “would go for a cup of coffee, that sort of thing in order to find out what his issues are.” Mr. Bond aimed to help the freshman identify and address his concerns.

Each participant group acknowledged that many of today’s students needed more assistance than past generations because of things like poor coping skills. Faculty members often recognized the needs of students on their own or were approached by students. As a result, faculty members occasionally chose to call on skills that came naturally to them such as providing nurturing, showing compassion, and using their parenting skills when working with students. At times, faculty members were drawn into helping students because a parent/guardian contacted the faculty member about a concern he/she had about a student.

First, the notion of allowing parenting skills, nurturing, and compassion to influence how faculty members and academic administrators approached a student matter is something that Ms. Kiger, Ms. Williams, Ms. McIntyre, and Mr. Bond all had in common. Ms. Kiger mentioned, “I'm a parent so I guess my parenting skills come into play there, but I also realize I'm a professional and I can't cross a line, which seems to me sort of an ethical line that I cannot cross.” Mr. Bond demonstrated compassion when he discussed a time he talked to a homesick student. He reported, “Now, granted I'm not a counselor by any means, but I have a shoulder and I have an ear and so that's all it was.” Ms. McIntyre showed nurturing when she shared:

And they joke me [sic] because I have all the magnets and little toys and gadgets, and every now and then they ask why I have it and I said, "The truth is this is a mechanism to
get you to relax, and because you relax, you start talking and whatever problems you have, we can resolve that.

However, the faculty member who appeared to show these qualities to me the most was Mr. McMurtry. Like many other faculty members, Mr. McMurtry spoke of maintaining professionalism and staying within his academic boundaries. However, there were several instances during my conversation with Mr. McMurtry that demonstrated that he pushed or disregarded his own boundaries. For example, while working with a student with behavioral issues, he took an early morning, 2:00 a.m., phone call from him. After speaking with the “despondent” young man, he met the student on campus a few hours later to check on him. When the TAMT became involved, Mr. McMurtry characterized himself as “kind of a mother hen… I was kind of an interested observer but not responsible for making sure the student got the help.” Although Mr. McMurtry moved to eventually have the student “dismissed from the program [academic],” he remained in contact with him. Recently, he “encouraged him [the student] to think about finishing up his graduate degree.” He also had been contacted by the student’s parents and “met with the parents a couple of times.” In the end, Mr. McMurtry was glad to have been a “part of the process” because he believed that at “his core, he [the student] was a pretty good person but, boy, he went through some dark times.” Although Mr. McMurtry may not have realized it, his boundaries seemed to be less rigid than he described.

Not only were faculty members and academic administrators caring and compassionate, they commented about seeing similar characteristics in the TAMT and the TAMT administrators. When Mr. Anderson spoke of how the TAMT helped a student he said, “It felt like a compassionate solution for her and I thought that the dean of student's office thought it through in a way that gave her a chance to get back out of a very difficult time in her life.” Ms. Williams
said, “I think they care. It's not just a job.” Mr. Saddler believed that the TAMT was “focused on the needs and safety of the student and being understanding of the situation rather than blaming.”

Second, faculty members and an academic administrator realized that today’s students may not have developed good coping skills for college or life in general. As a result, stress and the reality of being on one’s own, at times, yielded behavioral concerns for students. Mr. Bond, Ms. Kiger, Ms. Mackie, and Ms. Williams each referred to students’ poor coping skills. Mr. Bond admitted that his discipline’s professional school programs were very rigorous and stressful. As a result, feedback and critiques were quite direct, and at times, harsh. He feared that some students did not have the coping skills to understand that “substantive criticism” was a major part of the “learning experience rather than ostracizing.” He worried that faculty in the discipline might be inadvertently causing “psychological harm” to the students.

Ms. Mackie shared that “a student was very upset, they walked out [of the classroom building], they actually hit the door… and they broke the glass door.” Although she alerted the police, Ms. Mackie spent time talking with the student directly after the incident. In addition to connecting him with the dean of students office, she “told the student to come and see me the following day” because she wanted “to make sure they [the student] were going to be okay.” In addition, Ms. Mackie determined that part of the student’s stress was a “financial situation.” Therefore to avoid adding to his financial stress, she decided to pay to replace the glass out of department funds because she did not want to further burden the student.

Kiger recalled an incident that happened more than 10 years ago. She “had a student who was struggling and things got worse and worse during the course of the semester.” One day, she found the student “sobbing” outside the classroom building. She knew then that the student was in such dire condition that she “ended up taking him by the hand and walking him to the
counseling center and I sat with him until a member of the staff came and took him off my hands.” Ms. Kiger refused to simply suggest that the student seek counseling “because I thought he was in such crisis.”

Ms. Williams acknowledged that one of the student referrals she made to the TAMT dealt with a student’s inability to cope with financial difficulties. According to Ms. Williams, the TAMT helped the student connect with the counseling center, “worked her through” addressing her financial matters, and connected her to additional resources. The TAMT addressed the student’s need and taught her necessary life skills which helped her persist at the institution. Ms. Williams beamed with pride that the student “stayed in school and is graduating from here.”

Third, faculty members were often pulled into student concerns by parents/guardians. Throughout my conversations with participants, I discovered that parents did not hesitate to confront or enlist the help of faculty members and academic administrators when their student was in trouble. Just as Elam et al. (2007) expressed, parents will advocate for their children. Big University parents were advocating for their students. Parents made an indelible mark on all the participant groups represented in this study. It appeared that some parents had shown themselves to be indirect partners in school and student safety.

Like Mr. Bond who was contacted by the mother of a homesick young man, Ms. Mackie, an academic administrator, was contacted by a mother who alleged that her daughter was being stalked and asked Ms. Mackie to help her. Afterwards, Ms. Mackie spoke with the student directly. As a result, the student’s need to find a safe living environment took precedent over academics. Ms. Mackie was instrumental in connecting the student with the TAMT so that appropriate resources could be made available to the student. While housing was being arranged, Ms. Mackie also worked to address potential security concerns in her department. In her role as
an academic administrator, Ms. Mackie knew that offering a level of safety for the student in her
learning environment was important. This student concern required assistance from various
offices to address the matter.

In addition, Ms. Paine reported that a student brought her mother to class with her to
speak about her need to miss a test. At first, the student approached Ms. Paine alone to talk about
the need to miss a test. During the course of the conversation, “the student became increasingly
agitated, upset, crying, alluded to personal issues that were going on, and ultimately asked if her
parent could come in and talk to me as well.” Initially, Ms. Paine thought having a parent present
“was a little unusual. This was not an incoming freshman student, [and] it was not the beginning
of a semester.”

Ultimately, Ms. Paine was appreciative the parent was there to provide insight “about the
student's personal issues,” as well as to voice “concerns about the safety of the student, and the
mindset of the student.” As result, Ms. Paine decided the student matter “quickly became
something that needed to be dealt with by somebody with greater expertise than I did.” As a
result, Ms. Paine “made a phone call to the dean of students,” and later “walked the student and
the mother to the office of dean of students office.” Ms. Paine shared that “the student and the
family were very grateful for the support they received.” In her opinion, the family was
appreciative because they were “in a situation where they didn't quite know how to handle what
was going on either, and so the fact that the institution responded so quickly and helped them…
navigate in what could be a difficult process in withdrawing and figuring out how to do that” was
so helpful.

Two TAMT administrators provided similar information regarding parental involvement.
Mr. Hank, retired TAMT administrator, confessed that he was not excited about having parents
involved. He chuckled, “Parents are going to be involved. I tried to take the attitude that I wasn't going to let them [but] they beat me down, so I asked them to join rather than fight them.” Once he embraced the existence of parental involvement, Mr. Hank was the guiding force behind creating an office that serves BU’s parents. He found that “a lot of parents called me and thanked me for making these services available” and “sometimes parents would even call and say, ‘My son is having a hard time. I'm afraid he's suicidal.’ Hell, they would make the referral [to me].”

Mr. Holcomb, one of the current TAMT administrators, welcomed parental involvement. On occasion, Mr. Holcomb found parents to be part of the problem as well. However, the information that they shared often helped the TAMT determine next steps. Mr. Holcomb provided this anecdote. He said that a parent could call to report, “I'm worried about John. He won't return my calls.” Upon investigation, Mr. Holcomb could discover that John was fine and did not want to speak to his parent. The situation had been addressed and was resolved. Mr. Holcomb and his staff were happy to handle the “one-time incidents” of concern.

I want to protect them if I can.

Throughout the study, it became apparent that some participants wanted to protect students from various consequences. It seemed that faculty members and academic administrators wanted to shield students from things such as embarrassment, arrest, and disenrollment which were perceived to be associated with making a TAMT referral. At times, the comments regarding protecting students were very subtle, other times quite obvious. This subtheme showcases the three protections afforded to reported students by participants. The protections are: (a) don’t make trouble for the students, (b) mixed emotions among academic administrators, and (c) “I’ve got to see patterns.”
Don't make trouble for the students.

For some faculty members, submitting a student’s name to the TAMT was a huge undertaking mainly because they did not know what the team did. For example, Mr. McMurtry admitted that he hesitated to submit a report. He was attempting to protect the student from embarrassment and did not want to create an uncomfortable situation for the student. Mr. McMurtry explained his hesitancy:

Of course initially the first time going through the process, I wanted to give the student the benefit of the doubt and I thought it would reflect really poorly on him if I involved the [name of team], and so there was kind of a natural reluctance to really escalate the situation.

In another case, Mr. Wise tried to save a student from being arrested. He was relieved that the students he referred were not arrested by the police. He explained, “When you have people like the ones we have had, either it is that [TAMT] or the police. And I think in both cases the police did not have to become involved.”

Moreover, Mr. Wise was not the only participants who spoke of wanting to protect students from the police. The former TAMT administrator, Mr. Hank mentioned protecting students as well. He understood how university police could positively or adversely affect a campus community. As a result, he took the time to express to police officers that “they are going to have to respond appropriately, but at the same time they have a different role than a policeman in [name of city] with our students.” As a result, Mr. Hank professed how he expected campus police officers to treat BU students. He said, “We don't have a bunch of thugs out here. Ninety-nine percent of our students are good people. So these [students] are not our enemy.”
When it came to BU students, Mr. Hank expected police to understand that “they [students] may get drunk and do some stupid things, but you [police] can handle that.”

Conversely, Mr. Anderson wanted to protect a student’s ability to be enrolled. He commented that he was glad that he could contact the TAMT and not have to worry about getting a student “flushed out of here [the institution] for no reason.” Mr. Holcomb, a TAMT administrator, also wanted to protect a student’s enrollment and advocate for them. Mr. Holcomb mentioned that at times the multidisciplinary team members and/or academic administrator unknowingly made recommendations without realizing there could be other alternatives. He said this to committee members, “There is a larger picture here and we need to look at all the aspects and does your opinion change, if by doing this, we end their career?” Mr. Holcomb also revealed how he occasionally has to demonstrate various scenarios to the team such as “do we arrest them” or “go the behavior route and we suspend them?” Afterwards, he followed that up the options with how those scenarios could impact the student. This helped the team members grasp the far reaching consequences of the decisions that they made. The consequences could be lost scholarships or a failed semester if the group did not examine a student referral from all angles. Mr. Holcomb aimed for the team to make well informed decisions, not to change anyone’s mind.

Although faculty participants wanted to protect students at times, it appeared that they also wanted to protect their own conscience as well. Participants admitted that the TAMT was a good campus resource. However, it appeared that, at times, faculty members might have unconsciously attached a negative connotation to reporting. During our conversations, Ms. Mackie, Ms. McIntyre, and Ms. Paine used words like “whistle blower,” “narcing,” “snitching,” and “getting them in trouble” to inform me that they really did not see submitting a report to the TAMT as any of these things. However, the fact that they used those words told me more about
some of their original perspectives of the TAMT and the things that went thru their minds when making a referral.

**Mixed emotions among academic administrators.**

In addition, academic administrators wanted to protect faculty members. Academic administrators understood that faculty members frequently saw students and witnessed changes in their behaviors. This fact might have contributed to their willingness to aid faculty members in the referral process. However, Mr. Ellis and Ms. Houston insisted on limiting a faculty member’s involvement in addressing a student concern. For example, Ms. Houston supported faculty reporting but did not want her faculty to be placed in a compromising situation. She believed that faculty members had a defined role within the institution and did not need to be pulled into handling things outside their skill set. She asserted that faculty members should not be asked to take on roles that they have not been trained to assume:

I have feelings because faculty members are not trained to be psychologists or to necessarily know the appropriate [protocol] or know what signs and things to look for. On the other hand, faculty are the ones who see the students on a day-to-day basis in class and so they are in the best position to be able to know particularly when there are sudden changes in behavior with students. And so I think it is appropriate for faculty to report those things when they observe them. I don't think it is appropriate for faculty to be called upon to intervene or do things where they don't have the training to be involved.

Mr. Ellis, another academic administrator, accepted that faculty members needed to report mainly because of societal expectations. He shared, “I think in general society, forget about faculty members, things just have kind of changed in our society and the expectations of what you should do for another person or can do for another person.” On the other hand, Mr.
Ellis acknowledged that some faculty members would willingly take on this role because “as teachers, you are mentors…. at some point, you start looking at your students and wanting the best for them.” Therefore Mr. Ellis believed that if faculty members shared that mindset, they would be compelled to help students “if you see something that you can do, that can make something better for them.”

Yet, he also understood and accepted that reporting would vary by faculty member. He explained, “Some faculty will be more engaged in that, others will keep their distance.” Regardless of the approach faculty members took, Mr. Ellis wanted to ensure that faculty members were not asked to participate in the reporting process in a manner that would overstep their role as academicians.

“I’ve got to see patterns.”

Another way that academic administrators protected students was by observing situations in an attempt to identify a pattern of behavior first. When faculty members were concerned about students, most academic administrators encouraged faculty members to approach them first before sending their report to the TAMT. There were no repercussions for sending reports directly to the TAMT, but academic administrators preferred to be among the first to know. They wanted to know what was happening in their areas, just in case there needed to be some corrective action taken with a faculty member who might have poor classroom management skills. For example, Mr. Marcell expressed, “It is not hard to understand that their [TAMT] effectiveness is diminished if all kinds of people are just using them for, oh, you talked in class.” Mr. Marcell believed that it was his duty to vet cases first, to prevent wasting the time of the TAMT. He wanted to prevent his faculty members from being likened to the “people calling 911 because their dishwasher isn't working or something.”
Another reason faculty members were asked to notify academic administrators first was because it allowed the administrators an opportunity to holistically review the matter and make determinations on next steps. A holistic view by an academic administrator might lead to actions that faculty members do not have the authority to execute. These actions could include removing a student from a leadership role in the department pending a final determination or arranging for a student to attend another section of a class.

Finally, I found that academic administrators ask that faculty members approach them with student concerns first because they wanted to review the situation(s) to identify patterns of student behaviors. Academic administrators asked faculty members to keep sound documentation regarding students’ concerning behaviors. Mr. Marcell vehemently repeated that he liked to see patterns. He detailed:

Threats, automatically [should be reported to the office of the dean of students].

