

Engineering Students' Perceptions of Their Role in the University Organization

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Abstract

From a student's perspective, academic institutions are impossibly complicated organizations. Specifically, every department, office, and club has its own policies, procedure, and structure. This organizational complexity makes it challenging for students to determine how they fit into the overall structure of the institution. For many students, their own position in the university is not a day-to-day thought, though its influence may affect multiple aspects of their everyday lives. As such, students may struggle to conceptualize what the university offers to them, and in turn, what their responsibility to the university is. This relationship is a crucial aspect of university improvement as it provides faculty and staff with information about the wants and needs of students while simultaneously giving the students a voice in the improving their institutions. To understand what kinds of organizational changes are needed at the institutional level to better incorporate students both into their university and the organizational change process, students' perceptions of their own position and role must be known and understood. The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to investigate how first- and second-year engineering students at a large public Mid-Atlantic university describe their position and role within their university and program. Data for this study are drawn from semi-structured interviews conducted with ten students in Chemical Engineering. This selection of students from each of the first two years of their undergraduate careers provides a means for comparing how students' views vary as they gather more experience at the university. Bettering the understanding of students' understanding can help inform the design or improvement of programs and interventions meant to acquaint students with their academic surroundings and integrate them into the institution more fully.

Background and Objectives

Educational institutions are inherently complex organizations. Regardless of the size of the institution, there are webs of policies and norms that cross between and throughout the hierarchies that govern various functions within the university (Korte, 2009). To an incoming student, this can be incredibly daunting. Even to a veteran student, it may remain so. The transition into college can prove stressful for a variety of reasons, but adapting to an entirely new environment is a particularly salient challenge for many (Gist-Mackey et al., 2018; Reynolds, 2013). Students will often struggle to understand what their new role in the university entails, what is expected of them, and where to go for help. The difficulty of navigating a new environment is only amplified by the challenges students face in coming to terms with what they expect from their university and what is expected of them in return. Research has been done on what is to be reasonably expected of each group with respect to institutional life and educational processes (Kuh et al., 1995), but as new members of the organizational structure, students are still responsible for determining their own needs and responsibilities. Many students arrive to college with suppositions of what they will need to do, oftentimes underestimating what will be required of them (Scutter et al., 2011). The incongruence of their incoming assumptions and the

realities they discover has potentially disastrous implications for their academic success and persistence (Tinto, 1987). For students, coming to understand what they expect from the university is an important first step in their journey of becoming fully integrated into the organizational structure of the institution.

Looking from the reverse perspective, it is also valuable to educational institutions to understand the expectations of their students and communicate their own expectations to the students. This give and take ensures that both groups are at an understanding with one another. When this shared understanding is lacking, change is much harder to come by (Lyon et al., 2014).

Troublingly, however, it has become evident that universities are not always aware of their students' expectations and are therefore unable to factor their voices into institutional change. Allen and Nichols (2017) highlight that while student input is frequently involved in the process of evaluating and revising teaching efforts, it is seldom included when planning and operating other forms of student support. While Kuh et al. (1995) lay out expectations universities might have of their students, it remains unclear how adept the institutions' administrators and faculty are at gauging students' wants and needs. The work of Shank, Walker and Hayes (1995) indicates that many professors tend to underestimate what their students expect of both them and the broader university's services. This points to a troubling situation where neither students nor university officials are accurately gauging what is expected of them by the other party, leading to an disconnect between two key groups in the same organizational structure. This severely complicates initiatives to make positive change (Lyon et al., 2014).

