

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE
School of Management
Higher Education Administration

LOBBYING AND GOVERNANCE: COMPETITION
AND COOPERATION AMONG PUBLIC RESEARCH
UNIVERSITIES IN TWO AMERICAN STATES

European Master in Higher Education
(HEEM), a joint program provided by the
University of Oslo (Norway), University
of Tampere (Finland), and the University
of Aveiro (Portugal)

Master's Thesis
November 2011
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Abstract

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Titles of Thesis:

Lobbying and Governance: Competition and Cooperation
Among Public Research Universities in Two American
States

Master's Thesis:

74 pages, 3 appendices

Time:

December 2011

Keywords:

lobbying, governance, competition, higher education,
United States

While governance and lobbying practices by public universities have both been considered as factors in the ways that American states fund their public higher education systems, there has as yet been no research on how boards of governance influence the lobbying behaviors among public universities under their purview. This study uses comparative case study methodology to frame the policy-shaping behaviors of the higher education systems of two American states, one with a consolidated governance board and one without any such agency. Through interviews with 2 in-house lobbyists in each state, this study shows that a board of governance limits the autonomy of institutions and encourages cooperative lobbying strategies. In the state without a governance body, institutions are less likely to collaborate, especially because the lack of a central governance board has allowed for institutions to become highly individualized in terms of campus policies. Population ecology theory provides a useful model for conceptualizing these relationships: the board provides partitions that maintain stable environmental niches for public universities. Without such a board, public universities are free to adapt to new situations, which causes competition as institutions attempt move into occupied niches.

List of Abbreviations

IRS Internal Revenue Service

PAC Political Action Committee

S&T Science and Technology

SGI Self-Governed Institutions

STEM Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

Competition has long been a hallmark of the American higher education system. Clark's classic triangle of coordination indicated that, in the absence of a strong, centralized, national higher education authority or an influential academic oligarchy, the American system relies on the market to serve as the most efficient coordinator of resources (Clark, 1983). He suggests American universities are engaged in competition for students, academic staff, research funds and other related, necessary inputs. The core American belief in markets fosters the idea that the needs of the nation are best met through the innovative provision of higher education services and subsequent demand from student-consumers (Maasen & Cloete, 2002).

But the mechanisms of market competition in the U.S. are less understood. Hoxby (1997), in attempting to explain the apparent contradiction that the price of higher education in the U.S. has increased despite robust competition, forwards the idea that the decrease in the price of interstate communications and travel opened the higher education market on a national scale. Students, especially high-achieving students, were willing to go to across the country to obtain a degree, and institutions, especially prestigious ones, were eager to recruit and subsidize them to raise their profiles in national league tables. The resultant competition led to a steeply vertical higher education market (Hoxby, 1997; Dill, 2007).

Within this vertical market, then, institutions compete most directly with institutions of similar quality (presumably based on position in league tables.) Other in-state institutions that once served as the main competition for a single institution lose some competitive power with the national higher education market expansion. The in-state inter-institutional relationships are further complicated by the fact individual American states exercise varying degrees of control over public universities. Some states allow public higher education institutions a large degree of autonomy while others have governance boards that decide key aspects of the institutions' policies and performances (Maasen & Cloete, 2002). As such, while competition may serve a central coordinating role on a national level, public universities in some states are regulated by and accountable to state-level agencies.

Yet public universities in the same state obtain resources from the same source in that they rely on state legislative appropriations for part of their core funding. This would appear to establish grounds for competition within the same state, while introducing the question of how universities pursue such resources in light of politics and governance bodies (which serve as a link between universities and the state.) That public universities have the potential to behave as political actors is established: many have some type of in-house lobbyists under the vestiges of a government relations office (Ferrin, 2003). But the theoretical models of the state-university relationships cast the university as the passive recipient of government action (Maasen & Cloete, 2002). Certainly passivity is one potential response to government action, but such models do not include any ways in which the university seeks to influence its relationship with the state. Organizations have three essential responses to governmental activity: passive reaction, in which they adapt to new policy decisions; positive anticipation, in which they attempt to plan for governmental decisions; and public policy shaping, in which organizations take an active role in the decision-making process (Hillmann & Hitt, 1999).

If competition is largely vertical and national in nature, the ways in which public universities in the same state respond to governmental activities may include collaboration. Tandberg (2006) found that cooperation among public universities was commonplace in an unidentified state in the Eastern U.S. In 2010, in California, students, faculty, and administrators from its three public university systems engaged in protests (an overt form of policy-shaping behavior) and other initiatives in response to budget cuts and subsequent tuition hikes (McKinley, 2010; Rivera, Santa Cruz, & Gordon, 2010). In light of these anecdotal examples, it is possible to assume that in-state universities manage to avoid competition. On the other hand, these limited examples hardly reveal any methodical or systematic ways that universities pursue their policy-shaping agendas.

How public universities adopt a policy shaping role, specifically how they lobby, has not been fully explained. Whether the competitive nature of American higher education infects the lobbying strategies of institutions, or whether the presence of a board of governance (a body whose members may be appointed by the governor of the state), creates specific opportunities for lobbying, is unknown.

1.2. Justification and Key Questions for Research

The purpose of this thesis is to provide more qualitative evidence of how competition and specific forms of governance structures create specific environments in which public higher education attempts to influence the state. The objective is to discern the nature of relationships among public universities within particular states in the sphere of lobbying. In the next chapter of this thesis, a review of literature will be produced. This review will demonstrate the lack of scholarly attention given thus far to the questions surrounding competition and cooperation by publically-funded universities.

From the review of literature, it will be made apparent that scholars interested in university lobbying practices have very little information to draw from. Few studies have targeted the ways in which universities engage in lobbying, and no study has attempted to research the ways that governance affects lobbying beyond testing correlations between governance structures and lobbying outcomes. Researchers, when considering governance, have relied largely on unsubstantiated assumptions of how various actors in public higher education systems act in policy-shaping ways. This study will serve as an initial step towards filling that gap.

Governance bodies serve intermediaries in the relationship among public universities and state governments, yet little scholarly attention has been given to explaining if and how governance bodies participate in lobbying. Furthermore, the nature of governance in a state curtails the autonomy of public institutions in its charge, but how this affects lobbying behaviors on an institutional and systemic level is unexplored. These variables create uncertainties that require explanation. This study has identified three key questions for research in order to better illuminate these uncertainties.

How and in what circumstances do public higher education institutions opt to lobby collectively with other institutions?

How does competition among public higher education institutions influence decisions in lobbying strategies?

How do certain types of governance arrangements promote or preclude collective lobbying by public universities?

Given the lack of attention to governance and lobbying in earlier research, this study opts not to formulate propositions as to the outcomes of these research questions. There is too little information on which propositions could be based. On one hand, lobbying practices by universities under a governance board might be closely coordinated by the central board; on the other, a board active in lobbying on behalf of the needs of the system might allow individual campuses to lobby independently. Conversely, universities without a system of governance might lack the coordination necessary to work together and thus lobby in competition with other campuses, or they might find that without a strong, central advocate, that their needs are best met through collaborative lobbying strategies. Furthermore, these positions may not be static: different sorts of issues might provoke different responses. Existing research provides little insight as to which, if any, of these scenarios is reflected in practice. As such, this study is an important contribution to a deeper understanding of lobbying by public universities in the American states.

1.3. Organization of Study

This study is composed of 6 chapters. In chapter 2, relevant literature to lobbying and governance will be presented. The ways that scholars have conceptualized organizations that engage in lobbying, the types of strategies that lobbying entails, as well as the political behaviors of higher education institutions will be addressed.

Chapter 3 addresses the methodology of the research undertaken. This research implemented a multiple case study design, using interviewing as the primary form of data collection. Further, chapter 3 introduces the analytical methods used to interpret the findings. The comparative method is used to draw out the differences among the cases studied, and a theoretical framework was applied in order to make sense of those differences.

The findings from the research are reproduced in chapter 4. The results of the interviews are presented, grouped into issue areas. Those results are then analyzed in chapter 5, through both comparison and theory.

Finally, this study draws some conclusions in chapter 6, which also addresses the limitations of this research, and suggestions for further study.

2. Literature Review

In this section of the paper, literature relevant to describing the nature of political participation by public universities will be discussed and critiqued.

The following section is limited in large part to those studies reflecting research on state-level political systems and activities. This thesis focuses more on literature related to state-level lobbying than to federal lobbying. The reasons for this focus involve some of the key facets of this thesis, namely competition among in-state universities, the role of state governance, and the unique relationship of the American state to its public universities. While federal-level lobbying may not differ in terms of lobbying strategies, the large number of divergent actors at the federal level changes the scale of competition and the levels of access an organization will have to policymakers. More importantly, public universities are largely the domain of the American state. States are responsible not only for policy-related decisions, but also the amount of funding appropriated by state legislatures for public higher education (McGuinness, 2005). The expectation guiding this research is that, at the state level, public universities with varying missions will have a wide variety of issues about which to engage in policy-shaping practices, and furthermore, that they will have the requisite access to do so.

2.1. Lobbying Organizations

No singular tradition of categorizing the types of organizations that engage in lobbying at the state level has dominated the literature surrounding this topic. Organizations have been re-classified according to the specific context of the research.

Scholarly investigations of politically-active organizations have often taken the form of broad categorizations that attempt to capture the types of organizations by the sorts of interests they represent. While repetitious, in order to make sense of the potential political behaviors of public universities, it is necessary to understand the ways that politically-active organizations have been classified by other authors. Simply put, both public and private universities have been largely ignored.