Behavioral issues, always here first and I need to see a pattern of repetition…. I've got to see patterns before I report it to either my dean in arts and sciences or the dean's office in student affairs unless it is a really [egregious matter].

Ms. Houston, academic administrator, talked about seeing patterns as well. When a student was brought to her attention, she looked for patterns in class attendance, quality of school work, behavior, and/or inappropriate emails. A pattern triggered her to encourage a faculty member to report an incident.

As a faculty member, Ms. Kiger also understood the importance of patterns. In her supervisory role, she would contact the dean of students office to gauge if a student had been problematic elsewhere. She recalled when she “picked up the phone and called.” She said, “The
first thing we need to know is this a pattern of behavior.” Ms. Kiger believed it told she and her staff member a lot “if I call them and say a person’s name and it rings a bell.”

Conversely, it appeared that at least one faculty members was less invested in identifying patterns. Mr. Anderson realized the importance of identifying patterns but was eager to leave the identification of the pattern to academic administrators or those in the office of the dean of students. He simply wanted the concerning and often inappropriate behavior to stop. Mr. Anderson’s explained why he leaves looking for patterns to the dean of students office:

You [faculty] should be focusing on teaching. Dean of students should have some kind of awareness of whether this is a pattern or general issue. They might be able to have that one contact with the student that would completely snuff it [the behavior] out.

However, participants identified that one of the errors discovered in Virginia Tech’s handling of Seung-Hui Cho, the individual responsible for the massacre, was a failure to report incidents to a centralized location that would allow patterns to be detected. Participants demonstrated that they were committed to the overall success of students as well as not having an incident like Virginia Tech. Therefore, they were willing to share information so that patterns could be identified by academic administrators or the TAMT.

Summary.

Faculty participants knew that today’s students needed assistance both inside and outside of the classroom. As a result, inside the classroom faculty members taught students, attempted to be approachable, and maintained open communication. Outside of the classroom, faculty members took students on field trips, attended extra-curricular functions to show support, advised student organizations, and partook in opportunities that allowed them to interact very casually with students. When student concerns came to the forefront, faculty members used personal skills and wanted to protect students from possible embarrassment, arrest, or
disenrollment. However when student concerns reached a level of concern that faculty members were not comfortable with, they submitted a report to the TAMT.

Summary of Themes

The responses of nineteen participants were collected during one-on-one interviews at BU. The interviews revealed three themes that described the participants’ perceptions and experiences with the TAMT. The themes included: (a) **Collaboration at BU**, (b) **I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First**, and (c) **It Takes a Village So Count Me In**.

In **Collaboration at BU**, faculty members were asked if collaboration existed. Based on participants’ responses, collaboration existed campus-wide and was attributed to the expectations set by the most recent provost. Yet, on a more micro-level, collaboration between academic and student affairs was strained mainly because of perceptions about the amount of money student affairs received, philosophical differences about the roles of academic and student affairs in higher education, and the silos that existed within the divisions. Yet, academic administrators and faculty members consistently found one area of student affairs that was meeting the needs of students while minimally involving faculty members in the reporting process, the TAMT.

In **I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First**, faculty members acknowledged receiving information that educated them about the TAMT. Unfortunately, some dismissed the information mainly because they did not fully understand the team or believed they would never need the services of the group. It was reported that faculty members came to understand the TAMT more while referring a student to the team which increased their willingness to make future reports. As a result, faculty members viewed members of the dean of students and the TAMT as “experts.” This idea was reinforced by TAMT administrators and each time cases were taken seriously and followed up in a timely manner. Following their interactions with the TAMT, all academic
participants supported the team and appreciated the assistance it provided to faculty members, academic administrators, and students.

In *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, all participants acknowledged that today’s students need additional support. Faculty members spent time with students, formally and informally, in ways that allowed students to feel safe disclosing information to them. As a result, faculty members embraced their role as one of the primary reporters for the TAMT. To aid in reporting, academic administrators were trained to support their faculty members. However, academic administrators wanted to ensure that faculty members were not being asked to participate in the reporting process in a manner that surpassed their training as academicians.

Next, the three themes will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter five. In addition, the research questions will be answered and the conceptual framework will be reviewed within the context of this study. Additionally, recommendations for “policy, practice, and future research” will be provided (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

**Summary of Chapter**

In summary, faculty and academic administrators realized that students needed help both in the classroom and outside of the classroom. Yet, faculty members did not feel equipped to assist students with some of their non-academic concerns. As a result, faculty members and academic administrators began to use a resource in the division of student affairs, the TAMT.

Initially, some faculty members and academic administrators hesitated to report because they worried about how it would impact a student’s standing at the institution. However, once they made a report to TAMT, they quickly realized how useful the team was in addressing student concerns and how easy reporting was. Faculty members seemed to appreciate that the institution had a team in place to address student needs in a quick and effective manner.
Furthermore, securing assistance from TAMT let faculty members step away from a student concern so that those trained to handle the situation could intervene. Faculty members developed confidence and trust in the team which often led to additional referrals.

This study allowed faculty members and academic administrators to describe their experiences with and perceptions of the TAMT. Hence, although collaboration between academic and student affairs was strained at BU, there was one service that student affairs offered that caused faculty members and academic administrators to interact with student affairs in an intentional manner, the TAMT. In chapter five, the analytic themes will be discussed in greater detail. In addition, recommendations will be made regarding future practice, policy, and research.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore faculty members’ perceptions and experiences with a threat assessment and management team (TAMT). The study utilized a collective case study method to capture faculty members individual experiences. In this chapter, I will provide an overview of the study, seek to answer the original research questions, and evaluate the conceptual framework based on the research findings. Moreover, implications for practice, policy, and future research will be addressed.

Overview of the Study

Students continue to arrive at institutions of higher education with severe mental health concerns (Gallagher, 2012). When not treated properly, students’ mental health conditions have resulted in harm to self, others, and/or an inability to remain enrolled. The same was the case between April 16, 2007 to February 14, 2008 when institutions of higher education were the sites of three shootings, Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech) (Roy, 2009 & The Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007), Louisiana Technical College (Newman & Fox, 2009), and Northern Illinois University (NIU) (Vann, 2008). In each incident, the shooter had exhibited questionable behavior and had not received adequate treatment. The culmination of these shootings was the loss of 39 students and faculty members’ lives. As a result, TAMTs emerged as a violence prevention technique employed in a crisis/emergency management plan (Fox & Savage, 2009; Sokolow et al., 2011).
As a multidisciplinary team, the TAMT often has representatives from both academic and student affairs divisions (Deisinger et al., 2008). In addition, these teams rely heavily on faculty members’ reports. Yet, little research existed to determine (a) the teams’ effectiveness, (b) faculty members’ perceptions, and (c) how well these team facilitated intra-organizational collaboration.

The purpose of this qualitative collective case study was to explore faculty members’ perceptions of a college and university TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions. The study took place at one southeastern four-year public institution, Big University (BU). The participants for this study included a total of nine faculty members, eight faculty members who referred students to the TAMT and one faculty member who served as a mental health consultant for the team. Other participants included six academic administrators who were mainly department chairs, one non-faculty academic advisor who worked closely with students and served as a resource to faculty members, and two individuals who served as administrators for the TAMT. In addition to the 18 currently employed BU participants detailed above, I also interviewed a retired BU TAMT administrator who is credited with beginning both an informal and formal TAMT at BU. The 19 study participants were enlisted using purposeful and snowball sampling.

The primary and secondary research questions for this study were:

1. How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?
   a. How do faculty members describe their expectations of the TAMT?
   b. How do faculty members work with the TAMT to address crisis with individual students?
2. What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

One hour one-on-one semi-structured interviews were used to gather information from participants regarding their experiences with making student referrals to the TAMT. Participants provided rich descriptions about their perceptions and experiences. Once the data was analyzed, three major themes emerged. The themes were discussed in Chapter IV. The themes were: (a) Collaboration at BU, (b) I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First, and (c) It Takes a Village So Count Me In.

The first theme, Collaboration at BU, described the participants’ reflections on BU’s campus-wide collaboration and the collaboration between academic and student affairs divisions. Campus-wide collaboration appeared to be occurring. Some participants attributed the strong collaboration to the expectations of collaboration set by the provost. When asked about collaboration specifically between academic and student affairs, participants’ responses varied vastly. However, based on the data collected, collaboration appeared to be happening but was strained. The strain between the two divisions may have come as a result of philosophical differences, the perception that student affairs was getting more funding than academic affairs, and departmental silos that existed.

The second theme was I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First. Although faculty members knew that the TAMT existed, many had not taken the time to review the handouts or absorb the information from presentations. Some faculty members had not grasped fully what the team did and how they could be of service to faculty members and the campus community. However, faculty members learned more about the TAMT when faced with an incident that required the team’s assistance. As a result of these encounters, the TAMT won the respect and trust of faculty members because the team consistently followed up and handled student matters in a
professional manner. Faculty members realized what a great resource TAMT was to students and to them. In addition, faculty members learned valuable information and skills when working with the TAMT such as classroom management, documentation, and how to convey expectations to students in their syllabi.

The third theme was *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*. Faculty members reported that they were eager to help students academically. However, they also realized that students often had concerns that extended outside the classroom. At times, faculty members and academic administrators realized a student was in distress based on their own observations, parental involvement, or because of information that the student shared with them. Faculty members and academic administrators were willing to assist students as long they were not required to step outside of their academic boundaries. At times, participants chose to use personal skills that came natural to them such as compassion, nurturing, and parenting skills.

Faculty members struggled with reporting at times because they wanted to protect students from embarrassment, arrest, or disenrollment. Yet, the media attention given to acts of violence in primary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions alarmed some faculty members and academic administrators, which contributed to their willingness to report student concerns.

**Discussion of Research Findings**

**Research question one:**

*How do faculty members experience the TAMT as a model of collaborative practice between academic and student affairs?*

In this study, faculty members were unable to fully capture how they experienced the TAMT as a model of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. Yet, they provided general indicators that suggested to them that the TAMT was a model of collaboration
between the two divisions. For example, Mr. Saddler, faculty member and the TAMT mental health consultant, reported that the TAMT was very briefly mentioned during new faculty orientation as a resource which indicated to him that it was an important joint project. In the midst of an orientation schedule crammed with essential information, Mr. Saddler noted that the resources of the division of student affairs, specifically the TAMT, were addressed in that setting by someone from the dean of students office. Ms. Williams commented that she viewed the TAMT as a collaboration between academic and student affairs because “it’s a natural flow” between the two areas. Ms. Paine suggested that the team’s composition indicated to her that it was an academic and student affairs collaboration because the team had representatives from both divisions.

Furthermore, some faculty members struggled to articulate what collaboration between academic and student affairs looked like in general. I offer a few reasons why. First, some faculty members, like Mr. McMurtry and Mr. Spalding, were enveloped in their work in the academic department. They had not noticed collaboration efforts between the TAMT and academic affairs. Second, faculty members had the ability to involve academic administrators before making reports. For some having an extra layer of support may have altered how they interacted with and viewed their experience with the TAMT. Third, many faculty members associated the TAMT with the dean of students office because the TAMT was housed in that space and had dean of students staff members working with the team. This fact might have made it more difficult for faculty members to express their experience with the TAMT separately from their experience with members of the dean of students office. Fourth, some faculty members were taken aback when I asked questions about collaboration in my interview with them. Despite my information sheet and verbal explanation, some faculty members did not see the relevance.
Maybe, the way the question was asked or the timing of when the question was asked could have impacted the faculty members’ responses. Fifth, BU appeared to be a collegial campus in that faculty members would call individuals that they had come to know in the dean of students office to assist them. Sixth, some faculty members appeared not to know which incidents reached the TAMT or remained with the dean of students staff. Ms. Williams, faculty member, described her limited knowledge of how cases were vetted:

I don't know that they went to the team and [if] there was full intervention…. After I called and reported it, I think it is out of my hands…. I’m not ever involved with the other end unless it comes back that you have got to do this.

It seemed that one of BU’s TAMT administrators investigated the cases. Based on his findings, he decided how the cases would move forward, without notifying the faculty member. As a result, the cases could become a dean of students matter or a TAMT case.

On the other hand, academic and TAMT administrators were able to articulate more about how the two divisions worked together. For example, as academic administrators, Mr. Ellis, Ms. Mackie, and Mr. Marcell, invited personnel from the dean of students office to department meetings to discuss the resources they offered, including the TAMT. In addition, Mr. Ellis admitted that he does not hesitate to ask a dean of students’ representative, often a TAMT administrator, to address the faculty members after a major behavioral incident has occurred in the department. Furthermore, academic administrators Ms. Colbert, Mr. Ellis, and Ms. Houston shared that they attended department chair trainings provided through the provost’s office. The trainings were designed to better equip upper level administrators in leading their areas and assisting faculty members. One of the guest speakers during a training session was a representative from the dean of students office who mentioned the TAMT in the presentation.
Academic administrators clearly experienced the TAMT as a resource and partner when addressing student concerns.

Furthermore, as a TAMT administrator, Mr. Holcomb seemed to appreciate the opportunity to present the resources offered in the dean of students office during new faculty orientation, department head training, and department meetings. He recognized the opportunity was made possible because of the great relationships established between members of the dean of students staff and academic affairs. He and his staff were constantly looking for opportunities to connect with various levels of staff in academic affairs.

These findings were described in the theme *Collaboration at BU*, specifically subtheme “intentional interactions.” Although BU had established a TAMT that appeared to be successfully meeting the needs of the campus community, the interaction shared between academic and student affairs fell short of authentic collaboration. Although the groups coordinate and cooperated with one another, they were not authentically collaborative because they lacked “shared power, authority, decision making, and accountability” (Adelman & Taylor, 2003) and did not “implement those solutions jointly” (Thompson & Perry, 2006).

**Secondary question one:**

*How do faculty members describe their expectations of the TAMT?*

There were three primary expectations that faculty members had of the TAMT. They expected the TAMT to (a) contact the student, (b) assess the risk, and (c) get the student help. Regarding the first expectation, the faculty members wanted assurance that a TAMT administrator would contact the student in question to gain a better understanding of the student’s issue(s). Moreover, faculty members wanted to know that some action was being taken. This first expectation is supported by the theme *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First*, subtheme
“one call and complete a report – that’s all” because faculty members knew that students needed help and they were willing to aid in the reporting process as long as their concerns were taken seriously.

The second expectation that faculty members had of the TAMT was to assess the risk of a student to himself or others. Deisinger et al. (2008) and Sokolow et al. (2011) indicated that risk assessment is one of the major responsibilities of a TAMT. Moreover, faculty members were keenly aware of what could happen if there was no intervention or if a student’s needs were not assessed properly, causing the intervention to be ineffective. Furthermore, faculty members, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Kiger, and Ms. Paine, knew the importance of detecting patterns in student behavior. It appeared that some academic administrators were comfortable with looking for patterns while Mr. Anderson thought that the dean of students staff should be responsible for identifying patterns.