Correcting this deficiency in mutual understanding begins with an understanding of how the organization views the management of its resources and personnel. There are numerous models for conceptualizing management strategies, each emphasizing different approaches and values as part of the organizational change process. For this research work, Bolman and Deal's (1991) Four Frames model was the guiding framework. Bolman and Deal outline four distinct "frames" for leadership and management of an organization. The structural frame prioritizes clear goals, roles, and efficiency. There is a distinct hierarchy and chain of command, data and analysis are highly valued, and problems are solved with changes to policy. The human resource frame instead focuses on individual human needs within the organization, functioning on a baseline assumption that the individual and organization benefit each other. Problems are defined with respect to individual needs and leadership takes the form of empowerment. The political frame defines the organization as being composed of various interest groups that are constantly vying for resources and authority. Leadership in this frame takes the form of advocacy and negotiation, where the interests of various groups must be balanced, and compromises are often made. Finally, the symbolic framework focuses on developing an organizational culture that shapes behavior by providing a shared set of goals. Leaders work to develop and maintain this culture through the maintenance of rituals, stories, and various other "symbolic forms" (p. 512). Bolman and Deal argue that effective management is built upon the ability to utilize different

perspectives and balance them, even if they seem contradictory initially. A summary of the four frames can be seen below in Table 1.

	Structural	Human Resource	Political	Symbolic
Metaphor	Factory/Machine	Extended Family	Jungle/Arena	Carnival/Temple
Organizational Ethic	Excellence	Caring	Justice	Faith
Central Lenses, Focus, Filters	Rules, Formal roles, Goals, Policies, Technology, Procedures	Individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills and limitations; relationships, “fit”	Different interests competing for power and resources; conflict is normal; competition, organizational policies, resources, interests, agendas, alliances	Culture & meaning found in: metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes, ritual, myths
Images of Leader	Social architect; Institutional architect, analyst, system designer	Servant, catalyst, coach	Advocate, negotiator, political strategist	Artist, prophet
Key Leadership Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialization increases efficiency - Clarity and control enhance performance - Problems result from structural misalignment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institutions and individuals need each other - Individual-organizational alignment benefits both sides - Productive relationships vital to organizational health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differences are enduring - Resources are scarce - Conflict is inevitable - Key decision involve who gets what 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People interpret experiences differently - Meaning-making is a central organizational process - Culture is an institution’s emotional and intellectual glue - Symbols express institutional identity, values, and beliefs

Table 1: A Summary of Bolman and Deal’s (1991) Four Frames, adapted from Davidson, McDonald, and Steeves (2014)

Each one of the four frames has a distinct role in guiding how university administrators and faculty engage with their students and each other (Bonner et al., 2004). With this guiding framework in mind, the purpose of this qualitative research study was to use Bolman and Deal's (1991) Four Frames model to further the understanding of how first- and second-year chemical engineering students understand their role in a large, public research-intensive university in the Mid-Atlantic United States. This study made use of the analysis of interview transcripts from ten chemical engineering students in each of their first two years of undergraduate study to address the following research questions:

1. How do first- and second-year chemical engineering students understand their role in their university as an organization?
2. In what ways, if any, do student understandings change between their first and second years?

Broader Project Background

This analysis used an existing data set generated as part of a larger project that encompasses six universities across three countries. Member institutions are equally distributed, two each from the United States, United Kingdom, and South Africa. The research team for this project includes faculty and graduate students from all three countries, with direct representation from five of the six included institutions. The objective of the project is to capture various aspects of the student experience over the course of a student's undergraduate career and is thus a longitudinal undertaking beginning in the first year and ending with the fourth year. There are also a handful of graduate students engaged as participants, though they were not part of this particular investigation. Semi-structured interviews are conducted in the second semester of each year. The author of this paper became involved with the project in the second year of US data collection, which corresponds to the third year of data collection in the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Methods

Participants

The participants in this study are all chemical engineering students at a large public Mid-Atlantic university. This institution is STEM focused and research intensive. Each participant was interviewed twice, once in their first year and again in their second year of undergraduate study. In the first year at this institution, all engineering students are in a general engineering track before transitioning into their desired disciplines. Participants had indicated an intention to study chemical engineering, and all students involved in this study did transition to chemical engineering in the second year. All self-reported demographic information, in addition to the pseudonyms that have been assigned to each participant, can be found below in Table 2. Every student has an acronym beginning with the same letter as a result of the pseudonym assignment strategy in the overarching research project this data comes from.