In their study of three states and the groups lobbying therein, Nownes and Freeman (1998) use lobbyist registers and lists of state *interest groups* (a catchall term used to identify organized

efforts to lobby around an issue or issues) to describe the types of organizations engaged in lobbying. They imply that institutions, and especially corporations, would be more likely represented by a registered lobbyist, while membership groups are more free-standing. They grouped lobbyists into 7 distinct interest categories (Corporate, Trade/Professional, Labor Union, Intergovernmental, Citizen, Religious/Charitable, and, where professional lobbyists represent more than one type of interest, Mixed) and interest groups into 4 categories (Trade/Professional, Labor Union, Citizen, Religious/Charitable.)

A nationwide study uses a similar study of lobbyist registers, but defines interests more broadly. They include:

agricultural production; cultural activities; economic development; finance, insurance, and real estate; industrial manufacturing; governmental bodies; mineral production; nonprofit and citizen assistance groups; professions; retail and wholesale; single issue and ideological groups; transportation; unions and like organizations; utilities; and a final category of unidentifiable lobbying (Hunter, Wilson, & Brunk, 1991, p. 489).

In similar, earlier approach, Aplin and Hegarty delineate three distinct groups: *non-legislative government bodies* (including executive branch, state agencies, political parties, and subordinate government units); *industry and business groups* (firms, trade or professional associations, and economic development groups); and *societal interest groups* (such as unions, civil rights groups, environmental groups, and other issue-specific special interest groups) (Aplin & Hegarty, 1980, p. 441).

The types of lobbying strategies that these studies have identified will be covered in the subsequent section of this work. However, what is notable here is the fact that public universities do not fit comfortably inside many (or even any) of the classifications used in these studies. Public universities receive funds from the state, like government bodies, but are involved in any number of the activities listed by Hunter et al. (1991).

Lowery and Gray (1993a; 1993b) provide a broader, theoretical framework that encompasses the different types of organizations politically active within a state. They approach political actors in a state as being part of an “interest group system.” Their research involves the density and diversity of these systems and sought to determine the state-level characteristics related to the

growth in size (density) and types of issues represented (diversity.) They find a significant, if complex, relationship between a state's economic complexity and size and the interest group system.

In their quantitative studies, Lowery and Gray (1993a) drew on lists of registered lobbyists to gather an accurate number of politically-active organizations. These lists include “membership organizations (e.g., unions, professional associations, civil rights groups), corporations, trade associations, and governmental representatives” and identify the whole collective as “interest groups” or “organized interests” (p. 193.)

The mechanism regulating the growth of interest group populations is explained by Gray and Lowery (1995) through population ecology theory. They suggest that an individual interest group will attempt to partition resources or issue areas into distinct niches that it alone will inhabit. This is referred to as the competitive exclusion principle. The authors suggest that where possible, interest groups will avoid direct competition in order to secure their own resources against interest groups with similar goals. Population ecology theory will be re-examined in the context of public universities in chapter 3 of this study. Important for this study, Lowery and Gray (1995) introduce the concept of competition into the organization of interest groups.

However, the blanket identification of politically-active organizations as interest groups is not unproblematic, as Lowery and Gray (1998) note. Salisbury (1984) identified that the bulk of research on interest group systems at that point in time had been dominated by the study of membership organizations, despite the fact that *institutions*, here broadly defined as firms, non-profit concerns, and any other non-membership groups, constitute the majority of many actual lobbying populations.

Salisbury writes that membership organizations differ significantly from institutions in both motivations to lobby and the ways they represent their interests. Membership groups must provide their members with some selective benefits that no other organization can provide, and that such a benefit would only be available to members and not to those outside of the group (those who receive the benefit without contributing are termed *free riders*.) Lobbying does not always lead to a selective benefit (as a change in the law affects all entities within the state

equally) so membership organizations are challenged to attract and retain members. In the political arena, membership groups gain legitimacy and political power insofar as their positions and goals are reflective of their members. If a group's lobbyist takes a position counter to the perceived wishes of the majority of its members, the group has less legitimacy in the eyes of the policymakers and may distance or lose dues-paying members.

Institutions, however, are largely free from membership-related issues of representation and legitimacy. Salisbury (1984, p.67) defines institutions broadly, including private corporations, universities and think tanks in his analysis. He writes that institutions of this type do not have any claim of representation of their members—for example, that firms do not take positions based on the values of their employees, or that universities do not advocate for certain issues to please their student populations. When institutional leadership or lobbyists take a position, they do so based on their perceptions of maximizing the benefit to the institution as a whole. If they have “members” (such as citizens of a local government or students at the university) the departure of those members does not necessarily signify a failure on the part of the institution in the political arena.

Furthermore, institutions' legitimacy and political strength are not derived from membership numbers. Whereas a membership group can claim to speak for its population, an institution does not. Finally, institutions have a far more diverse array of interests around which they may be politically active. “Environmental regulation, safety and health regulation, rules regarding employment practices, the host of grants and entitlement programs, tax policies—the list is long” (Salisbury, 1984, p. 68).

Even with Salisbury's insights into the differences between institutions and membership organizations, there remains a great deal of ambiguity as to the extent to which differences among institutional types influence the ways that they engage in lobbying. Assuming that non-profits lobby similarly to large corporations because both types of organizations are institutions would appear to ignore important factors, such as organizational missions or the availability of resources. Perhaps paramount of such factors is the U.S. Tax Code, and its limitations on lobbying by 501(c)(3) charities. According to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), charitable organizations are not allowed to campaign for particular candidates, and are limited in the lobbying (as a proportion of their total activities) they may engage in (IRS, 2011). Importantly,

public universities are generally considered 501(c)(3) organizations. On the other hand, individuals *associated* with a university (such as executive officers) can donate to candidates, and evidence indicates that they do so (Ferrin, 2005).

Nownes and Freeman (1998) critique the approach by Lowery and Gray (among others) as being “limited in their broad scope” (p. 88). They note that system-level characteristics fail to explain any differences among the types of groups within a state and the types of lobbying strategies undertaken. On the other hand, Lowery and Gray (2002) claim that Nownes’ and Freeman’s approach is disconnected from larger theories of political engagement.

Certainly both the system-level, theoretically-driven work and the strategy-focused examples have a place in the study of how and why organizations act and interact in policy-shaping ways. What the literature as yet lacks is any comprehensive typology that would suggest the key dimensions of organizational characteristics that are meaningful to involvement in the political arena. While some typologies exist (c.f. Walker, 1983), they refer to only membership groups.

The recognition of differences between membership groups and institutions is an important one, but may create the illusion of similarities among diverse institutional types while at the same time furthering the appearance of differences between, for example, a non-profit institution and a membership group. A typology that included a dimension such as a *responsibility to the public* would help to highlight any differences that may exist among institutions, for example, churches and large corporations. The *source of organizational legitimacy* in the political arena might help identify a difference between a large, for-profit firm (whose positions might reflect an economic importance to a state) versus a membership group, which represents political strength in the number of members. Developing such a typology is outside the bounds of this study, and as such, forming any expectations for the behaviors of public universities on the basis of previous research of politically-active organizations requires assumptions and guesswork as to how public universities might fit.

2.2. Lobbying Strategies

Lobbying, much like the concept of interest groups, suffers similarly from a broad definition. Salisbury (1984, p. 71-72) notes that the term lobbying has an “unsavory” connotation in the American lexicon, and is used to describe everything from simple informational presentations to

educate non-legislative state agencies, to targeted legislative campaigns by major corporations for financial help.

Studies of lobbying have defined it as, simply, “any attempt to influence public policy” (Nownes & Freeman, 1998). This has been identified as a European definition of the word, yet the ostensible American definition is no less ambiguous: lobbying is “the provision of information to policy makers by individuals representing the firm’s interest—that is, by lobbyists” (Hillman & Hitt, 1999, p. 84). This tautology is meant to represent succinctly the concept described elsewhere as “contacting government officials directly to present point of view” (Nownes & Freeman, 1998, p. 92). As a matter of clarification, this paper favors the European usage of term “lobbying” and will refer to the specific instance of information provision accordingly.

Such broad definitions of lobbying have led to a great number of interpretations. For examples, monitoring legislation and activity by competing groups is identified by Nownes and Freeman (1998) as the “most prevalent form of group political activity” (p. 87.) Yet monitoring is a far more passive activity than, for instance, writing correspondence to a legislator. The ambiguity of what qualifies as lobbying may have led some researchers to avoid describing the lobbying process in favor of the outcomes. “For the most part, existing literature on organized interests examines only whether and when organizations’ lobbying efforts affect policy makers’ decisions” (Hojnacki, 1997, p. 62).

Surprisingly little research exists on the decision-making process that goes into the creation of a lobbying effort by an organization. Perhaps the best developed formula comes from Hillman and Hitt (1999) which theorizes that lobbying strategies (or tactics—they draw a distinction not present elsewhere) are the result of a number of factors and pre-tactical decisions.

While this model is useful in suggesting the types of decisions an organization faces, it is important to note that Hillman and Hitt derived these dimensions on their studies of corporate lobbying, not a generalized version that might be applied to the diverse types of potential political actors listed in the previous section of this work. This section will introduce the Hillman and Hitt model, alongside evidence from other sources as to the fit of the model in the higher education context.

2.2.1. Approach

The Hillman-Hitt model of developing lobbying strategies identifies two initial ways in which an organization may choose to participate in the realm of politics. In the *transactional* approach, organizations respond to new public policy issues as they arise. In a *relational* approach, organizations look to the long-term and seek to build consensus over a broad policy area.

The model posits three potential variables in the decision of whether to adopt a transactional or relational approach. These are listed below, with explanatory text.

- *The level of dependence on the government.* When an organization depends in large part on the state, the organization is more likely to adopt a relational approach, while a limited investment in the state calls for a transactional one.
- *The diversification of the products of the organization.* When the products of a firm are diverse, public policy issues may be disparate, requiring the firm to adopt a transactional approach. When the products of the firm are more similar, long-term investments and collaborations can be built, an example of the relational approach.
- *The placement of a state along a continuum of corporatism/pluralism within the framework of the public policy.* The authors here suggest a country-specific variable to describe how open the public policy process is to outside influence. A corporatist state limits involvement in the public sphere to specific industries. On the other end, a pluralist state has a patchwork of interest groups competing in the policy process. Corporatist states have more fixed players, allowing for relationships to form over time, while pluralist states have shifting alliances and divergent interests. Such uncertainties limit political approaches to singular issues, an example of the transactional approach.