In addition, the media attention given to school shootings had provided faculty members with an up-close look at how some situations had gone terribly wrong. During interviews with faculty members, Ms. Paine, Mr. Spalding, and Mr. Tucker referenced the Virginia Tech shooting or commented that they did not want a “Virginia Tech” to happen at their institution. Faculty members and academic administrators seemed more willing to refer students to the TAMT and expected the TAMT to assess the student’s risk.

Moreover, faculty members felt that they did not have the skills to help students in areas outside of academics, including risk assessment. Thirteen of the sixteen faculty members and academic administrators acknowledged that their professional preparation did not entail identifying distressed students. Several of the faculty members went on to say that were not confident in their abilities even after attending presentations and reading the hand-outs. Yet, at
times Ms. Kiger, Mr. McMurtry, Ms. Paine, and Ms. Williams went above and beyond to help students by providing nurturing, compassion, and parenting skills when the situations warranted it. They offered students the skills that came naturally to them, but risk assessment was not one of them.

Faculty members understood that they only were equipped to address non-academic student matters in a superficial way. To ensure that the student received the help they needed, faculty members believed that it was better to make a report so that the TAMT could take a look at the situation to assess the student’s risk. Hence, all three themes were used to detail the second expectation that faculty members had of the TAMT members. In *Collaboration at BU*, specifically the subtheme “intentional interaction” listed three results. Two of the three results applied to this research question, “here, you take it” and “past occurrences and media influences” because faculty wanted student concerns out of their hands and the media informed them of violent incidents that had happened at other institutions. In *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First*, the subthemes “one call and complete a report – that’s all” and “realization of the effectiveness of the TAMT” contributed to answering this question because faculty members understood that at times it took action from them, like filing a report, to get a student’s risk assessed and faculty members felt as though they lacked the training. Finally in *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, the subtheme “helping students” because faculty and academic administrators understood the importance of patterns. However faculty members, Ms. Kiger, Ms. McIntyre, Mr. McMurtry, and Ms. Williams and were willing to nurture, be compassionate, and use their parenting skills when offering solace to a student.

The third expectation that faculty members had of BU’s TAMT was that the TAMT effectively helped the students referred by them. Many faculty members wanted the TAMT to
confront the student’s behavior in and out of the classroom so that they could distance
themselves because they were not as knowledgeable of resources or possible solutions.
Furthermore, some faculty members did not want to be associated with disciplinary and/or policy
matters. Faculty members believed that if the TAMT handled the matter, the students would have
access to necessary resources. This expectation is in keeping with Sokolow et al.’s (2011)
declaration that TAMTs should be familiar with institutional and community resources. Ideally, a
student’s exposure to resources should result in the students’ condition improving and the
questionable behaviors ending. The two themes corresponding with this expectation were
_Collaboration at BU_, subtheme “intentional interaction” and _I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First_,
subtheme “realization of the effectiveness of the TAMT.”

When the same question regarding expectations of the TAMT was posed to academic
administrators, the answers to the question were quite similar to those of the faculty members.
Academic administrators echoed two of the three expectations that faculty members identified.
Like faculty members, the academic administrators wanted the TAMT to make student contact as
well as effectively help students. In contrast, the third expectation that academic administrators
had was for the TAMT to convey school policy and/or appropriate behavior expected of the
student. Academic administrators, Mr. Bond, Mr. Ellis, and Ms. Houston, wanted their faculty
members distanced from any policy decision. They wanted the TAMT to convey policies and
expectations on behalf of the institution. Having the TAMT intervene in this manner allowed
faculty members and academic administrators an opportunity to stay in their academic roles.
Academic administrators agreed faculty members should help in the reporting process but
adamantly did not want them involved beyond that point. This expectation coincides with the

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theme *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, specifically the subtheme “I want to protect them if I can” which addressed the mixed emotions among academic administrators.

The fourth expectation that academic administrators had was that the TAMT administrators gave faculty members advice on how to proceed. Ideally, academic administrators wanted faculty members involved in student cases as little as possible. However, if there were things that faculty members could do, would be required to do, or something they needed to monitor, academic administrators wanted the TAMT administrators to proactively prepare and guide their faculty members. Understandably, gun violence at institutions of higher education may have contributed to faculty members’ need to know pertinent information as the student concern unfolded. As an investigation or an intervention occurred, faculty members wanted to know next steps that they needed to take. Faculty participants viewed today’s students as more aggressive and violent at times so they did not want to do anything to further exacerbate a situation. Faculty members wanted to avoid possible gun violence. This last expectation coincides with the theme *Collaboration at BU*, specifically the sub-subtheme “past occurrence and media influences” because the media images likely influenced faculty members and academic and administrators need to know. In addition, it coincides with the *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First*, subtheme “one call and complete a report – that’s all” because of the support and learning role the TAMT played with faculty members.

**Secondary question two:**

*How do faculty members work with the TAMT to address crisis with individual students?*

Faculty members worked with the TAMT in two ways. First, faculty members reported incidents. This mostly entailed a faculty member picking up the telephone to consult with a member of the dean of students staff before submitting their report. Mr. Anderson, Ms. Kiger,
Ms. Paine, Mr. Tucker, and Ms. Williams commented on how they contacted the dean of students office to share what was going on prior to submitting their report. Although faculty members knew that they did not have to speak with anyone, they found comfort and support in calling first. Based on the information shared by participants, the phone call was placed mainly because faculty members wanted to protect students from the undue stress that could result if they acted too hastily. Surprisingly, it was during these conversations with a member of the dean of students staff that faculty members learned valuable information about classroom management, facts about today’s college students, and university policy and procedures which contributed to the faculty member’s knowledge base.

The themes that addressed these sentiments were It Take a Village So Count Me In, subtheme “I want to protect them if I can” because faculty members did not want to make trouble for the students by making baseless reports. They only wanted to place a student on the TAMT’s radar if it was truly warranted. In the theme I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First subtheme “one call and a completed report – that’s all” demonstrated how easy it was for faculty members to make a report and that it often resulted in learning for the faculty member as well.

The second way faculty members worked with the TAMT was to maintain communication regarding the student in crisis. Once a report was submitted, one of the TAMT administrators contacted the faculty member to ensure that the administrator understood all of the facts involving the incident with the student. Additional contacts were made between the faculty member and the TAMT administrators as the case developed to gather more information or provide updates. The theme that described this phenomenon was I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First, subtheme “realization of the effectiveness of the TAMT.” Once faculty members
encountered student incidents that needed the attention of the TAMT, they learned more about the team and came to realize how helpful the BU TAMT really was.

Again, academic administrators gave similar responses to those of faculty members. Academic administrators revealed that they also contacted the TAMT during student crisis situations via phone and when additional information and updates were conveyed. However before calling or submitting a report to the dean of students office, some academic administrators were aware of student concerns. Faculty members were encouraged to follow the academic chain of command when submitting reports and that often meant seeking assistance from an academic administrator. In some cases, the academic administrator investigated the case and looked for patterns prior to making a report to the dean of students office. For instance, it was not uncommon for Ms. Colbert, Ms. Houston, and Mr. Marcell, to look for patterns in a student’s behavior before making a report to the TAMT. Their comfort about collecting this information may have come as a result of their years of experience and department head trainings. Once the patterns were identified, the academic administrators called the TAMT to discuss the case in detail and then had the faculty member submit a report. The theme that corresponded here was *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, subtheme “I’ve got to see patterns” because academic administrators often looked for patterns of student behavior before contacting the dean of students office. In addition the theme *Collaboration at BU*, subtheme “intentional interaction” addresses the research question because faculty members had been instructed to ask for assistance if they needed it which meant involving academic administrators. Finally, *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First*, subtheme “one call and complete a report- that’s all” demonstrated how the academic administrators worked with the team to help faculty members complete reports of student concerns.
Research question two:

What practices have emerged to better educate and involve faculty in TAMTs?

As more faculty members used the TAMT, there was increased knowledge of the team and more satisfaction that students were receiving the attention that they needed. As a result, faculty members did not hesitate to use the TAMT again. In addition, faculty members’ trust and confidence in the TAMT grew. Consequently, the faculty participants encouraged their peers to refer student with concerns. Faculty participants had become walking and talking advertisement for the TAMT. Moreover, faculty members seemed to cringe less when a student approached them with a non-academic concern. Based on the accounts of Ms. Kiger, Ms. Williams, and Ms. Paine, they listened to the student and started the referral process right away. The themes that illustrates this practice is *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First* with subthemes “one call and complete a report- that’s all” because of the trust and confidence faculty received which led to encouraging their peers to report.

The second practice that emerged for faculty was building relationships with members of the deans of students staff and the TAMT. As faculty members interacted with the TAMT to address students’ concerns, they began to build relationships that included follow-up calls and even brief conversations while walking on campus. I believe that the formation of these relationships could be the foundation needed for future academic and student affairs collaborations. *Collaboration at BU*, subtheme “intentional interaction” captures this practice.

The third practice that has emerged to better educate and involve faculty in the TAMT is the many places that faculty members heard about the TAMT. New faculty members learned about it as they settled into the university environment. In addition, faculty members learned about it during department presentation. Moreover, faculty members heard about the TAMT
from academic administrators. Each time faculty members were granted an opportunity to familiarize themselves with the TAMT it planted a seed for the faculty members. This practice was illustrated in the two themes. *Collaboration a BU*, subtheme “intentional interactions” detailed the intentional manner the groups worked with each other. *I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First*, subtheme “it took an incident” resulted in a campus resource and support for faculty members.

Fourth, providing training for academic administrators to assist them in doing their jobs effectively was a novel idea that was initiated by the provost’s office. Having a representative from the dean of students office talk about the resources the office provides, one of which is the TAMT, was a great idea. Department chairs were given an opportunity to learn with their counterparts from all across campus. The knowledge they were exposed to was taken back to their departments. As a result, department chairs felt empowered to look for patterns and assist faculty members in making reports regarding distressed students. The theme that corresponds here is *It Takes a Village So Count Me In*, subtheme “I’ve got to see patterns.”

I recognize that the narratives from the sixteen members of academic affairs were overwhelmingly positive. I offer a few reason why this is the case. First, the research topic was very sensitive. As a result, the vice-president of student affairs and the researcher agreed to allow one of the TAMT administrators to make the initial contact with faculty members who had referred or aided in the referral of a student. This was done to prevent the pre-mature disclosure of faculty member’s identification before they agreed to participate in the study. I had to trust that the TAMT administrator was being impartial when contacting potential participants. In addition, I had a conversation with the TAMT administrator early-on regarding my need to secure a very diverse participant pool with regard to their TAMT experiences. Second, the
involvement of a TAMT administrator might have caused some participants to worry that the information they shared with me would be identifiable by those associated with the team. This may have caused some participants to withhold information that would have been negative regarding the TAMT. Third, the TAMT administrator told participants that the information collected would help BU’s TAMT to improve. Consequently, some faculty members may have chosen to share the positive and complimentary information about the team to ensure that the institution was favorably looked upon.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study was the Kezar and Lester (2009) Stage Model of Collaboration in Higher Education. I received permission to reprint the model (Appendix H). The goal of this model was to help administrators successfully create collaborative higher education organizations (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Therefore, collaboration needed to be engrained in the overall campus culture before it could successfully be achieved on a smaller scale throughout campus. This model was used as a template to investigate BU’s TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration.

Kezar & Lester’s (2009) model, as illustrated in figure 2, was detailed extensively in chapter two. The model consisted of three stages. Each stage had to be fulfilled before advancement to the next stage could happen. Stage one, building commitment, was comprised of four elements which were values, external pressures, learning, and networks (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Stage two, commitment to collaboration, included mission, networks, and rewards (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Stage three, sustaining commitment, involved integrating structures, rewards, and networks (Kezar & Lester, 2009). Throughout the model, networks remained constant in each stage (Kezar & Lester, 2009).
When evaluating the conceptual framework based on the data acquired by using interviews, observations, and document analysis, I found that BU experienced every aspect of the model. In stage one, the institution’s administration developed reasons why collaborating would be positive for the organization (Kezar & Lester, 2009). For BU, the institutional value that supported the collaboration was the student-centered approach demonstrated by faculty and staff. Next, the external pressure that led to the formation of an initial informal TAMT was applied by
parents/guardians who were concerned that their students were being dismissed from BU due to their inappropriate behavior. The lost tuition dollars, potential bad press, possible litigation battles, and a desire to make well informed decisions regarding a student’s case caused a BU official to explore a multidisciplinary team of colleagues he trusted. Later, the external pressure to make a formal team was derived from the Virginia Tech tragedy. Next, the learning that some members of the campus community needed to be convinced that collaboration was a worthwhile endeavor was demonstrated when upper level administrators shared their support of the team. Furthermore, gaining support from the campus community for the TAMT seemed easier to achieve after the Virginia Tech massacre because the TAMT is a prevention tool. Finally, the network in stage one was namely the TAMT members, vice-president of student affairs, and the dean of students staff members. These individuals were responsible for sharing information about the team and collaboration throughout the institution (Kezar & Lester, 2009).

Once the campus community understood the benefits of collaboration via the TAMT, a commitment to collaboration had to be established (Kezar & Lester, 2009). In stage two, the mission element was fulfilled when a new provost declared that silos would be eliminated and collaboration was expected. He established an expectation and a priority. Although the institution did not experience a re-writing of the mission statement, a declaration was given by the provost regarding the path the institution would take. The rewards in stage two was that faculty members were able to report students’ concerns to the TAMT with limited or no involvement needed from them afterwards. Although this reward carried no monetary value, it provided faculty members a means of helping students and themselves. This also provided faculty members with the reward of time. Finally, the networks represented in stage two were the academic administrators who helped faculty members report students. This network was strengthened because the provost’s
office offered a presentation by the TAMT administrator during department chair training. The provost’s office created opportunities to educate academic leaders, which in turn equipped them with knowledge that benefitted faculty in their departments. Furthermore, the support of trained department chairs helped the TAMT collect information that further refined the TAMT’s processes because the department chairs understood both faculty members and administrators’ perspectives and could serve as liaisons between the two groups.

Once a commitment to collaboration has been established, the endeavor must be sustained (Kezar & Lester, 2009). In stage three, the integrated structures committed to the endeavor was the hiring of a case manager in the dean of student office to help with follow-up communication, hiring a psychiatrist to evaluate students, the online capability for making reports, the option to make a report anonymously, and the fact that there was overlap of personnel serving on the dean of student staff, the TAMT, and the crisis response team. Adopting a structure like this ensured information could be handed up the chain of command as quickly and accurately as possible. The rewards were less apparent in stage three. One possible reward was that the mental health consultant could receive service credit in the tenure process for his role with the TAMT. Once the department chair learned of the service the mental health consultant was providing to the TAMT, he mentioned “counting this [his service] in different ways” like giving this faculty member some service credit which would be a slight change to the tenure process for the department. Finally, the networks formed in stage three were the TAMT members, staff in the dean of students office, academic administrators, and faculty members who referred students and had a positive experience. These networks would be responsible for creating more collaboration on campus and rise above any barriers that come as a result of the existing collaboration (Kezar & Lester, 2009).
Although elements of Kezar and Lester’s model were addressed by BU’s TAMT, the spirit of collaboration was not achieved. One of the objectives of this research was to determine if a TAMT could serve as an intra-organizational collaboration between the two divisions. I found that the TAMT created a highly effective process for faculty members and academic administrators to report questionable student behavior. However, the process was not formulated in a manner that allowed for shared processes between the two divisions. Student affairs staff aimed to find a way to get student concerns to their office in a timely manner. Faculty members were eager to refer a student so that they could step away from the situation. Members of academic affairs were not equally invested throughout the process. Often, they did not contribute to finding a solution for the student. Although the TAMT and the dean of students office consolidated where faculty members needed to go to obtain the help students needed, it did not result in effective collaboration between academic and student affairs. In my opinion, the groundwork has been done for such an endeavor in the future.