Pseudonym	Race	Sex
Arun	Indian	Male
Alexander	White	Male
Anh	Asian	Female
Allison	Black	Female
Anthony	White	Male
Adrian	White	Male
Anika	Indian	Female
Akio	Mixed White/Asian	Male
Annie	White	Female
Ayame	Asian	Female

Table 2: Self-Reported Participant Demographic Information

Data Collection

The data for this study is drawn from a larger existing dataset that was collected as part of a multinational study involving six institutions. All of the participants for this particular sample were interviewed in the second semester of each of their first two years of undergraduate study. Thirty-six (36) total students were interviewed at this institution in the first year of data collection, with fifteen intending to study chemical engineering and the other twenty-one split between chemistry and biochemistry programs. Of the fifteen chemical engineers in the sample, ten returned to be interviewed again in the second year. These ten students make up this study's population, due to an interest in seeing how student perspectives changed between their first and second years at the university. As such, twenty total interviews were conducted over the two year period, transcribed, and analyzed for this study.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the second semester of students' first and second years of undergraduate study, in order to allow them to have had at least one full semester's worth of experience to discuss. The interview protocol was generated as part of the overarching study and covers a variety of topics related to the students' experience in their degree program. Students were asked a broad range of questions about their experience as a student, from their course loads and experiences with assessments to their interaction with disciplinary groups and how they are financing their education. This study is based on a set of questions that focus on what students expect from the university and what they believe the university expects from them. In total, the interviews lasted approximately one hour each. The recordings of the interviews were sent to a professional transcription service, after which each one was checked one more time to ensure accuracy. The analysis in this study was primarily based on the following questions from the interview protocol:

1. What do you think your responsibility as a student is?
2. What do you think the university's responsibility towards you is?

A trend that emerged during initial analysis also suggested the incorporation of an additional interview question for further detail:

3. Does the way that you are paying for your college influence your expectations towards the university and lecturers?

Analysis

Once the transcripts had been checked, each was re-read closely to establish familiarity with the individual participant. All first-year transcripts were read first, followed by the second-year interviews. As this was done, notes were made of general patterns and observations for each individual participant. The interviews were coded descriptively, matching students' perceptions and expectations with the Bolman and Deal (1991) frame that they most closely aligned with. For multiple excerpts, several of the frames could reasonably have been chosen, and these were noted as analysis continued. Particularly interesting excerpts were coded *In Vivo* to maintain the exact language students had chosen to use to describe the nature of their relationship with the university (Miles et al., 2013).

Upon completion of the first round of coding, the responses were then reexamined to identify themes that could be emerged from the data. Each year was analyzed separately to get a sense for cross-sectional themes before the two were compared to identify any changes or trends as students continued through their studies. Individual students' responses from each year were grouped together to allow for identification of change for a single participant as well, as not all of the students aligned with the general trends that were discovered. Notable outliers were extracted, and their experiences were further investigated in an attempt to better understand why their experience was so different from their peers.

Results

The analysis of student responses revealed a number of themes. Student and university expectations will be split into *first year themes* and *second year themes*. Any changes between these two will be discussed further later in the paper. In addition to these themes, it became apparent that students were increasingly concerned with their *financial investment* in the second year and how this affected their expectations. Finally, *unique cases* will be addressed, as they provide a few interesting points for consideration with respect to factors that affect what students want or need from the school. Each of these themes will be addressed in turn. For the themes in each year, student expectations of the university will be followed by their beliefs regarding what is expected of them.