In considering whether this theory of firm behavior holds true for non-firm political actors, interest group research indicates that it does. Lowery and Gray (1998) state that using lobbyist registrations as a marker does not capture the sum total of political activity in a state, noting that “[s]ome organizations move on and off registration rolls as salient issues move on and off the political agenda” (p. 241). When an organization’s presence in lobbying is tied to particular issues, this is indicative of a transactional approach.

Theorizing on the fit of these variables to the public university produces no clear answers. In

terms of dependence on the government, public universities clearly have a large stake in both the legal and regulatory areas, as well as the budget. The public university is tied to the state government more so than a private firm, so a relational approach seems likely.

The degree of product diversification within a public university is difficult to gauge in the abstract, not only because such a measurement is subjective. In the model of the private firm, the product is that which is marketed to the public for purchase, so the university's products might be new technologies or degree programs. On the other hand, if products are defined as the outputs of an organization, then research, technologies and graduates (or even more abstractly, knowledge) are the products of the university. Even if a clear definition of the university's products was apparent, there is also the question as to the degree of similarity within a single "product." If graduates were assumed to be the only product of the university, there may still exist substantial differences between an engineering graduate and an art history graduate. A helpful tool in conceptualizing the degree of product diversification of a public university is the legislative tracking databases some campuses use to inform interested parties as to the types of bills affecting the institution. For example, the University of California's State Government Relations Office publishes a tracking database, with options for users to filter by such wide-ranging issues as agriculture, business operations, and health. Other legislation listed in the database includes bills related to science policy, employment, and compensation. This legislative tracking tool demonstrates the wide variety of issues that a public research university has interests in. Using the Hillman-Hitt model, this would require the adoption of a transactional approach to political behavior.

On the corporatism-pluralism continuum, evidence from Gray and Lowery (1995) as to the growth and proliferation of interest groups within states indicate that the political process is open to different types of organizations to influence it. Furthermore, it is important to note that diversity exists within the organization of state governments. The powers of the citizenry in some states to bypass state legislatures through the process of initiatives and referenda would seem to place such states closer to the pluralist end of the continuum than those states where no such powers exist. That such powers can be damaging to higher education is proven: California's Proposition 13, passed in 1978, was particularly disastrous for public higher

education as it placed a cap on the property taxes the state could levy. This led to a \$7 billion decline in state earnings and a cut in state funding for higher education (Hines, 1988, p. 33). This freedom of the citizenry to raise issues to the level of the ballot would imply that the public university would need to adopt a transactional approach to manage diverse and shifting policy issues arising from diverse interest groups and actors.

Broad evidence of a relational approach to political activity by public universities comes from the existence within many public universities of in-house lobbyists and government relations staff (Ferrin, 2003). The very fact that a university maintains full-time employees dedicated to managing the relationship between the university and the state government is indicative of a long-term, relational approach to lobbying.

2.2.2. Level of Participation

Once an approach is taken, Hillman and Hitt assert that the next step in formulating a political strategy is to decide on whether the political action will be taken by an *individual* or by a *collective*. Individual here refers to either a single person or a single organization. Within the framework of private firms, collective action is undertaken by trade associations that represent a number of similarly-engaged businesses.

Again the model contains variables that the authors use to predict the likelihood of a firm to engage in either individual or collective political action.

- *Resources*. The authors suggest that firms with substantial financial resources are more likely to act individually, as they can afford to do so. They also suggest that “intangible resources” such as experience with influencing public policy, also create the conditions for individual action.
- *Corporatist/pluralist continuum*. As in the approach to political behavior, the openness of the public sphere creates incentives towards either individual or collective action. The authors suggest that a closed, corporatist system requires collective action on the part of organizations in order to summon the requisite power to influence the policy process. They suggest that organizations compromise with each other in order to gain ground as a whole. In a pluralist state, they assert that there is a fragmentation of political power among diverse interests, and that while lawmakers may have to compromise to please a

broad group of constituents, individuals seeking to influence the policy process do not need to compromise with each other. Thus in pluralist states, organizations engage in individual political action.

The model also suggests that within the transactional approach, in the matter of *controversial issues* (what they term “election issues,”) firms will opt for a collective action. The reasoning for this is that if an issue rises to the level of public debate, firms seek to limit negative, individual exposure by taking a collective stance.

The question of what would consist of a collective in a public university system is of keen interest to this study. Hillman and Hitt single out trade associations as the representative form of alliance, but that not need be the only form of collective action organizations take. Further discussion of collective lobbying forms will be covered in the next section of this study.

Continuing the idea that American states exhibit pluralist participation in governance, then the model used here would imply that public universities would engage in individual action, and that they will compete and win resources independent of the other public higher education institutions. The variable of having the requisite resources to mount a lobbying effort, however, is ill-defined in the public university context. The authors suggest a degree of largesse in terms of the budget available for political action. Whether a publically-funded higher education system has such resources at its disposal is questionable, although again, the existence of specifically-dedicated individuals in government relations positions at public universities would imply possession of such resources.

As to the matter of controversial, “election issues,”) public universities may indeed have cause for concern and thus reason to lobby as part of a collective. This paper will highlight the issue of gun control on campuses, but other controversies in American higher education exist (e.g., the use of affirmative action in admissions procedures.) Universities that maintain hospitals may engender controversies in terms of healthcare legislation. Stem cell research carried out on campus may involve universities in science policy debates.

Hillman and Hitt imply that individual or collective action is an option with either the relational or transactional approach to political participation. This seems unlikely, in the sense that they

assume collective action is the joining of a trade association. Further, the authors do not fully account for is types of issues, besides controversies, that might encourage individual or collective action. It is possible to assume that with firm lobbying, the types of issues encountered have industry-wide ramifications and few firm-specific regulations. However, in other policy areas, some lobbying outcomes are *selective*, in the sense that they affect only the entity responsible for the lobbying, while others are *collective*, affecting a group of similar interested parties (Lowery and Gray, 1995). Presumably, then, organizations would be more disposed towards collective action when the outcomes of such lobbying confer collective rather than selective benefits. This study investigates this potential difference in terms of public universities by looking at how universities lobby around the issue of gun control, which could be construed to be a collective benefit, and how they lobby for funding from the state legislature, which would more likely be viewed as selective to a particular institution.

2.2.3. Strategies

Once an organization has decided on an approach and whether it will engage in the approach individually or collectively, Hillman and Hitt then indicate that it must choose specific strategies to engage state governments. Their model identifies three general strategies through which organizations try to influence the state. The authors note that these strategies are not exclusive of each other, and that organizations engage multiple activities in order to influence policy.

- *Information.* In a representative government, policymakers need to have information in order to decide how to vote on a specific issue. Interest groups tailor messages to legislatures in order to optimize the legal outcome.
- *Financial inducements.* The authors note the high cost of political campaigns, and that through campaign contributions, organizations can support candidates who best represent their interests.
- *Constituency building.* In order to continue serving in an elected office, a legislator needs votes. Constituency building among diverse interests creates a bloc of voters around one cause, creating incentives for policymakers to side with these united parties.

Below is a reproduction of a table in which Hillman and Hitt place a number of common lobbying tactics within the three major strategy areas they have identified. The Hillman and Hitt model was developed theoretically from other studies, so empirical evidence is needed to support

its use as a guide to understanding lobbying behaviors. Aplin and Hegarty (1980) derive a list of strategies through interviews with “focal” persons (legislators and related staff.) A table categorizing their conception of lobbying strategies is reproduced here in Appendix A. One of their lobbying categories, Information, corresponds with that of Hillman and Hitt, and most of the other tactics they use can be attributed to Hillman’s and Hitt’s three strategic types. Aplin and Hegarty, however, do not provide a description of the tactics themselves, leaving some of them (for example, “threat of harm”) somewhat nebulous.

Table 1: Taxonomy of Political Strategies

Strategy	Tactic	Characteristic
Information Strategy	Lobbying Commissioning research projects and reporting research results Testifying as expert witnesses Supplying position papers or technical reports	Targets political decision makers by providing information
Financial Incentive Strategy	Contributions to politicians or political party Honoraria for speaking Paid travel, etc. Personal service (hiring people with political experience or having a firm member run for office)	Targets political decision makers by providing financial incentives
Constituency-Building Strategy	Grassroots mobilization of employees, suppliers, customers, etc. Advocacy advertising Public relations Press conferences Political education programs	Targets political decision makers indirectly through constituent support

Source: Hillman & Hitt (1999)

Other survey-derived results echo the major categories listed by Hillman and Hitt (1999). For example, Nownes and Freeman (1998) developed a list of common lobbying practices

(reproduced here in Appendix B.) Though they did not try to categorize them, the tactics themselves largely mirror those already mentioned here. However, they do add *monitoring of legislation* (described above) and *Political Action Committee giving* to the overall roster of lobbying strategies, though they omit them from the list reproduced in Appendix B.

Within the context of this study, it is important to again note the U.S. Tax Code, which prevents non-profit organizations (including universities) from direct financial contributions to political candidates (IRS, 2011). Universities may only donate funds to PACs that are unaffiliated with a candidate and represent only a particular position. However, these issue PACs can then give limited amounts of money directly towards a candidate's election (or defeat) but are unlimited in advertising or otherwise supporting their issue. At the federal level, one study noted the small representation of such unaffiliated PACs, and judged contributions from universities as insignificant (de Figuereido and Silverman, 2006). State-level university relationships with PACs remain understudied. Evidence from Texas shows that the creation of a PAC that lobbied for increased funds for higher education was successful (Hines, 1988). In that case, persons outside the university sector formed the PAC and used informational strategies to lobby on behalf of higher education. But beyond case-specific research, the importance of state-level higher education PACs is unknown (McLendon, 2003).