Yet, I am not advocating for a greater degree of collaboration between these groups. I am inclined to agree with Kezar and Lester (2009) that collaboration is not always the best way to achieve a task. The TAMT process devised at BU worked great, in that students’ concerns were being communicated and addressed. Reporting these concerns likely diminished the number of crisis situations because they were possibly being communicated early-on. In addition, maintaining a small group of people who needed to know about, and work through, the student concerns helped to preserve confidentiality. The fear of breaching confidentiality was one of the reasons why the TAMT was restructured in recent years. With several people around the table, there was concern that confidentiality could be broken. With that in mind, maybe intra-organizational collaboration was not achievable for this the TAMT because extensive faculty
involvement in resolving the student matter might have contributed to compromising confidentiality. Furthermore, faculty members’ limited knowledge of student life, law, and university policies would lessen their ability to be a key contributor.

With regard to Kezar and Lester’s model, I would suggest three additions to the model based on my findings from this study. One element that I believe should be added in stage one is internal pressures. Although external pressures for funding often helps to drive decisions, I also believe that, at times, internal pressures such as implementing best practices, saving money, and streamlining processes, can be equally compelling reasons for collaboration discussions. Another element to be added in stage one is the need to learn about tangible results. The results can be based on the outcomes of the same or similar collaboration elsewhere or from research data. Although learning the benefits of collaboration is valuable, I think that being provided with tangible results can contribute to the learning process as well. The final element that I think should be added to this model is assessment. I think it is very important that collaborations are reviewed and/or changed as needed to ensure optimal performance and assessment is a great tool to use. The end of stage three was the best place for assessment because by then the collaboration is well established and has been incorporated in all of the elements. Figure 3 illustrates the newly proposed stage model of collaboration in higher education.
Implications for Higher Education Practice

The results from this research study demonstrated that although collaboration between academic and student affairs was not in pristine condition at BU, collaboration was happening. More importantly, there was an area of student affairs that faculty and academic administrators consistently utilized and respected, the TAMT. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed based on data collected. The analysis of this data will help inform policymakers,
researchers, faculty members, and the TAMT administrators on ways to further explore how TAMTs operate on college campuses and how faculty members can be effective participants in this process.

**Counseling centers**

There is a profound need for counseling center services at institutions of higher education. In the 2012 National Survey of College Counseling, 88% of the 293 counseling center directors surveyed reported that an increase in the number of students with severe psychological problems continues to pervade campuses (Gallagher, 2012). Consequently, counseling centers have witnessed an increase in requests for services (Gallagher, 2012). Unfortunately, 88% of directors also indicated that the increased student traffic has resulted in staffing problems, according to Gallagher (2012). Many campuses lack the personnel or fiscal resources to address this concern.

The question then becomes how does a counseling center with limited staffing and resources help the growing number of students in need of services; some of whom have severe psychological concerns? One way that BU addressed this concern was by hiring a psychiatrist. The 2011-2012 annual report of the division of student affairs indicated that one psychiatrist was hired for its counseling center and another psychiatrist would be hired the following year for its student health services. According to the National Survey of College Counseling, the majority of psychiatrists have the following primary work responsibilities, “conduct psychiatric assessment, prescribe medication, and provide individual case consultation with other professional staff” (Gallagher, 2012, p. 4). Hiring psychiatrists is something that other institutions might want to consider but first more information must be gathered to assess the effectiveness of employing psychiatrist on campus.
In addition, one unique thing that the dean of students staff at BU has done was the solicitation of assistance from a professor trained to work in mental health care. Although TAMTs looked at the overall information gathered when assessing students’ risk, Mole (2012) believed that asking for assistance from mental health care professionals who are employed on campus is a practice that more TAMTs should adopt. A mental health professional can be more specific about the mental health of a student when making an assessment. Although efficiently gathering information and making determinations about students exhibiting questionable behavior is important, that information should be effectively evaluated by trained professionals, including mental health care professionals.

To address the increasing number of students entering higher education with psychological conditions, my first recommendation is that institutions solicit the assistance of licensed individuals already employed at the institution, who are capable of making assessments regarding a student’s mental stability when there is a shortage of qualified personnel in the counseling center or health center. Like Mr. Saddler, the mental health consultant, these people could serve as a consultant to a TAMT. As an incentive and/or reward for taking on additional duties, those individuals who are willing to assist could receive service credit in the tenure process, additional pay, and/or a reduction in the teaching course load. Of course, support from those in academic affairs is needed; but, I believe that having this level of collaboration sends a very clear message about how far institutions will go to maintain a healthy learning environment.

My second recommendation is that institutions should implement an experiential learning opportunity for students majoring in clinical psychology and psychiatry by providing them an opportunity to make student assessments as part of the academic program curriculum under the supervision of a faculty member. Kolb, Boytazis, and Mainemelis (2000) reported that practice
plays a key role in experiential learning. It is not uncommon for students to be given opportunities to practice their skills in fulfillment of the requirements of their academic program. Of course, faculty members would need to be intentional about the cases they gave students because hands-on student learning is important but limiting the stress added to a fragile student is equally important. Instituting such a practice could possibly ensure that an institution has a readily available cadre of mental health care personnel at their disposal when needed.

Mole (2012) reported that the traditional college age is often when mental illnesses begin to manifest. Therefore, coupling the stress of the college transition with lack of sleep and/or drugs and alcohol is likely to yield unfavorable results. Therefore, providing education to the campus community will help in early identification and intervention. My third recommendation is that more training be offered to faculty members, staff, and students by counseling center professionals regarding the identification of students who may be in distress. Throughout the study, faculty members consistently shared that they had not been trained, or did not feel comfortable with the training received, to make a credible judgment about referring a student of concern. Yet, a study at the University of Connecticut demonstrated that teaching faculty and staff techniques such as Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR), which was a suicide prevention model, had positive results (Sieben, 2011).

In addition, employing the help and support of others is especially important when the average counselor to student ratio was 1 counselor for every 1600 students (Gallagher, 2012). This ratio can prove to be too daunting for some counseling center staffs to handle as their clientele numbers increase. Schwartz and Kay (2009) alleged that most college clinicians would say that “the demand on services have dramatically outpaced the capacity and rate of growth of available mental health care systems” (para. 10). Furthermore, counseling center staff members
have come to understand that they will not see all the students who need to take advantage of their services. Hence, in response to the larger number of students with more severe psychological concerns, sixty-seven percent of the counseling center directors surveyed reported an increase in time devoted to training faculty on how to assist students and how to make proper referrals (Gallagher, 2012). Institutions of higher education should follow suit by devoting more time to educating faculty, staff, and students on how to identify and help students in need.

**Student affairs**

This study also had implications for student affairs. Threat assessment and management teams frequently are housed in the division of student affairs and headed by seasoned student affairs professionals (Sokolow et al., 2011). The duties of the multi-disciplinary team were often in addition to the responsibilities attached to their primary positions at their institution. The same was the case at BU. Team members already had a considerable workload and the propensity to experience burnout because of, “The accumulated effect of long hours, increasing demand for services, shrinking budgets, intractable issues, litigious environments, and what seems at times like incessant bashing of higher education for political purposes” (McClellan, 2012, para. 2).

During the study, the TAMT administrators were effectively managing work and team responsibilities. However, Mr. Grant recognized the toll the work had taken on him and the other TAMT administrator. In my opinion, burn-out appeared to be a looming possibility for the TAMT administrators, probably more so than other members of the team. I am not advocating that the team’s leadership be rotated, because my findings suggest that consistency of administrators contributed to its success. Yet, my fourth recommendation is that the division of student affairs, namely the office of the dean of students, employs a case manager(s) whose sole or primary responsibility is to handle the logistical pieces associated with the team. These duties
might include receiving initial reports, fact finding, database entry, and any follow-up communication. Although BU had a newly hired case manager, he was not yet fulfilling the position in this manner.

The case management model stemmed from social work and psychology in the 1970’s to assist individuals with mental health conditions to transition back into their communities (Van Brunt et al., 2012). Today, higher education has seen an increase in case managers which has led to the formation of the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA, 2013). For example, Virginia Tech employed a case management approach following the April 16, 2007 massacre, in an effort to reduce instances of future threats and violence on its campus and to help manage those affected by the actual event (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009). Moreover, The National Survey of College Counseling reported hiring case managers as the most frequent response in the category listed as “other” for ways that counseling centers are addressing the large number of students with severe psychological concerns (Gallagher, 2012). Randazzo and Plummer (2009, p. v) reported, “The case management program represents the provision of supportive services for students and employees, and provides systematic follow-up monitoring of individuals who have received treatment.” Hence, providing resources, monitoring a student’s progress, developing a plan, following up, and making referrals as needed are some of the components of case management that make it so successful (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009).

Although Van Brunt (2012) suggested that case managers could be housed in various departments such as student conduct, housing and residence life, office of the dean of students, disabilities services, and academic advising, I think that BU and other institutions should have at least one case manager who sits on the team and who works solely with the TAMT cases. Having a case manager working in concert with a TAMT could likely increase the institution’s
overall effectiveness when addressing student concerns. Ultimately, there could be fewer crisis incidents because concerns were handled before they escalated resulting in greater student retention, student success, and persistence as an outcome (Sokolow et al., 2011). Furthermore, employing the case management approach could prevent or lessen some of the pressures and demands on student affairs professionals who serve in leadership roles on the TAMTs.

Academic and student affairs administrators must do more to educate faculty members about the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Although Mr. McMurtry and Mr. Tucker, faculty members at BU, expressed a desire to learn more about FERPA, I observed other participants who unknowingly were unclear about FERPA. Therefore, recommendation number five is that the academic and student affairs divisions make greater strides to educate faculty members about laws and statutes such as FERPA and the Clery Act, as they relate to academic and non-academic matters within a college environment. Proper education may persuade some apprehensive faculty members to take on a greater role in reporting questionable student behavior, to share information when contacted by university officials, and to aid them when communicating with parents.

In recent years, the economic downturn has had a profound effect on higher education resulting in tuition increases, reduced funding by state and federal governments, and budget cuts (Pokross, 2012). While operating with dwindling resources and not enough staffing, student affairs divisions clamor to meet the needs of an increased number of students, some of whom suffer from psychological conditions. The same scenario applied to BU. A number of faculty members marveled at how well individuals in the office of the dean of students and the counseling center were able to stay afloat with what they perceived to be a small staff. As a result, my sixth recommendation is that divisions of student affairs explore ways to find external
funding so that additional student affairs personnel can be acquired to help address the growing number of student concerns. For instance, Virginia Tech obtained a grant from the United States Department of Education that funded three case manager positions and resources for its threat assessment team (Randazzo & Plummer, 2009).

There is no case law regarding TAMTs at this time. Therefore, these teams are operating based on what they believe to be effective. Recommendation seven is that each TAMT remain in close communication with their institution’s legal counsel and watch very closely the details and outcomes of incidents involving students exhibiting questionable behavior at other institutions. A plethora of knowledge was gleaned from the Virginia Tech massacre. Consequently, Virginia Tech lost a civil lawsuit brought against the institution by two of the families of students killed on April 16, 2007 (Lipka, 2012). According to Lipka (2012), the families believed that their daughters would have lived had a second warning gone out sooner. We also have learned a substantial amount from Pima Community College’s decision to suspend Jared Loughner, the individual responsible for the shooting at a political gathering outside a grocery store that killed six people and injured fourteen others, including then Congress woman Gabrielle Giffords (Cloud, 2011). The actions of the institution were still questioned because some people believe that the general public was not amply informed (Roy, 2011). Now many anxiously await information regarding the outcome of the trial of James Holmes, the man alleged responsible for the mass shooting at a movie theater in Aurora Colorado that killed 12 people and injured 58 (Mole, 2012). The perceived lack of response taken by the TAMT at the University of Colorado and the role that the school psychiatrist played in reporting his behavior have both been called into question (Patton, 2012). Threat assessment and management teams must keep abreast of
current affairs concerning these teams, maintain their training, and be reflective practitioners who evaluate each incident individually.

With limited resources and personnel, divisions of student affairs must welcome involvement from parents/guardians. Throughout this study, parents/guardians were involved in reporting student concerns. As a result, parents/guardians have shown themselves to be partners in maintaining safe living and learning environments for students. Therefore, recommendation eight is that parents/guardians are fully informed of the existence of TAMT, are encouraged to make reports, and are educated early about reporting procedures. In my opinion, the use of a parent office and the dean of students office are prime locations for concerned parents/guardians to call and make their reports.

Furthermore, student affairs divisions should encourage peer reporting. Mr. Ellis and Ms. Kiger saw value in directly involving students in the reporting process. In the case of Mr. Ellis, he asked those involved in the department’s student council to come to him if they were concerned about a peer. Ms. Kiger believed that students needed to know what a great role they could play in helping their peers by reporting questionable behavior. In addition, she thought it was important that students learn more about what the TAMT was. She said:

Students probably see more signs of behavior issues than they are aware of.…. I'd like to get students more involved in the process and more aware that this is not necessarily just a punitive situation, that it is sort of, again, just another resource for all of us.

As a result, recommendation nine is that student affairs do more to educate students about what the TAMT is and how to make a referral. Furthermore, it is likely that students will turn to their peers when they are in distress. Therefore, equipping students with vital information about
the TAMT could increase a distressed student’s willingness to receive help from the team. Student must hear that the TAMT cares about students and is a prevention tool.

Finally for institutions that have branch campuses, the student affairs divisions must develop a plan that support branch campuses. Although branch campuses may not offer all of the services of a main campus, there needs to be an established process for student concerns to be reported and investigated. Furthermore, all campuses should have one system to document student concerns in case a student takes classes on more than one campus. Therefore, recommendation ten is that branch campus staff members are trained and able to report their questionable student concerns just like those individuals on the main campus. In addition, incidents should be investigated and handled in a manner that is comparable to what is done on the main campus.

**Academic affairs**

This study also has implications for academic affairs as well. Equipping faculty members and academic administrators with the skills needed to identify a student in crisis is especially important because faculty members in this study overwhelmingly conveyed that reporting concerning student behavior was a part of their job responsibilities. Yet, they often were unsure about what needed to be reported. A few faculty members, Mr. Spalding and Ms. Paine, commented that their graduate programs had taught them about their subject matter; but did not teach them how to meet the holistic needs of students. Furthermore, Mr. McMurtry, Ms. Williams, and Mr. Wise insisted that they were not “a psychologist” to explain their lack of training in identifying student behavioral problems. Likewise, Mr. Tucker suggested that faculty members occasionally be reminded of the toll that the college transition had on students because he believed faculty members forget sometimes. Based on these responses, the BU faculty
members in this study understood their limitations and did not want to overstep their professional boundaries. Yet, students see the role of faculty members quite differently. Participants in the study disclosed that students often view faculty members as authority figures that they trust with details of their academic and personal lives. Therefore, members of student affairs and the TAMTs should work with faculty members as well as other members of the university community to equip them with the tools needed to identify concerning student behavior. Continuing to employ a silo-approach in higher education is a disservice to the entire campus.