First Year Themes

In the first year, the most common expectation students spoke to was the need for an effective education. Some kept this limited in scope to their time at the university, while others like Annie

wanted the school to “prepare [them] to enter the engineering workforce.” Allison takes this notion one step further, explaining that:

I feel like their responsibility is to provide the best learning experience, the best education experience, not even for academics but just for, like I said, for me to be successful once I graduate, the best ... how can I put it? The best experience for me as a student here, and their main responsibility is to have me prepared for once I graduate. It needs to be to the point where after I graduate, I can say, "I'm not worried 'cause I went to [this university].”

This need for effective preparation tied into several students’ concerns regarding the environment that the university provides. Two primary needs emerged in this domain: a safe campus and an effective learning environment. Arun bridged both of these, explaining that the university should “make sure it’s a safe environment, [and] obviously make sure it’s fair to both students and instructors.” He elaborated, “fair must mean that it’s equal opportunity in grading... and if they’re trying to pursue something outside of just academics, make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.” Ayame echoed both themes of effective preparation and environment, explaining that “It [the university] should give you a good environment to help you study and have many professors that can help you.”

When asked what they believed students were expected to contribute to the university, the answers all seemed to point to the same theme: students needed to put in effort. Some students focused this exclusively on academic contexts, but many included their university community as well. Adrian shared that “Personally, I think my responsibilities go to my academics first and then more of playing a role in an organization and the community.” Alexander echoed this sentiment:

I think my responsibility's just time management and balance because like I said, there's so much to do here. There's also so much to learn here. There's obviously chemical engineering is not one of the easier majors here. It requires a lot of me out of the classroom at the same time.

Foreshadowing a theme that will emerge much more strongly in the second year, Allison even went as far as to alleviate her professors of some of the responsibility for her education, stating that “I think I need to put in the work that my classes require, because... you can’t expect your professor to do the work for you or learn it for you. You have to learn it on your own.”

Second Year Themes

Having gathered more experience throughout the course of their first year and first semester of second year, students’ expectations of the university began to become more diverse. Students expressed a need for effective education, some like Adrian even voiced frustration at negative experiences in this regard, “It’s really upsetting and discouraging when I have a professor that couldn’t give two ***** about how I’m doing in the class or my understanding of the material.”

Numerous students reiterated concerns about professional preparation and having all the necessary skills to succeed. Furthermore, students like Anh and Alexander maintained the importance of a well-maintained environment to their experience. Alexander took a broad perspective:

I would say that providing the best environment to understand course material. Whether environment means study hall or say, study lounges, or ample space at a library or anything from, you know, dining hall as food, because we've got crappy food, maybe not the best food that day or something like that. It's anything when it comes to overall lifestyle.

However, in addition to the maintenance of the primary themes from the first year, students developed new expectations. Allison turned her attention to her personal needs, positing that, “the university should make sure I have things here for me personally. Like I said, like health issues, stuff like this, because there's a lot of things students go through.” This personalized need was repeated by several other students, always addressing an individual want, like assistance with paperwork in the case of Anh or the availability of research opportunities for Ayame. Some students emphasized the role that the university plays in helping students develop not just technical skills, but as individuals. Annie and Akio both highlighted how a university experience should help them become better people, and while the university is not entirely responsible for that development, it plays an important part.

Student perceptions of what is expected of them evolved in the second year as well. In the first year, the almost unanimous response was the need to put in effort. As students engaged in their second year of study, the same general response remained prevalent, but shifted in tone. Instead of focusing on the energy they need to exert on their own, many students transitioned to emphasizing the importance of engaging with the resources offered to them by the university. Arun summed this mindset up well:

I think it [my responsibility] is to take advantage of the opportunities that the university is giving to prepare yourself for the future, you know, after you graduate, because it's not just the university's responsibility. You need to go and you need to try and develop your own skills and prepare yourself for the future...