While Ferrin (2005) does not consider PAC giving, he does reference political contributions as a potential lobbying tactic available to universities. He finds that while university lobbyists see campaign contributions as a particularly effective lobbying tactic, they envision those contributions coming from university officials, not the university itself. Ferrin also finds that officials do not give in the volume that university lobbyists would prefer, indicating that campaign contributions are not a widespread tactic. Although Ferrin (2005) is a study of public and private universities, both are tax-exempt under the Tax Code and should be similarly limited in how they donate to political campaigns.

A frequent label for lobbying strategies is *insider* versus *outsider* lobbying. Goldstein (1999) refers to personal meetings with elected officials, testimony in hearings, or financial contributions as insider lobbying, referring to actions taken inside the capital region. He defines outsider lobbying as "any action" that results in constituencies outside the government center attempting to influence representatives, or more popularly, *grass roots* lobbying (Goldstein,

1999, p. 3). However, at least one study argues that the insider/outsider dichotomy is an archaic distinction. As more organizations of different types have begun lobbying, organizations have also increased and diversified their lobbying efforts to include both insider and outsider strategies (Nownes & Freeman, 1998).

2.3. Cooperation as a Specific Strategy

The lobbying strategy (or tactic) of individuals or organizations lobbying in concert towards a specific outcome is one that appears across the literature. Hillman and Hitt (1992), as has been shown, see this as a pre-tactical decision, and in the context of firms, it entails firms joining together as part of a trade association. Nownes and Freeman (1998), on the other hand, include “entering into coalitions with other groups” as a tactic, and found that nearly 80 percent of lobbyists and over 90 percent of organizations report using it in their study of political activities in three American states (p. 92).

How a public university views other universities in terms of lobbying is the crux of this research. This paper seeks to determine if and how the competition that is characteristic of the American higher education system (c.f. Clark, 1983) informs the choices in lobbying behaviors of public universities. The opposite view of competition, in other words cooperation as part of a lobbying alliance or a similar coordinated effort, is therefore of key interest.

Neither competition nor cooperation is readily applied to organizations based on similarities of organizational type. Rather, how organizations choose allies or face competition may depend largely on the nature of the policy issue. Adversarial relationships are deeply entrenched between business and unions in the context of labor policies, and between industry and environmental groups involved in energy issues. However, organizations representing farmers find both allies and adversaries among themselves and not from some diametrically-opposed group (Salisbury, Heinz, Laumann & Nelson, 1987). Some entities, such as those in the healthcare domain, do not face direct opposition similar to that of business and unions, but instead contend with “the more amorphous forces of budget constraints and administrative priorities” (Salisbury et al., 1987, p. 1227). Public higher education may in fact have few organized opponents, but the fact that universities are given a direct appropriation from the state may create the conditions where competition in lobbying for those resources is necessary.

Interest groups opt to join alliances because “such an aggregation of interests would increase the overall legislative power of an interest group since its lobbyists legitimately could claim to represent many more individuals” (Hunter et al., 1991). In addition, an alliance allows an individual organization to lower its own costs of participation, since allied groups share financial resources, experience in the political field, and information (Hojnacki, 1997). Joining a trade association where a firm’s interests are represented by the association’s leadership, or lobbying directly as part of a coordinated effort with other organizations are both examples of lobbying alliances, although there is little distinction made among these types. Trade associations might benefit smaller firms without the expertise or staff to mount their own lobbying campaigns, while larger organizations may prefer lobbying directly alongside like-minded groups. Whether there is a difference among these alliances types in the sorts of lobbying strategies they choose or the outcomes of their lobbying is not apparent from any available research.

Although Nownes and Freeman (1998) characterize the formation of lobbying alliances as a tactic alongside more discrete activities, the joining of an alliance does not preclude the usage of other lobbying tactics, which reflects Hillman and Hitt’s conception of collective action as a pre-tactical decision. Types of alliances range from *informational networks*, where lobbyists share information with each other, to single-issue *ad hoc coalitions*, where diverse groups work in an informal, highly autonomous way with each other (Mahoney, 2007).

Hojnacki (1997) identifies four factors that influence an organization’s decision to join a lobbying alliance or to work individually. In her view, the *level of adversity* to a position among other interests as well as the scope of agreement that the issue allows, *knowledge of potential allies*, the *level of autonomy* the organization can maintain as part of the alliance, and whether the alliance is composed of *firm-type organizations* or groups espousing *social values* constitute the factors that organizations consider before joining an alliance.

Hojnacki’s view of alliances recalls the transactional behavior of Hillman and Hitt (1999) in that it reflects a joining and leaving of alliances as issue contexts change. However, empirical evidence shows that lobbying alliances tend to display a degree of stability across time and issue areas (Salisbury et al., 1987). Both of these studies come from research on federal lobbying. State-level interest group systems offer both the opportunity for a greater knowledge of potential allies while at the same time, a smaller constellation of allies or competitors.

Despite the prevalence of lobbying alliances as a form of political participation, it is not accurate to assume that such alliances represent the totality of those who would benefit from lobbying on a specific issue. In fact, the presence of such alliances can serve as a disincentive to organizations contemplating entrance into the policy-shaping arena. Lowery and Gray (1996) note that membership groups must offer some selective benefits in order to entice individuals to join, since collective benefits from lobbying can accrue to non-members. As previously noted, non-members who do not contribute (or contribute in disproportionately small ways) are termed free riders. Free riding has been a recognized challenge for membership groups, but institutions engaging in direct political action as part of a coalition or alliance must also contend with free riding (Lowery, Gray, Anderson & Newmark, 2004).

Tandberg (2006) provides a rich description of lobbying at a single, unnamed university in the Eastern part of the U.S. In his study, the university was shown to have engaged in alliances with other public higher education institutions on a regular basis in order to strengthen particular political positions in pursuit of a favorable legislative outcome. Geographic dispersal allowed for the university to comfortably join alliances with other large universities in terms of lobbying for funding as part of the state appropriation. Further, his interview subjects responded that competition in the lobbying arena was rare. This case study, focusing on a single institution, provides a look into the topic of how public higher education institutions relate to one another in the political sphere, but, as the author notes, cannot be generalized. He encourages further research specifically in light of “state environmental and structural factors that may impact higher education interest group activity and coalition formation” (Tandberg, 2006, p. 47).

2.4. Lobbying by Higher Education Institutions

Literature on the political activities of higher education institutions to influence state legislatures is sparse, and much of it is quite dated. “As a subject of social scientific inquiry, politics of higher education research remains in a state of perpetual infancy, prone to periodic lurches but lacking in sustained and systematic conceptualization and analysis” (McLendon & Hearn, 2003, p. 3). Moreover, the attention of researchers interested in the politics of higher education has been split between the federal and state-level governments, with the bulk of academic activity favoring the national scope (McLendon, 2003). As such, the mechanics of higher education lobbying, especially at the level of the American state, remain somewhat unexplored.

One substantive source of information on higher education lobbying tactics reveals that the strategy types suggested by Hillman and Hitt (1999) are all present in the tactics employed by higher education lobbyists. Ferrin (2005) used a scale ranging from 0 to 4 (4 representing “most frequently used”) to derive the most common tactics used by higher education lobbyists. Informational tactics were the most frequent: *direct contact* between the lobbyist and the policymaker highest, followed by having an *influential constituent contact policymakers*, which is in nature an informational strategy, and not constituency-building. Using an influential constituent calls upon the authority and knowledge of the constituent to impart some message to the policymaker. It does not leverage the broad-based support in numbers of constituency-building strategies. Tactics rated between 2 and 3 included *publishing research results* and *entertaining legislators* (informational strategies.) The financial incentive strategy of *contributing to campaigns* was rated between 1 and 2, along with *congressional testimony* (informational) and *letter writing campaigns* (constituency-building.)

Ferrin (2005) also surveyed lobbyists as to their perceptions of the effectiveness of these and other tactics. One addition to the list above is that *monitoring* legislation is seen by university lobbyists as the second most effective strategy. Furthermore, lobbyists responded that campaign contributions were very effective, even if they were under-deployed by university officials. The publishing of research results was ranked low in comparison to other groups, and Ferrin suggests that this might be because the results of university research bear infrequently on the nature of the university or the university’s interests, instead being focused in specific disciplinary areas.

The tactics that were not frequently used (rated between 0 and 1) were largely negative in purpose: the *public denunciation* of opponents was ranked lowest, below *organizing protests* or *pursuing legal action* (Ferrin, 2005). Ferrin compares university lobbyists to lobbyists representing public interest groups (e.g., environmental groups) and those in the employ of private sector concerns, finding that, among other differences, university lobbyists were uniquely hesitant to employ tactics that would reflect negatively on legislators. Ideologically-driven public interests groups were more likely to use this strategy.

In that regard, it is possible that university lobbyists resemble lobbyists for public agencies or executive departments more so than interest groups composed of citizens. Abney (1988) surveyed legislators and non-legislative government agency lobbyists and determined that, while

some variations exist among agencies, lobbyists representing government agencies had greater levels of access to legislators, and were seen as more legitimate sources of information for legislators to turn to. Agencies play a role in mediating conflicts among concerned parties. They also take a long-term, relational approach to lobbying. While non-governmental lobbyists may be pressured to accomplish certain goals in a specific legislative session, agency lobbyists are more able to postpone their objectives until future opportunities present themselves. Abney suggests that this “insider” status creates a “team” mentality among legislators and public agencies, and that public agencies are more hesitant to expose legislators to negative consequences through their lobbying efforts as a result.