Being student-centered is a value that many institutions tout (Kezar & Lester, 2009). However, if institutions are to live up to their student-centered philosophy, it is vital that faculty members become fully engaged in the process. Now that a noticeable gap in faculty members’ educational preparation has been identified, it is imperative that we address it. Hence, recommendation eleven is to design a course that addresses working in higher education while teaching and interacting with 21st century students. The course should include multicultural competencies, educating faculty members about the characteristics of today’s students, indicators that a student might be in distress, the use of various teaching approaches, classroom management, how to address classroom disruptions, faculty rights, campus resources, emergency procedures, and various approaches to communicating with students.

Since crisis prevention is one of the goals of the TAMT, early intervention is critical. Therefore, the role that faculty members play in helping to identify students in distress is necessary. Hence, the semester or quarter course could be included in the academic curriculum of graduate programs or be provided as a professional development opportunity for current faculty members. However, if a universal class cannot be achieved, then individual institutions should develop their own course. The course could be taken within the first two years of being
employed and then every five years thereafter as a continuing education credit, as suggested by
the literature on the reassessing of the tenure process (Burgan, 2006). Faculty members should
not be underprepared and students do not deserve to be underserved. Based on the perceptions
gained from this study, it is imperative that academic affairs executives address deficiencies in
the information and training provided to faculty members.

In addition to being prepared for teaching on campus and the internet, it is not uncommon
for faculty members to accompany students abroad. Mr. Marcell, an academic administrator,
disclosed that he rigorously prepared faculty members who traveled abroad with students. He
held meetings where he reviewed expectations and protocol as well as distributed business cards
in preparation for the trip. In addition, students also were educated about the process. Mr.
Marcell felt that all of this was necessary as he posited, “We are very responsible for what goes
on, more responsible for what goes on abroad because it is our program than here because we
have student affairs and other people in charge.” Barbara Lindeman, the director of study abroad
at the University of Missouri echoed Mr. Marcell’s comments. She expressed, “It’s really
important faculty members[who accompany/work with students abroad] understand they have
responsibilities beyond those they have leading a course on campus” (as cited in Fischer, 2007).

I question why there should be such a difference in how rigorously information is
delivered to faculty members working with students on campus and abroad. In my opinion, the
goals for on campus and study abroad students are largely the same: to keep students safe, be a
resource when needed, and provide an environment that is conducive to learning. Therefore,
recommendation twelve is that academic affairs adopt some of the practices used for faculty
working with study abroad programs as standard practices for working with students who attend
classes on campus or online. Therefore, the training to learn these practices should be intentional, informative, and done collaboratively with student affairs.

Finally, the department chair training offered to the academic administrator at BU appeared to be very useful. As a result, recommendation thirteen is that academic affairs divisions create opportunities to train department chairs on how to effectively lead their departments and support faculty members. Providing an opportunity for academic administrators to learn and support one another in a safe environment is very important.

TAMT

Although the TAMT appeared to be active and was perceived to be functioning and respected among faculty members who had been involved in a referral, this study had implications for the team as well. For instance, follow-up communication seemed to be sporadic. Some faculty members received follow-up communication via telephone or in passing on campus from the TAMT administrators. Others received none. Surprisingly, faculty members generally were confident that the TAMT would have notified them if need be. Yet, a faculty member and academic administrators, Ms. Houston, Ms. Mackie, and Mr. Tucker, expressed a desire to receive follow-up communication to close the loop on a particular case. Follow-up was also an area that the TAMT administrator Holcomb admitted needed improvement. Therefore, recommendation fourteen is that the TAMTs use a case manager to complete the follow-up task. If a case manager is not available, TAMTs should designate someone to follow up on cases to limit missteps or misunderstandings. One approach might be to send status updates regarding the case to those who made the referral. The status update could indicate that the case is still being investigated or has concluded. Additionally, academic administrators should be included on
follow-up correspondence to keep them abreast of the situation and so that they can adequately support their faculty members as the process progresses.

Recommendation fifteen is that TAMTs re-evaluate how information about the teams and their functions are conveyed (Sokolow et al., 2011). Although the BU 2011-2012 division of student affairs annual report reflected that BU’s TAMT provided thirteen workshops throughout the year, the team should consider providing more workshops and more concise literature because faculty members thought the current documents were too long. Interviews also revealed that information delivered via email and hand-outs informed only a portion of the faculty members. Others received information, which they often characterized as brief, via new faculty orientation, faculty meetings, or department meetings.

Based on conversations with the TAMT administrators, they accepted that they cannot reach every faculty member. Mr. Holcomb also suspected that senior faculty members might be the group that they may be missing the most. Therefore, TAMTs should find ways to engage senior faculty members who would not attend new faculty orientation and may be disinterested in learning about resources. In addition, TAMTs should develop innovative, creative, and concrete ways to educate and train faculty members who consider identifying students in distress as one of their job responsibilities. As a result, this will address one of the concerns Mr. Grant, a TAMT administrator at BU, had regarding how the TAMT had to re-establish itself each time there was a school shooting.

As an example, TAMTs should consider producing a series of “What Would You Do Videos?” Scenarios could be videotaped using students from departments of theater and/or fine arts. Then faculty members could formulate their responses while watching the video. Afterwards, they could continue playing the video to see the suggested ways to address the
concern. These videos could be shared throughout the academic year. This approach encourages faculty members to become involved in the learning process by testing their skills.

In addition, TAMTs’ should re-evaluate the literature they distribute. Although, TAMT provided information in various paper forms, one of the pieces of feedback that I heard from the faculty members in this study was a desire to have concise communication shared with them. Ms. Colbert, academic administrator, suggested providing faculty members with literature multiple times each semester via a post card, a bookmark, etc. The information would be more condensed, serve as a refresher for some, and would address how newcomers such as late hires, mid-semester hires, and adjunct instructors get the information.

Next, TAMTs could address issues with its name recognition and broaden individuals’ understanding of what the team does. In my study, faculty members and administrators constantly associated the TAMT and the dean of students’ staff as one entity. As a matter of fact, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Marcell, academic administrators, did not know the official name of the team. The team should consider hosting a safe community week early in the fall semester and various other programs throughout the academic year in an effort to convey what the TAMT is, what it means to be a member of a campus community, and the importance of reporting questionable behavior. The week could include a guest column in the student newspaper, a broadcast from the campus radio station, table tents in the dining facility, and a guest speaker who lived through one of the recent school shootings to name a few. In an effort to get students involved in the festivities, TAMTs could have a competition that allowed students to create social norms ad and/or a public service announcement campaign about the team and reporting statistics. I suggest that the TAMT employ a number of ways to publicize who they are, not only to faculty members, but the campus community.
During my observations of the TAMT meetings at BU, I noticed that getting all of the TAMT members together, especially during busy times of the year, could be difficult because upper level administrators were leading their own areas and fulfilling duties associated with their primary positions. Fortunately, the BU’s team continued to meet when members were absent. Therefore, recommendation sixteen is that TAMTs adopt a practice that would embrace having a replacement for each person situated around the table. These “second stream” TAMT members would be trained and allowed to observe the team in action over a period of time. Then when a TAMT member was absent, that area would have a representative who was knowledgeable of the TAMT, knowledgeable about the department in which they worked, and was ready to participate in the decision making process. Furthermore, having a backup for each TAMT member would offset any disruptions, should a team member leave, because the team would already have a representative in place from that area until an official team member was named.

Recommendation seventeen is that the TAMTs collect and publish statistical data associated with each year’s cases. Although the TAMT is mentioned and assessed in the BU division of student affairs’ annual report, a brief stand-alone report touting the TAMT’s accomplishment would bring attention to TAMT in a different manner. Sharing the kinds of cases that were handled, the number of reports made using various reporting mechanisms, which populations (faculty, staff, and students) made reports, and general outcomes would help the university community better conceptualize the enigma that some participants believed only could be understood when personally experienced. In addition to the facts that can be generated via a database, I suggest that the TAMTs collect data from those who submitted referrals and those who were referred to assess the overall process. Gathering this kind of data will aid the TAMTs
in improving services, gauging satisfaction, and better managing the expectations that others have of the group.

Recommendation eighteen is that the TAMTs pass along cases as needed. Once the TAMTs have completed an initial investigation of the matter, the chairpersons should make a determination regarding what should stay with the TAMTs, what should go elsewhere, and what should be handled simultaneously by the TAMT and another entity. I caution the TAMTs about intervening in cases that clearly should be sent elsewhere. If a student’s behavior is more of a conduct case, the TAMT should not retain that case. It should be submitted to the conduct office immediately.

Finally, administrative staff members are often the frontline individuals in any administrative office setting, grounds staff, and custodians. Mr. Spalding, a faculty member, consulted with an administrative staff member before submitting his report. Furthermore, Ms. Williams, a faculty member, recalled a situation in which an administrative assistant was the recipient of inappropriate behavior from a student. As a result, recommendation nineteen is that the TAMTs provide training for frontline personnel like administrative staff because they come in contact with students when they panic, as they wait, and often overhear conversations students have on the telephone and with others.

Implications for Policy

Based on the data collected at BU, the TAMT is needed, being utilized, respected, and has facilitated a successful working experience between academic and student affairs divisions. The TAMT did not demonstrate successful intra-organizational collaboration in higher education because both groups were not equally invested. However, the faculty experiences and perceptions of BU’s TAMT could influence future policy decisions.
The findings of this study regarding TAMTs may influence three policies that include: (a) gun control, (b) background checks, and (c) mental health reform. Each of these individual issues is already a hotly debated topic in its own right. However, it has become increasingly evident how intricately these three issues are intertwined. Unfortunately, the tragic school shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut where twenty children and six adults lost their lives was a reminder that the conversation is far from over (Bidwell, 2013). Consequently, President Obama has rallied behind legislation that will curtail gun violence (Bidwell, 2013; Shered, 2013).

**Gun control**

Conversations surrounding the second amendment and how it should be interpreted on and off the campuses of higher education abound. Thompson et al. (2009) asserted, “Research has found that higher rates of firearm possession and ownership are associated with more acts of violence and higher rates of homicide and suicide” (p. 248). There are supporters and opponents to gun control. Although the constitution gave citizens the right to bear arms, state laws determine how guns laws will be enforced (Alger, 2008). Moreover, state laws have made it more difficult for higher education institutions to enact policies against allowing weapons on campus. Yet, many individuals associated with college campuses vehemently oppose giving students’ permission to bring guns into the learning environment of educational institutions (Bidwell, 2013). Alger (2008) declared, “When it comes to the regulation of weapons, the context of higher education is not the same as that of hunting, or even city or rural life. In academe the context is meant to protect vigorous, open, safe debate.” In addition, more than 300 college presidents argued in support of banning guns on campus by signing a petition that asked that rational gun safety measures be enacted (Schall, 2013). Furthermore, gun control supporters
have proposed that magazine capacity be limited, gun show loopholes be eradicated, and assault rifles be outlawed for civilians (Bidwell, 2013; Kingkade, 2012). That legislation has not passed to date.

There has been no federal research conducted on gun violence and gun laws in the United States in the last 17 years; but, in January 2013, President Obama asked congress to fund a Center for Disease Control study on the causes and prevention of gun violence (Ohlheiser, 2013). Nevertheless, in the absences of recent federally funded research data, the gun control issue has strong supporters and opposers. Those that support gun control often cite that there never has been a recorded case on a college campus in which someone was able to thwart an attack because they brandished a weapon (Olson, 2012). Another argument used in support of gun control is that generally students and faculty members view campuses as secure and safe places (Olson, 2012). Others who support gun control on campus realize that suicide plagues college campuses more so than homicides. Therefore, placing guns into the hands of college students may increase the suicide rate because guns would be readily available to them (Olson, 2012). As a matter of fact, Olson (2012) disclosed about this disparity with suicide rates, “Some reports have indicated that the campus homicide rate is about one in one million students. In contrast, colleges have an abysmal record when it comes to suicide, which is 100 times as frequent as homicides.”

On the other hand, gun control opponents had reasons why the second amendment should be upheld. First, many believed that gun control laws would be a violation of an individual’s second amendment rights. The second reason was that there was no clause in the second amendment that allowed college campuses to be an exception to where an individual is allowed to bear arms (Olson, 2012). The third reason given by some was that gun control was the
government’s attempt to take guns away from citizens (Shered, 2013). Fourth, gun control opponents believed that citizens should have the opportunity to protect themselves (Olson, 2012). Consequently, the second amendment debate and recent legislation has sparked increased support and membership for the National Rifle Association (NRA). The 2013 NRA annual meeting held in Houston, Texas was projected to have 80,000 people attending, 600 credentialed media, a possible 2016 presidential contender, and protesters (Korte, 2013). This would be the largest conference attendance to date.

This study found that faculty members at BU were not overly concerned about the possibility of students being allowed to have guns on campus because the attempt had been blocked by the state legislature. However, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Marcell indicated that faculty members have taken notice and are following the matter in the media. On the other hand, Ms. Kiger shared that she was very concerned and that she would leave her position at the institution if students were allowed to carry weapons. Ms. Kiger is a veteran instructor and an involved mentor for those that she supervises. If she left the institution, it would be a loss felt on many levels. Policymakers must take into account how allowing weapons on campus could change the fabric of higher education and could result in the loss of strong, competent educators as well as possibly increasing student suicide rates, homicide rates, accidental injuries, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

**Background checks**

While the gun control debate lingers on, so does the debate regarding background checks for those purchasing weapons. Although background checks would apply to only those seeking gun ownership moving forward, it could serve as one means of lessening future attacks (Shered, 2013). Yet, those that oppose this measure proclaim that the recent mass shootings involved
mentally ill individuals who had no criminal history. Therefore, they would have gone undetected in a criminal background check and would have been granted permission to purchase a weapon (Shered, 2013). Although background checks could limit the number of weapons sold illegally and limit who is able to sell weapons, background checks will not deter criminals or individuals with mental illness from acquiring weapons.

Although the name of an individual suffering from mental illness may appear on a list that does not allow them to make a gun purchase, there is a way to circumvent the system. A person can purchase enough parts online to assemble his/her own weapon (Cavnar, 2013). This was the case with the Santa Monica shooter, John Zawahri (Wilson, Levs, & Martinez, 2013). As a juvenile, Zawahri was hospitalized for mental health concerns back in 2006 (Wilson et al., 2013). As a result, he was unable to purchase a weapon locally in 2011 (Cavnar, 2013). Hence, the California background checking system worked. However, he later purchased gun parts online and assembled an assault weapon without the need for any background check (Cavnar, 2013). Zawahri went on a shooting spree on June 7, 2013 that began at his father’s home and ended on the campus of Santa Monica College. The shooting resulted in the deaths of six people, including the gunman.