This shift in narrative was common for students. Alexander likewise repeated the importance of “tak[ing] advantage of everything they offer. At least, everything that [he] think[s] is applicable to [him] and [his] well-being.” Students began to reference other facilities and services provided by the university, including career offices, recreational activities, and wellness programs. The focus shifted from students simply putting effort into being good students and members of the community to direct engagement with university structures.

Financial Investment

Unsurprisingly, the topic of money came up in students' responses. What was unexpected, however, was that it was almost entirely absent from first-year responses. In the second year, a number of students directly tied the cost of their education to their expectations. All of those who did cited attending the university as being very costly, and many of them felt more entitled to resources and assistance on account of their investment. Adrian's previously mentioned frustration with professors who don't seem to care about their students understanding the material is tied to this. Akio mentioned cost offhand but has no complaints about the education he is receiving, and as a result did not talk more about it. Anthony tied the cost directly to his expectation that the university will keep its facilities and faculty in good shape, sharing:

I would say it's their responsibility, logistically to keep [campus] clean and nice looking. I mean, I pay a lot of money to come here and I want it to be nice and up to date as well. I would say it's their job to make sure that they're hiring the best. And people who are knowledgeable in our field, because they're, I mean, responsible for educating forty thousand people.

Why these concerns were only prevalent in the second year is not entirely clear. They were not unanimous across the population of students, either. Roughly half of the population made some mention of the cost of their education and how it influenced their expectations of what they receive in return.

Unique Cases

While many of the responses tended to align well with the above themes, two specific students stood out. The uniqueness of their relationship to the university does not necessarily mean that they did not fit into the themes, only that some element of their experience was exceptional. First, Anthony took a very different stance from his peers on why the university is allowed to expect certain things from him and why he feels obligated to comply. He made similar statements in both years, showing that his perspective was consistent. In the first year, he explained:

I've never really thought about it this way, but the university kind of took a risk in giving you admission to the college, and I think it's our responsibility to respect that and really capitalize on the opportunity we have to study at a university and do our best, and represent the school well, both now and when we graduate.

He followed up in the second year, restating that "by them sending me an acceptance letter two years ago, they are investing in me to then carry their name well when I graduate." He then shared a few statements that align him with elements of the symbolic frame of Bolman and Deal's (1991) framework:

I think it's my responsibility to be supportive right now of, this might sound silly, but of their sports teams, or their programs, or my department. I mean I think it's, if you approach everything with kind of a cynical attitude and don't

really invest and support, then you're doing, not only yourself a disservice, but you're doing the university a disservice by not really showing people how excited you are about where you're at.

In these statements, Anthony presented a wider consideration for how he relates to his department and broader university than the perspectives espoused by many of his peers. This is not to say anything regarding the quality of his response or his peers' but highlight a perspective that stands out.

The second noteworthy example is that of Anika, an international student. Her international status directly influenced her expectations of the university. She shared:

As an international student, coming to U.S. with all the paperwork, was really hard. With the getting the F1, getting all the I20 form, all of these visa issues, and just adjusting in general in a completely different country on the other side of the world. I feel like the university does this, and it does a good job at it, but I feel like they're, it's their responsibility to guide you through all the paperwork, which is tedious and long enough as it is. And then help you settle in, which it does, it does a very good job and doing that. It provides a whole guidance, it provides three days of orientation, where you do all the paperwork and filling in and everything, process made a lot easier.

While she is satisfied in the first year with the help she has received, she expressed greater frustration in the second. She voiced a desire for more assistance, indicating that either the university's help had gotten worse, or she had more to do. Anika's example is a stark reminder of the role that a student's background and circumstance has on their expectations for the university.

Discussion

Altogether, the expectations that emerge in the first-year data appear to indicate that students viewed their relationship with the university as mostly transactional. If the university provides a good environment and good professors, and the students provide energy in return, then a successful education will result. Students largely did not see themselves as a part of the university organization, instead placing themselves as beneficiaries of their institution's offerings. As a result, the themes from the first year most closely align with Bolman and Deal's (1991) structural frame. Students perceived university functions as a sort of machine, taking students and effort as input. As long as the university maintained its operations – in this case the emphasis being on safety and good teaching – the machine runs smoothly, and both the university and student get what they want out of their interaction.