Hines (1988) lists some successful lobbying efforts at the state level by universities, including the defeat of a proposition in California that would have decreased the rate of income tax on Californians, and correspondingly decreased the level of funding available for public institutions, including universities, as well as the creation of a PAC in Texas that supported higher education funding. While this study provides illumination in the ways that public universities (and their allies) have engaged in political behavior, it does not provide insight into any systematized processes internal to the institutions that serve to influence the universities’ relationships with the states. The cases he outlines are static campaigns, not part of ongoing strategies. Another shortcoming for modern application is, of course, its publication prior to both the popularization of Internet usage and some significant campaign finance reforms.

In some of the available quantitative analyses of the political factors surrounding state funding for higher education, researchers have discerned a positive relationship between increased state funding and lobbying activities. (Tandberg, 2009; Tandberg, 2010; McLendon, Hearn & Mokher, 2009). In order to represent lobbying in these studies, the authors use the number of public higher education institutions as a proportion of the total number of interest groups. Tandberg (2009) justifies this by stating that “all public institutions engage in some form of lobbying” (p. 418).

To the extent that all public institutions are accountable to the states, and to the extent that institutions will seek to manage their relationships with the state through accountability measures (such as the production of an annual report or the testimony of a university president), this is inarguably true. Most certainly, and most relevantly for the purposes of quantitative studies on

the level of state appropriations, public universities must draft in some form of budget request, and that request may be accompanied by informational campaigns that support the appropriation of funds. Given the scope of lobbying activities (in, for example, Hillman & Hitt, 1999; Nownes & Freeman, 1998), it is fair to say that such activities can be called lobbying.

But by constructing a variable that includes all public higher education institutions in the state, Tandberg ignores any substantive (even quantifiable) differences in lobbying by institutions. Tandberg (2008, 2009) notes that some public universities maintain government relations offices for the purposes of lobbying while others fold this activity into the role of another executive (usually the President or a Vice-President for External Affairs). While no known study addresses the difference between a President-as-lobbyist and the in-house lobbyist in the dedicated government relations role, it may be fair to assume that the university with the capacity to maintain an office for government relations will have a more sustained, active presence in the state capital than the university that relies on its chief executive to lobby on its behalf on top of the other responsibilities of the office.

Further, Tandberg (2009) finds a positive association when public universities compose a greater proportion of the total interest groups in a state. But using all the interest groups may artificially inflate the number of those that are active in the lobbying process surrounding public funding. Ideological groups (e.g., gun advocates or same-sex marriage opponents) will not have as vested an interest in where state funding is appropriated.

On the other hand, if the majority of the total interest groups that Tandberg cites to make up his statewide total are similar, publically-funded entities and their supporters (e.g. healthcare groups, K-12 education systems, etc.), then one must question if a ratio describing the proportion of higher education institutions relative to other state-funded commitments would serve a similar role, irrespective of political activity. Although Tandberg ascribes a greater number of lobbying efforts in the presence of a greater number of universities, his model would indicate that universities receive greater funding if more public universities were founded, which in itself is not especially surprising.

It is also possible to assume that the presence of a large proportion of public higher education institutions represents a state's commitment to education, and thus a large appropriation would

be merely reflective of that commitment. In short, capturing the influence of lobbying activities on state higher education appropriations is under-described using the current variable developed in Tandberg (2008). While it is certainly true that public higher education benefits in terms of state funding when it occupies a greater proportion of the interests within a state, the supposition that this is due to lobbying, made on the weakly-supported basis that all public institutions engage in lobbying activities, deserves more testing.

While these studies provide a roadmap to the political factors that influence public spending on higher education, the lack of qualitative data on how public higher education works to lobby state legislatures leaves those interested in the topic with only information on the outcome of such lobbying (i.e., public expenditures.) The decision-making process of how organizations lobby is less documented, and much less so the processes and rationales of higher education institutions engaged in lobbying. One exception studied the role of the in-house lobbying staff at various universities in the U.S. It underscored the importance of lobbying on the state-university relationship, in that lobbyists were closely tied to the university president and served as the president's proxy when funding decisions were being made in the legislatures (Ferrin, 2003). The study also served to show that the nature of lobbying for higher education remains a shrouded, even controversial, endeavor (Ferrin, 2003).

2.5. Governance

This study has already made reference to “consolidated” or “centralized” governance boards, but clarification is necessary so as to fully understand the types of higher education governance structures and the ways that they might affect public university lobbying.

Governance in the American states has been classified by McGuinness (2002) into three distinct groupings. The quantitative studies mentioned earlier in this paper (Tandberg, 2009; Tandberg, 2010; McLendon et al., 2009) make use of McGuinness' classification, and this study follows those precedents.

In McGuinness' view, the most powerful type of governance structure is the *consolidated governing board*. Such boards are centralized bodies, and their powers extend from academic program review and approval to budgetary issues. In some states, a single board governs all public higher education institutions, while in others, two boards co-exist, one governing the

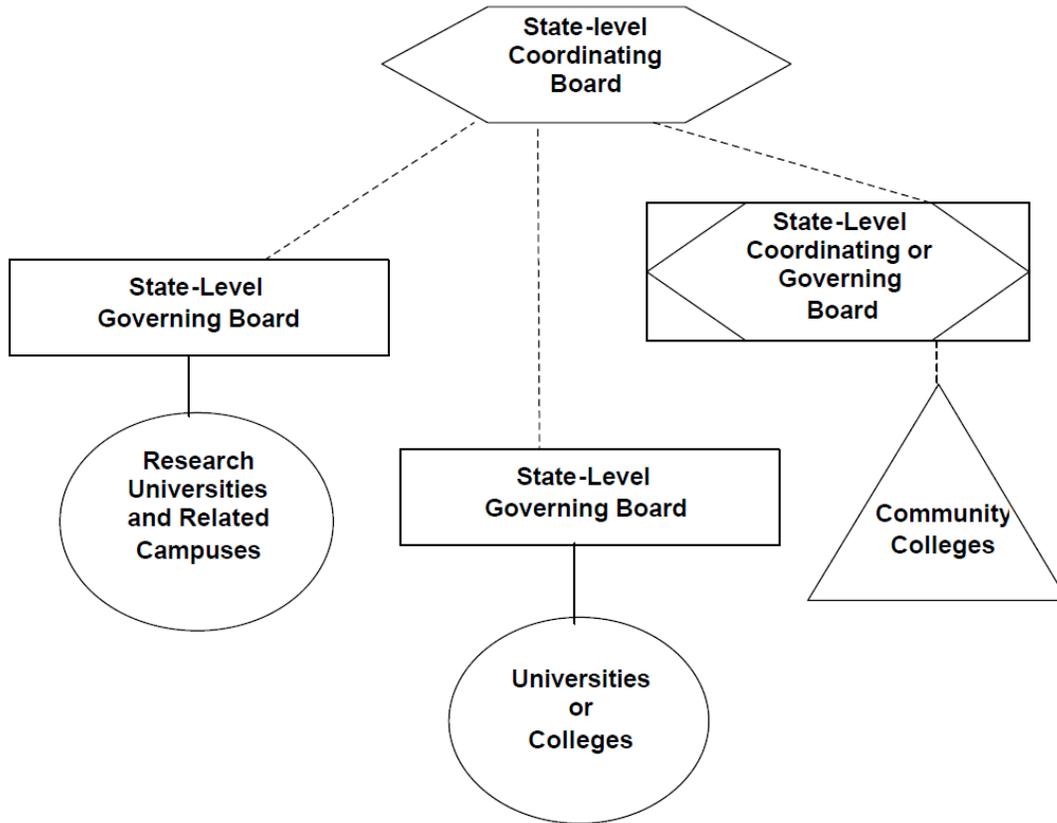
public university sector and the other a community college system. A consolidated governing board serves as a single point among government agencies representing the interests of the public university system, while at the same time, it restricts the autonomy of the institutions themselves.

Coordinating boards are the intermediate level of governance. Coordinating boards “vary significantly in formal authority and informal power and influence” (McGuinness, 2003, p. 6). McGuinness (2002) subdivides coordinating boards into *regulatory boards* which have discretion over budgets and programs, and *advisory boards*, which can only review and recommend actions and budgets.

The weakest form of governance is the *planning or service agency*. These bodies have no formal authority over public higher education institutions (McGuinness, 2002). Universities in these systems have a great degree of autonomy over their own pursuits.

These are generalized models: McGuinness (2003) describes 19 distinct governance arrangements among the 50 American states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. At times, different types of governance exist within the same state at different levels. As an example, four states share a model of governance where a central coordinating board oversees three distinct governance boards for distinct types of institution. California is one such state, where separate governance boards exist for the University of California system, the California State University system, and the community college system. This multi-level governance structure is depicted below.

Figure 1: California's Governance Structure



Source: McGuiness (2003)

The role of governance bodies in politics is one that requires disentangling. Research on politics and governance has produced a great number of studies but not all of them relevant or useful here. Nicholson-Crotty and Meier (2003), for example, sought to determine whether governance structures were able to insulate higher education from political factors within a state. They hypothesized that either a centralized board would either possess enough autonomy to insulate higher education from other political factors (e.g., legislative professionalism or citizen ideology), or that such a board would serve as a central point for such factors to be focused and increase their importance. Their results were inconclusive in terms of outcomes, but did signify that governance has a role in political activity. Where that study differs from this one is in the directionality of the research: this study seeks to determine the ways (if any) governance structures create the conditions through which universities attempt to influence politics, not the reverse. Further, its quantitative nature only tells us that different forms of governance produce

different environments in which higher education policy is created and implemented, but it cannot tell us what those differences are. Thus, further qualitative research is required.