Furthermore, institutions of higher education are choosing to or are being asked to perform background checks by agencies that allow the students to participate in practical application at their facilities (Farnsworth & Springer, 2006). Various types of background checks exist such as “city, county, state, and federal” and online (Farnsworth & Springer, 2006, p. 148). Farnsworth and Springer (2006) found that background checks in higher education “focused on the need to protect the public and the legality of denying admissions” (p. 149). Once a blemish is found during a background check, a clear and transparent process should be in place that
outlines next steps. For example, Farnsworth and Springer (2006) discovered that, although a
criminal history was indicated on a background check, some nursing programs admitted students
because there was no state law forbidding it. The use of background checks for students in
college raised a number of questions such as what will be done with background information,
how frequently should background checks be performed, how are background checks paid for,
how is the student notified of the results both favorable and unfavorable, what educational
alternatives are made available to the student if their background check is unfavorable, and is the
institution breaking any legal or privacy laws when conducting these checks (Farnsworth &
Springer, 2006). The answers to these questions appear to vary by institution.

Therefore, recommendation twenty is that we adopt a system of universal background
checks for those who look to purchase weapons online and in person. We must do more to ensure
we have taken every measure to address the gun control problem in America. Furthermore,
recommendation twenty-one is that all institutions of higher education adopt, publicize, and
adhere to periodic background checks for all public service majors such as nursing, primary and
secondary education, and social work prior to them observing or serving at any facilities,
especially where minors are present.

Mental health care policies

Mental health care in the United States appears to be an understaffed field of work that
has an ever growing population. When assessing mental health care staffing in the United States,
Schwartz (2013) reported, “According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 55% of
counties lack a practicing psychologist, social worker, or psychiatrist. The result is that on
average, mental health patients go more than two years before ever receiving treatment.”
Surprisingly, we have an electronic tool called the National Instant Criminal Background Check
System (NICS) that would allow states to upload mental health information into a national database (Schwartz, 2013). Use of this system would increase communication between mental health care officials and the police. Unfortunately, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) prohibits some states from sharing information with NICS (Schwartz, 2013).

Nowadays, some individuals argue that fixing the broken mental health system will be easier to address and resolve than attempting to regulate gun control (Schwartz, 2013). For example, Blaec Lammers had a history of mental illness and was voluntarily checked into mental health facilities seven times (Doane, 2013). Each time Lammers was committed he received a new diagnosis about his condition and new medication (Doane, 2013). The different drugs often intensified Lammer’s homicidal thoughts which once resulted in him visiting a Wal-Mart with a butcher knife in hopes of attacking someone in the back of the store (Doane, 2013). In November, Lammer returned to Wal-Mart and purchased an AR-15 assault rifle (Doane, 2013). He was able to do so because he had never been involuntarily committed; therefore, his background check indicated no sign of a mental health concern. His mother was tipped off about the purchase when she found a receipt for his gun and ammunition purchase (Doane, 2013). Although Lammer’s mother was worried about the safety of her son, she was also worried about the safety of others so she decided to contact the police to inform them that her son had a weapon that he should not have in his possession (Doane, 2013). The police later arrested Lammers and he confessed to a planned shooting in Wal-Mart and possibly the movie theater. Although Lammer’s mother was attempting to protect her son, she had not intended for him to be jailed. He has been charged with three felonies (Doane, 2013). Lammer’s mother understands her son
needed help but does not believe that prison is the place he will receive the mental health assistance he needs.

In Lammer’s situation, some might say that the system failed him in a number of ways. He had not obtained a consistent diagnosis, was not provided the long-term care that he needed, and was arrested when addressing his mental health concerns would have been better way to address the concern. Unfortunately, his family is caught in the middle because their attempt to save his life has resulted in him being jailed.

Addressing mental health care is very important to the success of the higher education system and the students enrolled. Although we have acknowledged an increase in the number of students with mental illnesses in college, funding and personnel have not been increased in a manner that matches the need. This is a major issue. In an effort to strengthen the argument for increased funding and personnel, I wonder whether the time has come for us to ask students to voluntarily disclose information concerning their mental and emotional health as well as their alcohol and drug conditions. Of course, a plan would have to be devised regarding where the information would be housed, who would have access to the information, how the information would be used, and a determination on whether there is increased liability because an institution had information that could have contributed to understanding how foreseeable an event could be. In my opinion, it is better to have an understanding and prepare for potential student concerns rather than be caught completely off-guard when something happens. Therefore, recommendation twenty-two is that a disclosure process be created that allows students to share emotional and mental diagnosis as well as drug and alcohol concerns without penalty.

Furthermore, Schwartz (2013) reported, “In nearly every mass shooting in recent memory, the mental health warning signs were there: Adam Lanza in Newtown, James Holmes
in Aurora, Seung-Hui Cho at Virginia Tech, and Jared Loughner who shot Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords” (para. 9). Therefore, it is incumbent upon higher education administrators and policy makers to create early alert programs that will work to identify people in crisis before circumstances escalate to the tragedies we have witnessed in recent years.

Therefore, recommendation twenty-three is that early alert programs are established in primary, secondary, postsecondary and society in general. Early intervention is a key component of addressing the mental health crisis we face as a nation. We must learn more about the students we serve and find innovative ways to help them address their concerns before those issues escalate.

One area that an early alert system should address is reducing the suicide rate. In an interview, Gary Pavela stated, “Among all the issues that campuses need to pay attention to, there ought to be a campus–cultural realization that suicide prevention is violence prevention.... fund your suicide-prevention program because it’s right up there at the top of the list” (Hoover, 2008a). If suicide is more of a concern than homicide, we should work to address the increasing suicide rates among students at institutions of higher education. Shadick and Akhter (2013) reported that as institutions of higher education become more diverse, the approaches used to reach students who may be suicidal must change. Although non-white students have been found to be more distressed and suicidal, there are others areas of diversity that must be addressed like ability, sexual orientation, and bullying because of alleged differences (Shadick & Akther, 2013). Furthermore, it is important to understand why some groups are opposed to receiving counseling (Shadick & Akhter, 2013). For example, some groups think that sharing their problems with non-family members is looked down upon. It is equally important to understand the impact that prejudice, bullying, and discrimination have on groups (Shadwick & Ahtker, 2013). In addition,
it is important to grasp that while westerners may believe that suicide is unacceptable, some cultures may encourage suicide in situations such as rape or engaging in behavior that might disgrace one’s family. Therefore, recommendation twenty-four is that greater strides be taken to address the suicide rates of a more diverse college student population who often need additional support and attention.

The data from this study can aid in the overall mental health conversation. The study could shed light on how faculty members come to know about a student’s mental illness, what caused faculty members to be involved, and if faculty members noticed that student’s condition worsened over time. This study can also indicate how faculty members felt, emotionally and with regard to safety, when dealing with the student matter.

**Title II/III of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

In addition to contributing to conversation about gun control, background checks, and mental health, the results of this study can also impact another law. Although being suicidal is not considered a disability, the root cause(s) of being suicidal often is. As a result in 2011, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) altered the language of Title II which governs public institutions and Title III for private institutions. Specifically, the language was changed regarding direct threats (Schuster, Lewis, Swinton, & Van Brunt, 2013). It once included harm to self or others and now only includes harm to others (Schuster et al., 2013). Now direct threat as defined in Title II is “a significant risk to the health or safety of others that cannot be eliminated by a modification of policies, practices or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services as provided in § 35.139.” Students cannot be discriminated against for harming themselves. As a result, students may not be involuntarily removed from an institution based on self-harm or suicidal behaviors (Schuster et al., 2013). This has caused great concern in the higher education
community because many institutions must re-word policies and re-formulate procedures (Schuster et al., 2013).

For example if a student living in a residence hall has attempted suicide, the student cannot be involuntarily withdrawn from the institution by administrators. However, the student could be moved out of that living space or asked to not live on campus for the sake of limiting disruption to the community. One must also consider that although a student may have suicidal ideations, they may be able to complete schoolwork. Institutions must be careful not to handle incidents involving students who might harm themselves in an arbitrary, capricious, and/or discriminatory manner. However, the cause of the student’s suicidal thoughts or harm to self also needed to be addressed.

As higher education administrators struggle to make sense of the new law, this study demonstrated how much faculty and administrators care about the well-being of all students. In addition, disruptions to the learning environment can have grave consequences for all community members. Mr. McMurtry and Mr. Anderson spoke of student situations that lasted for quite some time and resulted in their continual involvement in the case. This study offers policymakers an opportunity to see firsthand how a student’s desire to harm him/herself or others impacts the community. Unfortunately, the revision of Title II has left some administrators feeling as though they are being forced to work with a student whose needs surpass the services that the institution can provide. Many in higher education do not see this as being fair to the student in distress or the campus community. We do not want administrators to create their own loopholes for dismissing a student exhibiting questionable behavior. More importantly, the law should be fair to all engaged in the higher education environment and that includes faculty, staff, and other students.
Implications for Future Research

While examining the findings, a few recommendations for future research emerged. Continuing to research collaborations between academic and student affairs divisions and faculty members’ involvement in the TAMTs is very important. Acquiring new information will help us proactively address matters rather than be forced to reactively address concerns. In addition, other future research topics are: (a) how best to address inappropriate behaviors that occurred in an online class, (b) exploration of the multicultural competence of those who make reports to TAMT, and (c) the effects of tragedy on students pursuing higher education.

Ms. Houston and Ms. Colbert each commented that they had encountered students who exhibited questionable behavior and/or had threatened a professor via email. In Ms. Colbert’s case, the student was enrolled in an online course and therefore had a great deal of anonymity. If a student takes mostly online courses at an institution, little is known about his/her behavior and in some cases his/he appearance. Ms. Colbert, an academic administrator, helped an instructor address the inappropriate behavior of an online student. The student wanted an extension on an assignment and was acting very aggressively. It was later brought to Ms. Colbert’s attention that the student had acted similarly in another class. The instructor’s discomfort with the student’s email exchanges were evident to Ms. Colbert when the instructor commented that “she was glad she had security on campus [at her primary employment site] because she was worried the student would just show up.”

As online classes become more prevalent, new ways to address policy violations and inappropriate behavior must be addressed. Jones and Scott (2012) reported that inappropriate behavior in an online environment is merely another facet of classroom incivility. Technology is facilitating inappropriate behavior aimed at another person or aimed at an entire classroom
environment (Jones & Scott, 2012). Often the behavior is perpetrated by someone who would not attempt a disruption in person (Jones & Scott, 2012). Unfortunately, the inappropriate behavior can effect motivation, impact learning, and could render a faculty member ineffective if the behavior is not addressed immediately and appropriately (Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). As a result, a study that explored best practices for addressing student behavior that has occurred electronically would be appropriate.

Institutions of higher education are admitting more diverse student (Goldrick-Jab & Cook, 2011; Torres & Walbert, 2010). As a result, faculty, staff, and students must be able to relate to the many cultural differences represented in their campus community. However, acquiring multicultural competency requires that an individual accept that they have biases and assumptions about individuals from other cultures (Sue & Sue, 2008). As a result, this means that an individual must seek to learn about the worldviews of others (Sue & Sue, 2008). Therefore, becoming multiculturally competent is not an easy task. I think there should be research that explores the multicultural competence of those reporting students to the TAMTs. Are those who report to TAMT, reporting because of the bias the feel towards another group? The findings may help those in higher education better understand how to support diverse students and educate faculty members.

Finally, the influx of students with mental health concerns contributed to the creation of the TAMTs. Now, I question how the number of student cases will increase or decrease as a result of calamities both man-made and those created by Mother Nature. Hurricane Katrina, Superstorm Sandy, tsunamis, Virginia Tech tragedy, Colorado movie theater shooting, Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, the re-integration of veterans into society after combat, survivors of abuse and the effects of the recent recession affected many school aged and college students. As
students who have experienced tragedy matriculate through college, it would be wise to ascertain how these traumatic occurrences have affected them and their higher education experience. Not only could this inform how to support this growing population of students, it might add to research on resilience which explores how external pressures and events can have profound effects and consequences for those experiencing it (McMurtrie, 2013). Collecting this information may help the TAMT administrators identify additional patterns. As a result, future research could lead to programs that might offset some of the profound effects associated with experiencing tragedy.

A number of recommendations for higher education and policy were proposed throughout this chapter. Table four details all of the recommendations. Each recommendation is listed below by number and description.

Table 4 Summarization of recommendations for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation #1</th>
<th>Institutions should solicit the assistance of licensed individuals employed at the institution who are capable of making assessments regarding a student’s mental stability when there is a shortage of qualified personnel in the counseling center or health center.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation #2</td>
<td>Institutions should implement an experiential learning opportunity for students majoring in clinical psychology and psychiatry by providing them an opportunity to make student assessments as part of the academic program curriculum under the supervision of a faculty member.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #3</td>
<td>Counseling center professionals should provide more training opportunities to faculty members, staff, and students on how to identify students who may be in distress.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #4</td>
<td>The dean of students office should employ a case manager(s) whose sole or primary responsibility is to handle the logistical pieces associated with the team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation #5</td>
<td>Academic and student affairs divisions should take greater strides to educate faculty members about laws and statutes such as FERPA and Clery Act as they relate to academic and non-academic matters within a college environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation #6</td>
<td>Divisions of student affairs should explore ways to find external funding that will enable them to employ additional student affairs personnel to help address the growing number of student concerns.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #7</td>
<td>Each TAMT should remain in close communication with their institution’s legal counsel and watch very closely the details and outcomes of incidents involving students exhibiting questionable behavior at other institutions.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #8</td>
<td>Parents/guardians should be fully informed of the existence of TAMT, be encouraged to make reports, and educated on reporting procedures as early as orientation.</td>
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<td>Divisions of student affairs should do more to educate students about what the TAMT is and how to make a referral.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #10</td>
<td>Branch campus staff members should be trained and able to report their questionable student concerns just like those individuals on the main campus.</td>
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<td>Recommendation #11</td>
<td>Administrators in academic affairs should design a course that addresses working in higher education while teaching and interacting with 21st century students. The course should include multicultural competencies, educating faculty members about the characteristics of today’s students, indicators that a student might be in distress, the use of various teaching approaches, classroom management, how to address classroom disruptions, faculty rights, campus resources, emergency procedures, and various approaches to communicating with students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation #19</td>
<td>TAMTs should provide training for frontline personnel like administrative staff because they come in contact with students when they panic, as they wait, and often overhear conversations students have on the telephone and with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recommendation #20</td>
<td>A system of universal background checks should be adopted for those who look to purchase guns online and in person.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation #21</td>
<td>All institutions of higher education adopt, publicize, and adhere to background checks for all public service majors such as nursing, primary and secondary education, and social work prior to them observing or serving at any facilities, especially where minors are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation #22</td>
<td>Create a disclosure process that allows students to disclose emotional and mental diagnosis as well as drug and alcohol concerns without penalty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation #23</td>
<td>Early alert programs should be established for in primary, secondary, postsecondary and society in general. Early intervention is a key component to addressing the mental health crisis we face as a nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation #24</td>
<td>Institutions of higher education should take greater strides to address the suicide rates of a more diverse college student population who often need additional support and attention.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Summary**

This qualitative collective case study explored faculty members’ experiences and perceptions of a TAMT at one southeastern public institution, BU. Nineteen one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted. All interviews were digitally recorded and later transcribed. Three themes emerged from speaking to TAMT administrators, faculty members, and academic administrators. Those themes were: (a) Collaboration at BU, (b) I Didn’t Grasp the TAMT at First, and (c) It takes a Village So Count Me In.