In the transition to the second year, however, the focus began to shift more to individual needs and the interplay between university offerings and student effort. There was a much more direct connection established in how the organizational structure and the student interact within the

context of a university. The first-year relationship was seemingly just a give and take, with no further interaction between the involved parties. In the second year, however, students seemed aware of their responsibility to engage with the university's offerings. There was also a greater emphasis on individual needs and the benefits students have for the university. As such, the second year, as a whole, seems more closely aligned with the human resource frame from Bolman and Deal (1991). Building upon the leadership assumption posited by Davidson, McDonald, and Steeves (2014) that the organization and the individual need one another, these results indicate that students were well aware of the balance between their own responsibilities and their expectations. Elements of the symbolic frame also became apparent in the second year in the testimony of students who believed that they will be representing their institution both during and after their undergraduate study. Compared to the structural frame in the first year and human resource frame in the second, however, references to the symbolic frame were infrequent. The political frame was almost entirely absent, though this may be attributed to students' lack of understanding of the various powers in play in the management of a university. Students did not seem to yet recognize themselves as an interest group with say in broader policy discussion.

Explaining the transition in framing from the first year to second year is difficult. Some of the frustrations and individual needs can be reasonably aligned with the experience students gain simply from being students for more time, as well as learning to recognize what they need to thrive in a university environment. It is more challenging to determine the shift in students' locus of control. In year one, the university was responsible for providing an education. In year two, the university was only responsible for providing opportunities, which the students then had to make use of. Perhaps students felt as if they are gaining greater agency over their own education and felt more responsibility for it as a result. Further inquiry would be needed to fully understand this change.

Examining the introduction of financial concerns presented in second year interviews, it is not entirely clear as to why these concerns are only arising in the second round of interviews. It would be reasonable to guess that as students became more aware of the expectations they had that are not being met, they became more frustrated with their investment. It also may have been a result of students becoming more aware of the actual numbers behind their education. These concerns play an interesting role in students' expectations, one that is far from uniform. Some students acknowledged the cost without tying it to what they expected the university to provide, or what they needed to do to succeed. Others tied the investment they were making directly into their complaints while voicing their opinions. How exactly a student is funding their education likely plays a substantial role in how they relate it to their experience, though the data shows this to be rather inconclusive.

To explore this concept further, responses to the third interview question included earlier in this paper were analyzed as well. This question asked students how they were funding their education and what impact that method had on their expectations. Interestingly, students rarely tied their means of paying for university to their expectations of the institution, instead choosing to focus

more on how it impacted their expectations of themselves. Many suggested that, regardless of how exactly they were getting the money, having to pay for school pushed them to work harder and want to achieve more. Some cited a desire to make their parents' investment worth it, others wanted to get a good job following graduation so that they could pay off their student loans. Those on scholarships often spoke of GPA requirements to maintain their funding and the motivation that gave them to perform as well as they could. In contrast, there were a few students from a variety of funding backgrounds that acknowledged that their source of tuition did not influence their experience in any way they were aware of. Across all of the students, however, it was clear that when asked directly about their funding sources, students chose to look inward, rather than placing their expectations on the university around them.

Two exceptional cases bring back into focus how individual many of these expectations can be. Anika's status as an international student meant that she had needs that other students did not. In considering how the university as an organization and the individual interact, it is crucial to evaluate the circumstances of both parties. Anthony's consideration for the institution's investment in him was a unique glance at a student trying to view his enrollment from the university's perspective and build his responsibilities from this reflection.