A centralized governance board not only provides a direct connection between universities and policymakers, it also elevates university interests to the level of other executive agencies, which may provide political benefits to universities in terms of access to and influence of legislators and other policymakers (Abney, 1988). Tandberg (2010) cites several studies that indicate that agency-level advocates are especially effective. However, this assumes that the board is an active participant in lobbying, and there is little evidence that this is the case. Though Weerts and Ronca (2006) indicate that boards are often seen as more aligned with campuses, there is as yet little evidence that boards campaign on behalf of universities. Further, consolidated governing boards by their very existence retain powers not granted to the universities and thus restrict the autonomy of universities. The result is that universities may be impeded in not only how they lobby, but in the positions they are permitted to take.

In the quantitative studies that have included higher education governance structures as factors influencing higher education appropriations, the results have been decidedly mixed. McLendon et al. (2009) and Tandberg (2008) found that governance was statistically non-significant as a factor. Weerts and Ronca (2006), in a study limited to three large research universities, discerned those universities under a consolidated, centralized board received more in funding. In an earlier, much broader study, Lowry (2001) also found that states that have fewer governing boards confer greater state appropriations to higher education. On the other hand, Tandberg (2008) found there to be a negative relationship between centralized governance structures and funding, speculating that centralized boards might insulate universities from the political process, or that boards represent the government's involvement in higher education, but not higher education's interests in government. This negative relationship was further confirmed in Tandberg (2011), where he found that centralized governance has a negative association with state funding for capital projects, and he suggests that individual campuses lose out when a central board advocates for an entire higher education system.

Lowry (2001)'s positive association between governance structures and funding and Tandberg (2008)'s negative finding share a common feature in that they assume a relationship between

governance structures and lobbying practices. Lowry assumes that boards lobby on behalf of their institutions, but also that institutions also lobby for their own interests.

“Public universities in states that have few governing boards receive more state government funding than those in states that have many boards and thus greater coordination problems. This implies that state government funding depends on the ability of public universities to lobby effectively for themselves” (Lowry, 2001, p. 117).

His approach infers that governing structures do engage (and even coordinate) lobbying activities, and that such coordination leads to greater effectiveness in the lobbying arena. Tandberg (2008), however, finds that “having one agency lobbying for public higher education may not be as effective as having many individual institutions all asking for more money for public higher education” (p. 22). His implication is that a board does the lobbying on behalf of the institutions, rather than serve as a site of coordination. From available research, however, the role that governance structures play in lobbying has not been described. Whether they serve as sites of coordination as in Lowry’s depiction, or as the sole advocate for institutions as in Tandberg’s, is one area of uncertainty that this study seeks to address.

The focus on the relationship between governance and lobbying outcomes not only ignores the way that governance might be involved in lobbying practices, but it also flattens some of the distinctions among governance structures. The strong or weak nature of coordinating boards has been given little attention in the quantitative studies that have made note of them (Tandberg, 2009; Tandberg, 2010; McLendon et al. , 2009). Those studies use a dummy variable in which the value of ‘1’ represents consolidated governing boards and ‘0’ represents all forms of coordinating boards and planning/service agencies. This approach considers strong coordinating boards, which have regulatory authority over universities, as equal to planning agencies, which have little responsibility beyond oversight.

3. Methodology

This study favors a qualitative research approach to explore the lobbying relationships among public universities and the effect (if any) of a consolidated governing board. As previously mentioned, political science research around this topic has favored outcomes over process (Hojnacki, 1997). This is as true for higher education lobbying research. Much of the recent literature on the political activities has been quantitative in nature, and confirmed the importance of public university lobbying without a clear picture of how those universities actually engage in lobbying (Tandberg, 2009; Tandberg, 2010; McLendon et al., 2009). In order to provide some evidence of this phenomenon, qualitative research methods are utilized (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 68).

3.1. Case Study Design

The objectives of this study are perceived as best met through the use of a comparative case study, a technique that, by its nature, requires multiple cases. Case studies “have the merit of providing a framework in which a scholar with modest time and resource may generate what may potentially be useful data” (Collier, 1993, p. 106). Gerring (2004) describes the case study method as an “in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena” (p. 341). Gerring further sees case studies as a way of “defining cases, not a way of analyzing cases or a way of modeling causal relationships” (p. 341). In this vein, in designing a methodology for a case study, a researcher must further define the tools of data collection as well as the method of analysis, as these are not inherent simply through the invocation of the case study design.

Gerring (2004) identifies the broadest class of a phenomenon as a population. Within the population, researchers identify a sample, the subsection of the population that will be studied. A sample is made up of units. Units at a particular moment in time represent cases (Gerring, 2004, p. 342).

In this research, the sample chosen is composed of two U.S. states’ higher education systems. The units under review are the government relations offices (personified through an officer employed therein) at two universities in each of those states. Rather than a fixed period in time

serving as the temporal “bounds” suggested by Gerring, this study substitutes specific issues about which the universities might reasonably be expected to lobby their state governments. Through these *instances* of pressure that may have evoked a lobbying response, the temporal dimension is implicitly satisfied, as the case becomes limited to specific university offices acting around specific issue areas.

Case study methodology suffers from what many scholars refer to as the “many variables, small *N*” problem (c.f. Collier, 1994, p. 106). The frequent critique of such a methodology is that any discoveries generated from a case or a small number of cases are not generalizable to the broader class. Justifications for case study research include the fact that what the researcher loses in breadth by studying a small *N*, he gains in depth. As Gerring notes, “it is the opportunity to study a single unit in great depth that constitutes one of the great virtues of the case study method” (2004, p. 345).

Researchers including Collier (1993) and Nissen (1998) refer to Lijphart (1971) as one of the cornerstones of comparative case study methodology and especially its application in inquiries in the field of political science. According to Lijphart (as quoted by both Collier and Nissen), case studies are particularly suited towards certain types of research questions. As such, while the results of a small *N* case study may not be wholly and instantaneously generalizable to the broader class of phenomena, case studies can contribute to the pursuit of knowledge. Lijphart describes case studies as either having interest in a particular case or in the development of theories (Nissen, 1998). In terms of the single case, case studies can inform by serving as an *atheoretical* collection of facts that describe a particular case or by *interpretive* studies that use a theory to describe and illuminate a single case under investigation.

Where a researcher’s objective is in the generation or development of theory, case studies can serve as a basis for the *generation of hypotheses*, or as *theory-confirming* or *theory-infirmiting* studies. It is impossible (or at least unwise) for a researcher to suggest a fully-formed theory from the evidence of a small number of cases. However, a single case study may provide sufficient data for the generation of a hypothesis towards a theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study, or it can provide evidence for or against a theory originating from other cases or other methods (Lijphart, 1971, qtd. in Nissen, 1998; Collier, 1993).

This research endeavors to be of the theory-confirming/-infirmiting model. It is, of course, logically suspect for a researcher to design a case study with the explicit intention of confirming or infirmiting a particular theory; if the researcher already knows that a case study will provide evidence for or against a theory prior to data collection and analysis, then research hardly seems merited.

Rather than a single case, this study selected eight cases for study, if one identifies cases using Gerring's definitions (2004, p. 342) that cases are composed of units of a sample at a particular moment in time. The units in question are composed of four university government relations offices as they lobby regarding two different issues areas. In effect, then, this study has 8 cases from which to draw information about the phenomenon at hand (that of cooperation or competition in state-level lobbying strategies.) However, the objective of this research is to characterize the higher education systems of two states as to their competitiveness or cooperation in lobbying practices, which requires the generalization from those 8 cases (4 in each state) to the system level. The nature of this inquiry aids in supporting and justifying such state-level generalizations: by collecting data on the practices and processes of any potential cooperation in lobbying, interviewees are able to identify other institutions that work collaboratively with them, without the necessity of the interviewer speaking to each one.

Whether one views this approach as 8 cases or 2 states, this research must be considered a multiple case study. According to Yin (1994, p. 46), multiple case studies provide evidence either through the replication or contrast of results: a theory can be confirmed by being present across cases, or by being absent in some cases for "predictable reasons." Nissen cites John Stuart Mill's methods of inductive reasoning, and calls these approaches to case selection and analysis as either the "method of agreement" or the "method of difference" (Nissen, 1998, pp. 406-407). The logic of these methods holds that the relationships between variables can be uncovered through comparing very similar cases that differ in the outcome, or by comparing different cases that have a similar one.

Yin suggests that the researcher begin with a theory as the preliminary step, then to select cases and to develop the data collection procedures. The design of a multiple-case study differs from a single-case study only in that it requires the researcher to replicate the data collection method across a number of single-case studies for examination (Yin, 1994, p. 49). After each single-case

study, Yin suggests the researcher prepare a case report. After all cases have been reported, then Yin recommends drawing “cross-case conclusions” (ibid.).

This study departs from Yin’s prescription, as the initial step of this research was to identify cases. This researcher had no preconceptions of how (if at all) the outcome variable under observation in a state with a centralized governance board would differ from or be akin to the outcome variable in a state without any such agency. Without such foresight, it is impractical (if not impossible) to attribute a theory to the outcomes before the data is collected and research is done to determine if a theory might explain any differences. Put another way, without atheoretical studies that report the facts of the cases at hand, beginning with theory is an unworkable point of departure for this research.

As mentioned above, cases may be conceptualized as ways of defining units under study, but not as analytical tools (Gerring, 1994). Comparison, then, serves as a tool of analysis (Nissen, 1998). In Yin’s multiple-case study design, comparison is implied as the researcher is called upon to search for similarities or differences across cases. But political science has been the site of a great deal of explicitly comparative research, though “comparative politics” as an area of research has suffered from some degree of ambiguity as to the subjects and purposes of authors engaged therein (Nissen, 1998).

In Nissen’s conception of comparison, it can be used for analysis only after research design has been conceived and data collected. In this, her views are congruent with the steps of creating a multiple-case study that Yin (1994) prescribes.

3.1.1. Case Selection: States

In order to examine how higher education lobbying alliances are influenced by different forms of governance, this study seeks to compare two state systems of higher education as the primary units of analysis, on the basis of having diverse structures of higher education governance. Case selection techniques require random sampling or sampling based on predetermined characteristics (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Within what Flyvbjerg terms *information-oriented sampling*, cases may be selected based on extreme or deviant cases, cases with maximum variation, critical cases, or paradigmatic cases (2006, p. 230).