The Kezar and Lester (2009) stage model for collaboration in higher education was the chosen conceptual framework for this study. Although the TAMT facilitated the development of a very effective process to report questionable student behavior between academic and student affairs divisions at BU, the TAMT was not an example of intra-organizational collaboration because the spirit of collaboration had not be been accomplished. Each division was not invested in the complete process. Instead, each had their assigned tasks. Furthermore, I assert that based
on the TAMT’s setup at BU, intra-organizational collaboration between the two divisions may not have been necessary. However, the success of the team and its intentional interactions possibly could have laid the foundation for making this a collaborative endeavor in the future.

As higher education faces educating a more diverse group of students who have pre-existing conditions or will develop psychological concerns while in college, we must learn how to support these students. We can no longer expect that previous services and teaching methods will work for them. In addition, early prevention seems to be key when addressing students with concerning behavior. The TAMT can be one of the tools used to address the questionable behavior of students; however, the campus community must be educated about the team’s benefits, care and prevention. TAMT also can help address behaviors that could become worse that if left unaddressed such as aggression and depression. We must find ways to de-stigmatize mental health care.

Although faculty members at BU have been able to report and then detach themselves from student concerns, there may come a time when more involvement is needed because the volume of concerns may have outpaced the personnel in the dean of students office and student affairs. This could provide an opportunity for more extensive cross training between the academic and student affairs units at institutions of higher education.

Finally, the recommendations and implications of this study were discussed. This study had implications for higher education, policy, and future research. The findings of this study could influence work in education and government.
LIST OF REFERENCES
REFERENCES


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WAPT News (2010, July 2). *Student comes to Dr. Neal-Vincent’s Rescue*. Jackson, MS: Hearst Television Inc.


Information About a Qualitative Research Study

Title: Managing Threats: Examining Intra-organizational Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Divisions

Investigator                   Advisor
Mignon N. Chinn     Dr. Amy Wells Dolan
Department of Leadership & Counselor     Department of Leadership & Counselor
Education, School of Education     Education, School of Education
219 Guyton Hall     219 Guyton Hall
University of Mississippi     University of Mississippi
662.259.2177     662.915.5710
mchinn@go.olemiss.edu     aewells@olemiss.edu

Description/Purpose
The purpose of this qualitative case study is to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university behavioral intervention team (BIT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. This phenomenon will be studied using one-on-one interviews with faculty members who have referred a student(s) to the BIT. For this research study, a faculty member will be considered to be a currently employed tenured, tenure track, or clinical professor. Furthermore, the researcher will speak with the chairperson of the BIT as well as any academic administrator, such as a dean or department chair, who has aided in the referral of a student. With permission, all interviews will be digitally recorded and later transcribed. In addition, the researcher will observe at least three meetings of the BIT. The researcher will in no way participate in these meetings and they will not be recorded. Lastly, the researcher will analyze relevant public documents regarding the BIT and institution.

Procedures
The participants will be interviewed in a private and confidential on campus location of their choosing. The duration of each interview is approximately 60 minutes. Participants’ identities will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms created by participants or the researcher. They will be asked a series of questions related to faculty perceptions of BITs as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic and student affairs division. The study will focus on the processes associated with your BIT experience, not the content specifics of the student referral. The interviews will be audio-recorded using two devices. Once interviews have been transcribed, each participant will be given an opportunity to review his/her transcript.
Risks/Discomforts and Benefits
During your individual interview, you will be asked to reflect and respond to questions regarding how you have been educated and trained to identify students in crisis. Moreover, the researcher will seek to hear about your interactions with the BIT on your campus so as to improve faculty participation in BITs generally. I do not anticipate any risks or discomfort; however, should you become emotionally distressed the researcher will allow you an opportunity to collect yourself.

Cost and Payments
The interview will take approximately one hour. Otherwise, there is no cost associated with this interview for the participant.

Confidentiality
Although some demographic information may be asked of participants, no identifying information will be used in this study to disclose individual participation or institutional setting. Pseudonyms will be used to further conceal your identity. All transcripts and research materials will be stored in a desk in a locked room for the duration of the study.

Right to Withdraw and Voluntary Participation
Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. If you would like to terminate your participation in this study, you may do so at anytime without penalty. Whether you choose to participate or to withdraw from the study, your decision will not affect your standing with your institution of employment, the Department of Leadership and Counselor Education and the University of Mississippi, and it will not cause you to lose any benefits to which you are entitled. You may notify me of your decision in person, via email at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or by phone at 662.259.2177.

IRB Approval
This study has been reviewed by the University of Mississippi’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study fulfills the human research subject protections obligations required by state and federal law and University policies. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a participant of research, please contact the IRB at 662.915.7482.

Questions
If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to contact me, Mignon Chinn, at 662.259.2177 or my advisor, Dr. Amy Wells Dolan, at 662.915.5710.
UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

Release of Rights to Written or Recorded Information

My signature below indicates that I release all rights, including copyright rights for the use of any recorded or written information that I provided during this study. With this release, I grant the University of Mississippi and the aforementioned researchers the permission to use, reproduce, copy, and distribute my words in whole or in part into derivative works without limitation. I indemnify and hold the University and the researchers harmless from any claims of infringement of copyright by any third party regarding my words. I agree that I will receive no further consideration and no royalty payments for the use of my words.

I understand that my participation is voluntary. My refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I understand that I may discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits.

Name: _______________________________________________         Date: ______________

Signature: ____________________________________________
Appendix B
Appendix B
The University of Mississippi Institutional Research Board Approval

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
102 Parnassus Hall
R.O. Box 967
University, MS 38677
Office 662-915-7482

August 22, 2012

Ms. Micron N. Chinn
Leadership and Counselor Education
University, MS 38677

Dr. Amy Wells Dolan
Leadership and Counselor Education
University, MS 38677

Dear Ms. Chinn and Dr. Wells Dolan:

This is to inform you that your application to conduct research with human participants, Managing Threats: Examining Intra-organizational Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Divisions (Protocol 13X-029), has been approved as Exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Please remember that all of The University of Mississippi's human participant research activities, regardless of whether the research is subject to federal regulations, must be guided by the ethical principles in The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research.

It is especially important for you to keep these points in mind:

- You must protect the rights and welfare of human research participants.

- Any changes to your approved protocol must be reviewed and approved before initiating those changes.

- You must report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (662) 915-7482.

Sincerely,

Diane W. Lindley
Coordinator, Institutional Review Board
Request to Amend an IRB Protocol

**Title:** Managing Threats: Examining intra-organizational Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Divisions

**Principal Investigator(s):** Mignon N. Chinn

**Protocol Number:** 13X-025  **Original Approval Date:** August 22, 2012

1. **Amendment type (check all that apply):**
   - [ ] Revision to currently approved protocol
   - [ ] Revision to currently approved consent form
   - [ ] Revision to survey or other instrument
   - [ ] Add study site
   - [ ] Add additional experimenter(s)
   - [ ] Other (e.g., advertisement)

2. **Effect on risks (check one):**
   - [X] This amendment does not increase risks to participants enrolled in the study.
   - [ ] This amendment does increase risks to participants enrolled in the study (provide Department Chair’s email for cc of approval notice: ___)

3. **Amendment request and justification:**
   Originally I defined faculty members for this study as tenured, tenure track, and clinical faculty members. I would like to expand my definition of faculty member to include instructors. This addendum will likely increase participant numbers as well as give me an opportunity to explore the experiences of an additional group of faculty members now known to refer students to the threat assessment and management team at the research institution.

4. **Is the PI a student?**
   - [ ] No
   - [X] Yes (provide Advisor’s email for cc of approval notice: ae_wells@olemiss.edu)

5. **The revised protocol, consent form, and/or other documents with changes highlighted should be sent electronically to irb@olemiss.edu. Include the protocol number in the subject line of your e-mail.**

   - [X] By checking this box, I certify that the information provided in the amendment is complete and correct. As Principal Investigator, I have the responsibility for the protection of the rights and welfare of the human participants, conduct of the research, and the ethical performance of the project. **DATE:** November 14, 2012

   **Return this form via email only to irb@olemiss.edu**

   **For IRB office use only:**

   **APPROVED: This signifies notification of IRB APPROVAL of the amendment described above.**

   **IRB Reviewer:** [Signature]  **Date:** 28 November 2012

   UK Institutional Review Board  **Oct. 2012**
Sample Letter to Gatekeeper

Name
Address
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear Dr. _______,

This letter serves as a follow up to our conversation on (date). As I stated, I am a doctoral student in Higher Education at The University of Mississippi. To complete the requirements for my Doctor of Philosophy, I am interested in conducting a study at ___________________________. The purpose of my qualitative case study is to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university threat assessment and management team (TAMT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. This is an area of research that has limited information of any kind. Collecting data at your institution will add to existing literature regarding threat assessment and management teams, student mental health issues, academic and student affairs collaboration, and faculty members’ perceptions of the TAMTs.

You have indicated that this is a study that you would support at your institution. As a result, I am requesting the following:

• That you assist me in contacting 12-16 tenured, tenure track, or clinical professors that have referred a student to the TAMT on your campus within the last four years. In that correspondence would you please inform them about my research study and that I am contacting them with your permission. Please share with them that I will contact each of them the following week to answer any questions and to set up a one hour interview on campus.

• Please provide contact information for the chairperson of the TAMT. I would like to schedule an interview time him/her as early on as possible. During my conversation with the TAMT chairperson, I will ask him/her to share the names of any deans or chairs of departments that have been involved in referring a student to the TAMT. If you would like to be involved in this process, please let me know.

• As a part of my study, I would like to observe your TAMT in action at least three times. During my conversation with the TAMT chairperson, I will ask him/her to inform me of the meeting date and time. I hope to plan my interview schedule around this meeting.

I have attached a copy of the Institutional Review Board approval from your institution as well as my institution. If you need additional information, please feel free to contact me at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or 662.259.2177. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Amy Wells Dolan at 662.915.5710 or aewells@olemiss.edu.
Again, it was a pleasure to speak with you. Thank you for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you in the future.

Sincerely,

Mignon N. Chinn

Enclosures
Appendix D
Appendix D

Script for Initial Telephone Conversation with a Faculty Member

Hello my name is Mignon Chinn. I am a doctoral student at The University of Mississippi. To complete the requirements for my Doctor of Philosophy, I am conducting a study. The purpose of my qualitative case study is to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university threat assessment and management team (TAMT) as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs at ________________.

TAMTs, also known as behavioral intervention teams, were in existence at some institutions in a formal and informal manner prior to the Virginia Tech tragedy on April 16, 2007. However, these committees have grown in number since then. The committees are often comprised of multi-disciplinary team members from academic and student affairs divisions. The amount of collaboration between academic and students affairs for TAMTs is often significant. As a result, I would like to explore how that collaboration is going at your institution by collecting the perceptions of faculty members.

I chose faculty members as the participants in this study for several reasons. First, the perceptions of faculty members have not been sought before regarding these teams. Second, more incidents of shootings are happening in academic settings such as buildings and classrooms with faculty members present. Lastly, this study does have an element of irony. In early colleges, faculty members were responsible for all facets of the university. Over time, faculty became more specialized in their fields of study and began to focus on teaching, research, and service. Now, faculty members are being asked to pay closer attention to the students in formal and informal settings and report those students who may be in crisis.

As someone who has referred a student to the TAMT on your campus, I am eager to hear about your experience. Participation in this study will require approximately an hour of your time and will be digitally recorded.

Do you have any questions about this study at this time? May I please schedule a time to interview on your campus? Can you please provide a confidential setting for this interview?

Your interview time is set for ________________ in ________________ building. I look forward to speaking with you. In the meantime, please feel free to contact me with any questions you may have at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or 662.259.2177.

Thanks again for speaking with me. Have a good day. Good bye.
Appendix E
Appendix E

Confirmation Email to Faculty Members

Date

Name
Address
City, State Zip Code

Dear __________,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. I am excited to have an opportunity to hear your experiences.

Your interview has been scheduled for (DATE and TIME). The one hour on campus interview will be conducted at (location). With your consent, the interview will be digitally recorded on two devices. Your name will not be disclosed in this study. All data collected will be stored in a locked desk inside a locked room. Only the researcher has the key to the desk. If you have additional information to share after the interview, you are encouraged to contact me.

You will be asked to provide a pseudonym once you arrive for your interview. In addition, I will be taking notes during the interview. The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of the college and university TAMT as a model of intra-organizational collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. Before we begin the interview, I will ask that you sign a consent form. I have attached a copy of that form for your review.

Following your interview, the information gathered will be transcribed. I will send you a copy of the transcript. At that time, feel free to add or clarify any information as you see fit. In addition, I may contact you if I need any clarification. Later, all transcripts will be analyzed for themes. I will share those themes with you once I have completed the study.

Again, your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw consent or terminate your participation at any time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 662.259.2177 or via email at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu. In addition, you may contact my advisor, Dr. Amy Wells Dolan at 662.915.5710 or aewells@olemiss.edu.

Sincerely,

Mignon N. Chinn

Enclosure
Appendix F
INTRODUCTION
Hello/good morning/ good afternoon, my name is Mignon Chinn. I am a doctoral student in
Higher Education at the University of Mississippi. Thank you so much for agreeing to spend
some time speaking with me today. Your interview should take approximately 60 minutes and
will be recorded using two devices. I will ask you a series of questions.

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability. Stop me at any time you are feeling
uncomfortable or have a question. I will be taking notes during your interview. Questions will
center on process, not content. Again your participation is completely voluntary.

Before we begin, I would like review the information sheet and the release form you received a
while ago via email.

(READ THROUGH THE CONSENT FORM TOGETHER)

Now that we have discussed the documents, do you have any question? (IF NONE) Please sign
and date the release form at this time.

Now that we have taken care of all of the housekeeping items, let’s begin the interview. You will
be asked to choose a pseudonym. Once you have share it with me, I will use that name
throughout your interview. The first couple of questions will be a demographic information
about you.

I will now begin the recorders…
Faculty Interview Questions

Background Information

Date ______________                        Time  ______________

Pseudonym of Interviewee  __________________________________

How many classes do you currently teach?
   In what department(s)?

Are you tenured, tenure track, or clinical faculty

Number of years you have been employed in higher education?   ______

Number of years you have been at this institution.            ______
   What others positions have you held at this institution?

How many referrals you have made to the threat assessment and management team (TAMT) in the last four years?  ______

Have you ever served on the TAMT at this institution?  Yes or No
   If so, in what capacity have you served on the TAMT?