Taking a broader look at these students' undergraduate experiences, their expectations – both of themselves and of the university – play an integral role. This can be demonstrated using Astin's (1999) Input-Environment-Output College Impact Model. Students arrive to their universities with diverse backgrounds, skills, and of course, expectations. The experiences and interactions they have, encompassed within the environment they choose to be a part of, ultimately determine the plethora of paths that the students will pursue upon completion of their undergraduate degrees. Focusing specifically on the "perceived environment" facet of Astin's model, the way that students view their surroundings play a pivotal role in the way that they engage, persist, and perform. For example, Wilson (2006) found a positive correlation between students' perceptions of faculty and their motivation to excel on their coursework. Others have found similar results, determining that the environment students found themselves in and the interactions that occurred therein influenced students' behavioral intentions, subsequently leading to changes in behavior (Ahmad et al., 2012; Ferreira & Santoso, 2008; Schuetz, 2005). Furthermore, the perceived environment has a powerful impact on the degree to which students are involved both in curricular and extracurricular functions, which in turn affects institutional and disciplinary commitment and persistence (Ahmad et al., 2012; Berger & Milem, 2000).

As educators and administrators, it is crucial to understand the elements that influence a student's experience and garner some sense of how they interconnect. Student expectations are one piece of this puzzle, one that is commonly misunderstood by students, educators, and administrators alike. This misalignment raises questions about how expectations are communicated to students, as well as how academic institutions can do a better job collecting information about what students expect of them (Shank et al., 1995). If engineering is portrayed and communicated as a challenging major that some will not succeed in, as it often is, what

presumptions do new engineering students arrive with as a result? If undergraduate degree programs are to be as flexible as possible while producing professionally prepared students, this misalignment must be explored further, and eventually corrected for. Steps should be taken to better align the perceived environment both with best learning practice and with the authentic environment as it exists in a given moment. Students must be able to better understand what the university expects of them, and faculty and staff must identify ways to communicate this. Conversely, students must also be given avenues to communicate their expectations.

The most important takeaway from this work is that student understanding of their role in the university is constantly evolving. With respect to Bolman and Deal's (1991) four frames, students become increasingly focused on their individual needs and the relationship that they are building within the university's structure. Some students remained focused on the goals of the institution and their role within that system, but the majority began to recognize that they did not just exist within an organizational structure, but instead played a key role in it. Though these interviews only spanned two years of undergraduate study, change was clear. From an organizational perspective, it will be important for faculty and administrators to continue to work to discover and tap into student expectations to provide a more effective educational experience. Likewise, it will be valuable for colleges to communicate clearly what they expect of their students. If universities are to continue serving their students as well as they can, steps must be taken to correct the deficiencies in current understanding of what students expect and what is expected of them (Shank et al., 1995).

Future Work

As the overarching study continues, additional interviews are being collected from the same students in their third and fourth years of study. Given the development noted in this investigation over the course of one year, it would be potentially valuable to further trace how the students' perceived relationship to the university continues to evolve through the rest of their path of study. Understanding students' expectations even following graduation could assist universities in better developing alumni support programs and better preparing students for their post-college lives. Additionally, given the variety of institutional and national contexts present in this project, there is value in examining students' expectations across a variety of types of universities and national education systems. Students may have different expectations of a commuter college than a residential one, for example. Finally, given the aforementioned complexity of educational institutions and organizational change, it is worth delving deeper into students' expectations of various structures within their university. While this project examined how they perceived the university as a whole, this may be a more abstract relationship than they might have with their academic department and as a result, their expectations may be different. By examining the different levels of authority within the university structure, it may be possible to extract which expectations are tied to which structure or ideals, making it easier to develop the necessary changes that benefit both student and university alike. Though outside of the scope of the current study or project, it may also be worth investigating whether there are generational

differences in the expectations that students describe. Over the last several decades, the way that universities are structured, operate, and deliver services to students have continued to evolve. Likewise, cultural expectations surrounding university degrees have changed. As such, it would not be unrealistic to expect that what students expect from the university and vice versa would have changed as well.

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