To best illustrate the relationships between governance and higher education lobbying, this study will seek to analyze one system governed by a consolidated board and one under the supervision of a planning agency. Governance structures represent the independent variable in this study, as the state university systems that function as cases were selected based on this characteristic. Governance structures cannot be placed along a true continuum, as states create highly individualized, parallel systems of governance that cannot be simply ranked along a scale. However, the case selection here is designed to be one of maximum variation by selecting governance structures that have the fewest features in common. One of the states selected for study here has a consolidated governance board that serves as a central link between the higher education system and the state government. It also limits autonomy of the institutions under its purview by exercising authority over policy. The other state has no formal governance structure, thereby maximizing institutional autonomy and minimizing any nexus between the higher education system and the state government. While McGuiness (2003) characterizes this state as having a planning agency, in practice, the agency has no role in planning or governance of the state's higher education institutions.

In the absence of similar studies from which one could draw more vivid assumptions about the lobbying role of a powerful, consolidated board, this study is limiting its scope to only two states. Any differences that can be accounted for by such a board are assumed to be in sharpest relief by comparing the strongest and weakest forms of university governance.

The hypothetical assumption at the basis of this selection is that greater powers localized into a single agency will have a substantial difference in the ways that public higher education institutions represent their interests to the state. With such an agency, the members of which are appointed by the governor, there is a direct connection to the legislative and executive powers of the state and a thorough understanding of the issues facing higher education institutions.

A planning agency, on the other hand, has little connection to the operations, needs, and priorities of public higher education, and may not have any direct influence within the government, especially on behalf of higher education institutions.

Beyond representation of higher education in the policy-shaping arena, this study also seeks to determine if and how a governance board promotes cooperation among universities under its

purview, or whether having such an advocate at the state level engenders competition by broadly representing the general interests of the system. Likewise, it questions whether the lack of such a board encourages cooperation among otherwise-unrepresented institutions or whether universities must compete for their resources.

Two of the few studies that have sought to address the issue of lobbying by higher education interest group alliances have published the results of their findings while maintaining the anonymity of their interviewees, and even of the institutions the interviewees were associated with (Tandberg, 2006; Ferrin, 2003). This study uses the same level of discretion in collecting data from the individuals mentioned herein.

With due discretion, the specific states at the focus of this study will not be named. In the case of the state under the governance of a consolidated governing board, this study will use the term *Board State*. In this state, the Board represents all levels of public institutions, from the large research universities (of which there are several) to the far more numerous 2- and 4-year colleges, although adult, vocational, and technical education bodies are excluded. The role of the Board in lobbying in the state has not been clarified in previous research. Further, it remains somewhat unclear as to how the budget process works, so it may be the case that the institutions direct their lobbying efforts at the Board itself. The budget process in this state results in a total allocation for public higher education directly to the Board itself, not specific lines in the budget for specific institutions. The origins of this amount are not clear—if the Board makes decisions on what goes into the final budget request, in other words, if it does not merely collect and forward individual budget requests from each institution, then it may perhaps be the site of some sort of lobbying behavior.

On the opposite end of the governance spectrum, a state has been selected in which institutions have individual boards of governance, and an ostensible (all but powerless) planning agency. In some of the larger institutions, the members of the boards are elected by the people of the state, while in others, the governor appoints the members. Beyond the confines of these boards, this state has no significant agency responsible for its governance or management. The planning agency has no role in the governance or coordination of public institutions. This will be termed *Self-Governed Institutions State* for the purposes of maintaining anonymity in this study. For the purposes of brevity, this will be abbreviated to *SIGI State*.

Without a centralized body for decision-making, however, the public universities of the SGI State have formed an *Executive Committee* (the actual title of this body will be kept anonymous to maintain discretion) that appears to serve as a representative body for universities to the state government. Community colleges, however, are left outside this body and are instead represented by two different organizations.

Given the two very different approaches to higher education governance in the Board State and in the SGI State, it is anticipated that this study will find significantly different organizational behaviors in how the public higher education institutions in each state seek to influence governmental decisions in the higher education arena. The governance structure will be expected to create different processes through which decisions are made, and the channels in which higher education institutions communicate positions on policy. In turn, then, there should be significant, observable differences in the ways higher education institutions lobby the government.

3.1.2. Case Selection: Institutions

In order to collect data on university lobbying, this study interviewed staff members at public institutions in both the Board State and the SGI State. The interviewees targeted were those working in a state government relations office at research institutions (identified as such through the use of the Carnegie Classifications of Institutions of Higher Education, 2010). Table 2 below presents some basic institutional details about the institutions whose staff were interviewed for this study. While it was hoped that diverse types of institutions could be represented here, smaller institutions lack dedicated state government relations offices, and may or may not fold such activities into other administrative services (potentially those offices involved outreach, external relations, or in a budget office.) Insofar as this study was being conducted within a small timeframe, it was necessary to limit contact by the researcher to those offices that would have the most relevant experience and first-hand information on the lobbying process. Further, larger institutions could be reliably expected to have a broad base of issues of concern to them, and thus a larger pool of activity that would illuminate routine processes and behaviors. As mentioned, the University of California System's State Government Relations Office tracks legislation in such diverse fields as agriculture, medicine and health, and employment law,

beyond the much more obvious concerns such as issues surrounding financial matters, student aid or academic affairs.

Table 2: Institutional Characteristics of Case-Study Universities

	Board State		SGI State	
	Urban University	S&T University	Flagship University	Rural University
Level	4-year or above	4-year or above	4-year or above	4-year or above
Undergraduate Instructional Profile	Balanced arts & sciences/professions, high graduate coexistence	Professions plus arts & sciences, high graduate coexistence	Arts & sciences plus professions, high graduate coexistence	Professions focus, some graduate coexistence
Graduate Instructional Profile	Comprehensive doctoral (no medical/veterinary)	Comprehensive doctoral (no medical/veterinary)	Comprehensive doctoral with medical/veterinary	Doctoral, STEM dominant
Enrollment Profile	High undergraduate	Majority undergraduate	Majority undergraduate	High undergraduate
Undergraduate Profile	Medium full-time four-year, selective, higher transfer-in	Full-time four-year, more selective, lower transfer-in	Full-time four-year, more selective, lower transfer-in	Full-time four-year, more selective, lower transfer-in
Size and Setting	Large four-year, primarily nonresidential	Large four-year, highly residential	Large four-year, primarily residential	Medium four-year, primarily residential
Basic	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Research Universities (very high research activity)	Research Universities (high research activity)

Source: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2010)

Further, large public institutions within the same state may have similarities that engender collaboration and lobbying alliances. At the same time, given the population ecology view of political interests, those similarities might provoke more competitive lobbying stances.

Comparing a small, liberal arts-centered campus to a large research university almost surely removes any chance of robust competition between the two.

Four government relations offices at research universities were contacted, with two respondents in each state agreeing to participate (i.e., 4 interviewees in total.) Interviews were conducted via telephone, and lasted for about 30 minutes each. The respondents are described in broad terms below:

In the Board State, one respondent was the Executive Director of the state government relations office at a highly-ranked, research-heavy large university focused on science and technology. The other was the Director of a similar office at an urban, largely commuter, research university. In the text that follows, these will be referred to as *Science and Technology (S&T) University* and *Urban University*.

In the SGI State, one respondent was a Government Relations Associate at the flagship, research-heavy university and the other was the Vice-President for government relations at a small, technological-research based, rural university. These will be referred to as *Flagship University* and *Rural University*. At the risk that the reader will associate Urban University and Rural University, care will be taken to specify which state is being discussed at which time.

All participants had at least 3 years of experience in the particular office they were representing, ensuring that they were knowledgeable of the relevant processes discussed.

3.1.3. Case Selection: Issues

This study proposes to study lobbying around two legislative areas: the state budget, in which public institutions might be more competitive with each other for finite resources, and which is a fixed, predictable process; and a specific policy issue, in which a favorable outcome would benefit the system at-large, but which is not as predictable. The selection of these issues reflects the idea of selective versus collective benefits of lobbying (Lowery et al., 2004). The issue of the state appropriation represents a selective good (as dollars going to one institution are pointedly not going to another) while a policy issue affects the collective of institutions similarly.

The decision to limit inquiry to instances of lobbying around specific issues comes from a suggestion in Nownes and Freeman (1998), in which they note that information from lobbyist

interviewees led to too-general information and that research “should begin to focus upon how group tactics and techniques vary by issue and across time” (p. 110). In addition, as described in the section regarding case-study methodology, the choice of instances of lobbying is intended to satisfy what Gerring (2004) conceptualizes as “units in time.”

However, attempting to “control” for specific factors in social science research may not be possible (Nissen, 1998). As an outsider, this researcher recognizes that his ability to pre-determine the sorts of issues that matter to in-house lobbyists at public higher education institutions is limited to assumptions. Yet the benefits of identifying focal issues as part of the interviews, in terms of clarity of responses and provision of concrete examples, are judged in this study to outweigh the potential oversight as to other factors that influence lobbying.

In terms of the higher education responses to the policy issues to be studied in each state, legislatures in both the Board State and the SGI State began debate on bills regarding gun control. Media sources in the SGI State reported that pro-gun populations across the U.S., citing violence on the campuses of Northern Illinois University and Virginia Tech, led an organized push in over a dozen states for an amendment which would allow licensed firearm holders to carry weapons into public space, including university settings. In the Board State, the law had prohibited the possession of concealed weapons in public spaces, including college campuses and dormitories, while the SGI State had allowed higher education institutions to decide the issue for themselves. (And in fact, one institution in the SGI State was on record as having allowed guns on campus, though not inside buildings such as dorms or classrooms.)