Questions:

1. Describe your involvement with students in general (inside and outside of class).
   a. How have you contributed to the persistence of the students you encounter through out-of-class experiences? (please provide examples)
   b. Is there an expectation that you have out-of-class experiences with students?
   c. If you discover that a student is having difficulty adjusting what do you do?

2. How did you first learn about the TAMT?

3. Why do you think that the TAMT came about at __________?

4. How necessary or important is the TAMT at this institution?

5. What, if any, structures/processes have been developed to help faculty and staff work with the TAMT?
6. What kind(s) of recognition has the TAMT received on this campus?

7. What type(s) of training have you received to help you identify students in crisis? Who hosted these trainings?

8. As a faculty member, how do you feel about the roles that you are being asked to undertake (spending time with students formally and informally and/or reporting concerning student behavior)?

9. How has university leadership demonstrated a commitment to this endeavor?

10. How would you describe your campus culture with regard to collaboration? Between student affairs and academic affairs? TAMT?

11. What kinds of re-organization or systemic changes did the institution undergo for this academic and student affairs collaboration?

Questions Regarding Referral Process

12. What was the student situation/problem that caused you to go to the TAMT?

13. How did you know that the student you reported to the TAMT needed assistance beyond what you could provide?

14. What did you expect the TAMT to do?

15. Please walk me through all elements of the process associated with your student referral to the TAMT.

   a. How did you report your concern? Was it written, told to someone in your department, etc.?

   b. What kind(s) of follow-up did you receive regarding your initial submission?

   c. How were you kept in the loop throughout the investigation?

   d. What kind of support did you receive throughout the process?

   e. How were you notified that the case had been concluded?

   f. Did the student ever find out that you reported him/her? If so, how did it affect your relationship with the student?

16. How would you characterize your overall experience with the TAMT?
17. As a result of your experience with the TAMT, please identify misconceptions you had.
18. Looking back, please explain things the TAMT did well when working with you.
19. What could the TAMT have done better?
20. What do you wish you had known (but did not know) about the TAMT at the time you were going through your student referral?
21. Please share one responsibility that you wish the TAMT would add to the services they already provide.
22. What additional question(s) do you think I should have asked you regarding this topic?

Are there any comments that you would like to make at this time?

Thank You

This concludes the questions that I have at this time. Do you have any questions for me?

Closing Remarks

Hearing you describe your experience has helped me beyond measure. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to study this phenomenon more closely. If you find that you have additional information to share, please feel free to contact me at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or 662.259.2177. Please take my business card as well. Once the transcripts have been typed, I will email your interview to you. At that time, please feel free to contact me to add or clarify any information.
TAMT Administrator Interview

Background Information

Date ______________                        Time ______________

Pseudonym of Interviewee __________________________

Level of Education Achieved __________________________

Do you currently teach any classes? Yes or No

If yes, in what department(s)?

Are you tenured, tenure track, clinical faculty, or staff

Part-time or full-time

Number of years you have been employed in higher education. ____

Number of years you have been at this institution. ____

What others positions have you held at this institution?

Number of years you have served as chairperson on the TAMT. ____

If any, in what other capacity have you served on the TAMT before becoming chairperson?

Has there been any other TAMT chairperson at this institution?

If so, please share the name(s) of past chairperson(s).

The number of referrals, if any, you have made to the TAMT. ____

Approximately how many cases does the TAMT hear each academic school year? ____

Please describe the structure/make up of your TAMT. Please include primary (core) and secondary (consulting) members.

How has your TAMT changed in structure over the last four years? And why?

Describe how your TAMT supports and/or interfaces with branch campuses.
Questions:

1. Tell me how you were selected to be the chairperson of the TAMT.
2. As chairperson, please describe your duties.
3. How would you describe your campus culture with regard to collaboration?
4. How would you describe the relationship between academic and student affairs units on this campus?
5. Talk to me about the history of the TAMT at __________.
6. What existing relationships aided in this group’s formation?
7. What external pressure(s) has aided in the formation of the institution’s TAMT?
8. How are members trained to serve on this committee?
9. How has the TAMT facilitated collaboration between faculty and student affairs divisions?
10. How are faculty members involved in the work that the TAMT does?
11. Walk me through the steps of the process once someone has reported a concern. (When do you bring other people into the meeting such as faculty?)
   a. When do you bring other people into the meeting such as faculty?
12. What situations/problems come before the TAMT?
13. What does the TAMT do well?
14. What could the TAMT do better?
15. Please share some of the biggest misconceptions regarding the TAMT at your institution.
16. Please share one responsibility that you wish the TAMT would add to the services they already provide.
17. As chairperson, how do you feel about the roles that you faculty members are being asked to take on (spending time with students formal and informal and/or reporting concerning student behavior)?

18. What networks have been beneficial to this TAMT over time?

19. How has university leadership demonstrated commitment to this endeavor?

20. What structures have been developed to help faculty and staff work with the TAMT?

21. What type(s) of training has the TAMT or the university offered or sponsored that teaches faculty members how to identity students in crisis? Who hosted these trainings?

22. What kind(s) of support or recognition has the TAMT received from other entities on campus?

23. If it was in your power, which relationships would you cultivate or strengthen to make the TAMT more effective?

24. What additional question(s) do you think I should have asked you regarding this topic?

Are there any comments you would like to make at this time?

Thank You

This concludes the questions that I have at this time. Do you have any questions for me?

Closing Remarks

Hearing you describe your experience has helped me beyond measure. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to study this phenomenon more closely. If you find that you have additional information to share, please feel free to contact me at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or 662.259.2177. Please take my business card as well. Once the transcripts have been typed, I will email your interview to you. At that time, please feel free to contact me to add or clarify any information.
Department Chair or Dean Interview

Background Information

Do you currently teach any classes?  Yes or No

If yes, in what department(s)?

Number of years you have been employed in higher education?  ______

Number of years you have been at this institution.  ______

What others positions have you held at this institution?

Describe for me your interaction with faculty members.

Have you ever served on the TAMT at this institution?  Yes or No

If so, in what other capacity have you served on the TAMT?

The number of referrals you have made or aided with to the TAMT.  ______

Questions:

1. How would you describe your campus culture with regard to collaboration?

2. How would you describe the relationship between academic and student affairs units on this campus?  TAMT?

3. When did you first learn about the TAMT?

4. Explain for me the training process for faculty members regarding recognizing a student in crisis.

   a. When are faculty members taught how to identify a student who might be in crisis?
   b. What kind(s) of training is offered to faculty regarding identifying students with questionable behavior?
   c. Who provides that training?

5. What structures have been developed to help faculty and staff work with the TAMT?

6. What changes have you witnessed regarding how faculty approach or think about school violence?
7. What procedure has your department outlined for faculty regarding reporting who may be in crisis?

8. When did you first learn about the TAMT?

9. As dean or department chairperson, how do you feel about the roles that your faculty members are being asked to take on (spending time with students formally and informally and/or reporting concerning student behavior)?

10. When do you know/decide/feel/think that a student needs to go to the TAMT?

Questions Regarding Referral Process

11. How did you know that the student you reported/aided in reporting to the TAMT needed assistance beyond what you or one of your faculty members could provide?

12. What expectations did you have of the TAMT?

13. Please walk me through all elements of the process associated with the student referral to the TAMT.
   a. What student situation/problem did you take to TAMT?
   b. How did you come to know about it?
   c. What role did you play in the process?
   d. How were you kept in the loop throughout the investigation?
   e. How were you notified that the case had been concluded?

14. How would you characterize your overall experience with the TAMT?

15. Looking back, please explain things that the TAMT did well when working with you and the faculty member.

16. What could the TAMT have done better?

17. As a result of your experience with the TAMT, please identify misconceptions you had.

18. What do you wish you had known (but did not know) about the TAMT at the time you or staff member were going through your student referral?
19. Please share one responsibility that you wish the TAMT would add to the services they already provide.

20. What impact did your TAMT experience have on how you now approach encouraging faculty members to make student referrals?

21. What additional question(s) do you think I should have asked you regarding this topic?

Are there any comments you would like to make at this time?

Thank You

This concludes the questions that I have at this time. Do you have any questions for me?

Closing Remarks

Hearing you describe your experience has helped me beyond measure. Thank you for your time and this opportunity to study this phenomenon more closely. If you find that you have additional information to share, please feel free to contact me at mchinn@go.olemiss.edu or 662.259.2177. Please take my business card as well. Once the transcripts have been typed, I will email your interview to you. At that time, please feel free to contact me to add or clarify any information.
Appendix G
Appendix G

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL FOR TAMT MEETING

Date _______________   Location _______________   Time _______________

Descriptive Notes   Reflective Notes

Illustration

313
SUMMATIVE OBSERVATION NOTES
Appendix H
to me, Brenton

Dear Mignon Chinn,

I am pleased to grant permission to republish the content you requested.

Kind regards,

Christian

----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Mr. Christian Rosa – Intern, Global Rights - John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

111 River St., MS 4-02 - Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

crosa@wiley.com - ph: 201-748-5825 - fax: 201-748-6008
Assuming to be thesis.

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VITA

Mignon N. Chinn

EDUCATION

The University of Mississippi, University, Mississippi
Department of Leadership and Counselor Education – Higher Education
Doctor of Philosophy – August 2013
Dissertation: Managing Threats: Examining Intra-organizational Collaboration Between Academic and Student Affairs Divisions

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi
Department of Counselor Education – Student Development
Master of Science – May 2000

Mississippi State University, Mississippi State, Mississippi
College of Education – Biology and General Science Education
Bachelor of Science – December 1997

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

January 2013 – May 2013  Graduate Assistant, Office of the Dean of Applied Sciences
University of Mississippi

Administration – Maintained student records; assisted students with academic questions and paperwork; researched course information for transfer credit requests; aided in May commencement preparation; provided support to four undergraduate student workers; assisted with the career fair for the school of applied sciences; developed a program aimed at increasing student retention
August 2009 – May 2012  
**Graduate Assistant, Office of the Dean of Students**  
**University of Mississippi**

*Advising* – Co-advised University of Mississippi Gospel Choir (UMGC), Black Student Union (BSU), National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), and Minority Affairs leadership Council (MALC); provided leadership development workshop and retreats for student organizations; worked with UMGC and NPHC to update constitutions; held weekly meeting with the UMGC executive board members individually and collectively; worked with NPHC to create a standards board  

*Programming* – Co-coordinated the Black History Month calendar and events, organized large scale campus wide events hosted by the dean of students office; coordinated the fall volunteer services fair; organized the annual Adopt-a-Basket food collection and distribution for needy families in November  

*Administration* – Audited the budget and fundraising efforts, and expenditure reports for UMGC; assessed and evaluated programs; reported finding on the grade point averages of men in NPHC fraternities at the University of Mississippi; presented about volunteer services during new student orientation; met with students and/or students groups regarding volunteer project ideas  

*Marketing* – Worked with University Communications to create marketing and communications for signature events; assisted student organizations with publicity and recruitment strategies  

July 2003 – August 2009  
**Asst. Director of North Campus, Housing & Residential Education**  
**University of South Florida**

*Supervision* – Supervised four master’s level professional staff members, four graduate assistants, seventy resident assistants, 50 summer staff, and one administrative assistant  

*Advising* – Served as advisor to the Resident Assistant Training and Development Committee, Resident Assistant Advisory Board (RAAB), and Residence Community Conduct Board (RCCB)  

*Conduct* – Served as an appeals officer for judicial cases, resident assistant terminations, and student damage billing, provided training and support to professional staff and graduate assistants regarding student conduct  

*Administration* – Oversaw facilities management of 29 apartment and suite style halls which included facilitating a monthly meeting with housekeeping and maintenance staff; managed major departmental events such as hall openings, hall closings, etc.; worked with Banner and Residential Management System (RMS) computer applications; executed campus evacuations during emergency situations; Co-facilitated weekly residence life staff meetings  

*Programming* – Oversaw five living-learning communities (Wellness, Leadership, Bulls Business Network, Greek Village, and Honors)  

*Recruitment* – Managed the recruitment process of professionals and graduate staff  

*Budget* – Monitored area annual programming budgets of nearly $20,000  

*Assessment* – Assessed departmental and area specific programs
**First Year Adviser, Office of Residence Life and New Programs**

*Miami University*

**July 2000 – May 2003**

**Supervision** – Supervised, trained, and evaluated one graduate assistant, eight undergraduate resident assistants, one practicum student, and one office assistant each academic year.

**Academic advising** – Provided academic advising to 250 students housed in the residence hall; assisted first year probationary students in developing improvement plans.

**Conduct** – Met with students who violated policies and implemented educational sanctions.

**Advising** – Advised hall council.

**Administration** – Served as a liaison between the residence hall community and a partnering academic discipline (College of Arts and Sciences); recruited, selected, trained, and advised six upper-class mentors (Mosaic Mentors); accompanied students to the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) in American Higher Education; conducted weekly staff meetings.

**Programming** – Developed programming model for hall diversity hall and non-theme hall students.

**Budget** – Managed hall budget for staff and hall council.

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

**Canton High School** – Canton, MS

Biology and General Science Education Teacher

**Miami University** – Oxford, OH

Interdisciplinary Studies Diversity Course (IDS 151)

**University of South Florida** – Tampa, FL

Introduction to Student Personnel Work (SDS 2040)

**RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY PRESENTATIONS**

Chinn, M. N. (2013, May). *Examining Threats: Faculty Members Want to Let the Experts Handle It.* Memphis in May Student Affairs Conference (MIMSAC), Annual Conference, Memphis, TN.


HONORS AND AWARDS

Summer 2013   University of Mississippi Summer Research Assistantship Award
Fall 2012    University of Mississippi Dissertation Fellowship Recipient
2011, 2012   University of Mississippi Lamar Memorial Scholarship Recipient
2009-2013   University of Mississippi Underrepresented Minority Fellowship Recipient
2007       University of South Florida National Residence Hall Honorary (NRHH)
            Honorary Inductee

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)

UNIVERSITY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

University of Mississippi, University, MS

2013   Bias Incident Response Team Ad-Hoc Committee Chair
2012   Gospel Choir Black Alumni Reunion Committee Member
2012   Ole Miss Idol Preliminary Judge
2011   Interviewer for Outreach Summer Internships
2011   Who’s Who Committee Member
2011   Housing Assistant Director of Marketing Search Committee Member
2009-2012   Black History Month Committee Member
2010-2012   Celebration of Achievement Committee Member
2010   Column Society Interviewer

University of South Florida, Tampa, FL

2008   Thesis Advisor for Honors College Student
2007-2009   Resident Assistant Advisory Board Advisor
2007-2009   Residential Community Conduct Board Advisor
2007   Division of Student Affairs Student Orientation Co-Presenter
2006-2009   Housing Staff Scholarship Committee Member
2006-2009   Housing Staff Appreciation Committee Member
2006-2009   Housing Representative for New Student Orientation Committee
2005-2006   Internship Supervisor for College Student Affairs Student
2004       National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) Facilitator

Miami University, Oxford, OH

2001-2003   Practicum Supervisor for a College Student Personnel Student
2001-2003   First Year Planning Group Advisor