The purpose of this project would be to understand how universities responded to this campaign in both states. If an alliance was formed, the purpose is to understand how it came about, i.e., if it was initiated by the Board in the Board State or by the executive committee in the SGI State, or by individual institutions; how actors were selected and mobilized; and if any trade-offs were made to ensure support of particular actors.

The primary objective of this project is to create models of political alliance formation in both states, which requires a separate, independent look at both states in isolation. However, ultimately, it is desired to understand these models in terms of a theory of organizational behavior and relationships. In order to highlight this aspect of alliances, a comparative

discussion is intended to draw out the differences between the two states and how these differences either lend themselves to a single theory, or if the differences in governance create unique circumstances and behaviors in each state.

3.2. Data Collection Methods

This study relies primarily on interviewing as its primary data collection method. Four representatives of government relations offices at four research universities were interviewed for approximately 30 minutes each. Interviews were loosely-structured: while questions were built around issues identified by this researcher as having the potential to promote competition and cooperation, there was little evidence that these issues were representative of the work of the government relations offices. Given that one criticism of qualitative research is given as a tendency towards verification of the researcher's own opinions (Flyvbjerg, 2006), interviews in this study were designed to allow for respondents to elaborate on the processes of lobbying and the decisions they face in order to uncover a full picture of the sorts of factors that influence their lobbying strategies.

As Marshall and Rossman (2011) construct the concept of interviewing, this method can be considered the *topical* approach. In this approach, “the researcher explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's views but otherwise respects the way participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 144). Throughout the course of these interviews, respondents were encouraged to provide other examples of their relationships with other institutions in the same states, as well as other factors not foreseen by this researcher that might influence their willingness to work collaboratively or to compete. The questions used by this researcher as a topical guide are reproduced in Appendix C.

Interviews were recorded, and transcripts produced to guarantee no information was lost. The results were categorized around the two legislative issues above, as well as matters of process in deciding lobbying strategies, and areas of collaboration and competition. The next chapter of this paper will discuss the findings from the interviews.

To supplement the information given in the interviews, this study also made use of secondary documents. Of most relevance were press releases from the universities, the Board in the Board State, and the Executive Committee in the SGI State. In the case of the SGI State, this research

reviewed publications of presentations that representatives of the Executive Committee gave to the legislature, as well as an interview in the media that the Director of the Executive Committee gave on the topic of gun control in that state. These secondary sources serve the role of validating the responses of the interviews, and provide more comprehensive information on the positions of actors in the lobbying process and the roles those actors assume.

3.3. Methods of Analysis

This study engages two levels of analysis in order to answer the research questions. First, the comparative method is used to draw out the most notable differences in the practices of lobbying in the two states. Second, a theoretical model is applied in order to determine if the differences found through the interviews can be explained.

3.3.1. Analytical Tool: Comparative Method

Nissen (1998), drawing from concepts of John Stuart Mill, suggests that comparative research stems from one of two analytical outlooks: either information is gained from the comparison of very similar cases as to a difference among them (the method of difference), or from very different cases that share only a single phenomenon being studied (the method of agreement.) Using the method of difference, explanations are drawn from instances of difference among similarly-identified subjects. The method of agreement lends itself to explanations when the same phenomenon emerges across different types of subjects.

For this study, the method of difference is the applicable analytical tool. While it may not be possible to find identical cases, the cases under investigation here are all research universities and the issues that serve as focal points are ones that institutions in both states had to consider. Furthermore, the states themselves have similar populations and similar gross state products. Given that Lowery and Gray (1993a, 1993b) found that economic size influences the density and diversity of interest group systems, this similarity forms one of the reasons for the cases selected. The key difference between the two is, of course, in the type of governance exercised.

It is hoped that these similarities serve as a sufficient basis to begin analyzing how governance influences lobbying behaviors. Once the data has been collected and thematic groups created to compare the instances of lobbying in difference circumstances in both states, this study will then

proceed with the method of difference to try to identify what role, if any, the governing board had in the creation of lobbying alliances or the pursuit of competitive lobbying behaviors. If the board is shown to have some role, then this study will attempt to analyze that behavior through the application of population ecology theory.

3.3.2. Analytical Framework: Population Ecology Theory

According to Yin (1994, p. 46), having a theoretical model is of paramount importance in multiple-case studies in that the results of case studies require theory in order to be generalized to new contexts. This study makes use of *population ecology theory* to analyze, and hopefully to explain, the relationships among public universities in the legislative arena. Population ecology was developed in the biological sciences in order to examine the co-existence of similar species within a certain area. While it was formed under the auspices of living, non-sentient creatures, it speaks to “responses to environmental constraint” (Lowery and Gray, 1995, p. 5) and may prove useful to the study of similar public universities and their co-existence within an individual state.

The importation of population ecology to political science is largely the result of Lowery and Gray, and appears across their many publications (c.f., 1993a, 1993b, 1995). However, it is important to note that their primary focus was not on public universities, but rather on the rise and fall of broadly-defined interest groups, and specifically the membership-driven groups that require the recruitment of members (and their membership dues) to remain fiscally sound. What follows here is an explanation of population ecology theory in the political sphere as devised by Lowery and Gray (1995) and the attempt of this researcher to reconcile those claims with what we know about the political activities of public universities.

According to Gray and Lowery (1995), population ecology rests on the biological assumptions that entities take the form needed to survive in a specific environment. Further, within a specific environment, there is resource *scarcity* which provides a “carrying capacity” beyond which new entities cannot be supported. The maximized level of populations to resources is known as the *population equilibrium*. The mechanism through which this equilibrium is reached is competition.

The resources necessary for survival are composed of three key elements: *energy*, *stability*, and *area* (or *space*.) Space, in the biological setting, is simply the area in which species compete for

the other resources. Larger spaces allow for larger and more diverse populations. Stability, the lack of any major fluctuations in the environment, allows for species to compete with each other without external pressures. Energy is the name given to the resources needed for an entity to grow (Gray & Lowery, 1995).

Competition is mostly within the same species or closely related species, as similar species require the same scarce resources. “Species relying on different resources have no reason to compete because access by one does not exclude the other from the resources it needs” (Gray & Lowery, 1995, p. 5). However, species avoid competition whenever possible. According to the *competitive exclusion principle*, when species compete for the same resources, they will attempt to *partition* access to those resources from encroaching species by finding a specific *niche* to occupy.

There are clear parallels between the biological and the political world. Populations, at least in the work of Gray and Lowery, are interest groups. Scarcity of resources exists in the social sciences as well as the biological ones, and serves one of the basic principles of the study of economics. The reason for lobbying by any organization is for a type of energy, in that some goal exists that would benefit the organization in a positive way (or, inversely, to avoid such legislation that would cause undue hardship.)

Lowery and Gray (1993a, 1993b, 1995) further make the case that organized interests respond to environmental and resource constraints. They demonstrate that interest group density and diversity within a state are predictable given the individual characteristics of the state, such as economic size and diversity. Interest groups, especially those composed of voluntary members who pay dues to accrue a selective benefit, need space (members) and stability to take in energy, in the form of favorable legislation. Such energy satisfies the members and attracts new ones. Furthermore, Lowery and Gray (1995) indicates that when interest groups share the same mission, they compete for members. To avoid such competition, groups tend to find a specific niche within the issue to occupy in order to offer members a selective benefit and to thus exercise the competitive exclusion principle. These demonstrate a link between environment and organization, much as biologists discern a link between environment and organism.

Haider-Markel (1997) applied population ecology theory to a study of gay and lesbian rights interest groups and found it to be a potential explanation for membership levels and behaviors of those groups. But it is questionable as to the degree in which interest groups, those entities that court members and require legislative victories in order to keep their members, resemble public institutions. Three key differences appear most relevant.

1. First, public universities, as state institutions, are not as fragile as interest groups to membership shifts. Interest groups rely on victories in the legislative sphere on behalf of constituent interests. If they fail to do so, members leave. Salisbury (1994) notes that these are voluntary members, and that their leaving is notable to group leadership. His (and Lowery's and Gray's) description of this relationship characterizes it as one that is highly responsive.

On the other hand, institutions have interests beyond pleasing any particular populations. Salisbury (1984) illustrates this by noting that the university that lobbies for increased access to student aid does not do because its students have asked them for more money.

Salisbury's point is well-taken, but unnecessarily narrow. The university may not explicitly lobby for increased student aid to please its students, but implicitly it does so in order to keep education affordable for future member-students. (Arguably, universities seek additional student aid to increase their own revenues which they could then use to augment or expand services or offerings, which would serve to attract new students.) Furthermore, public universities have a societal responsibility and role: to use resources efficiently, to serve local communities, etc. Public universities must attract students and conform to public norms of behavior. They are at times expected to serve as regional economic drivers and to be sites of innovation. To be sure, while the interests of groups might be more specific than those of a public university, there is no less call for being responsible (and responsive) to constituents.

It is important to recognize here that in Lowery and Gray, "institutions" encompass a broad variety of organizations, including firms. While interest groups rise and fall on the basis of their ability to win energy by advancing the interests of their members, institutions have broader missions. While success in policy-shaping might benefit an institution, lobbying is not its sole focus but rather an activity meant to support its other endeavors. Hillman and Hitt (1999) refer to the frequency and level of involvement in lobbying by an institution as either relational or

transactional in approach. For many firms, there may be narrow issue areas that relate to its products or services. But public universities and other entities that rely on government appropriations have a much greater interest in policy-shaping. The fact that public universities maintain offices for lobbying connotes a commitment to involvement in lobbying that makes favorable legislation for public universities much more akin to the fight for survival by interest groups than to the lobbying by private institutions. There is a much stronger parallel here than Salisbury gives credit.

Moreover, Salisbury makes the point that the life-cycle of a successful interest group is for it to become an institution (or institution-like) in its own right. “Most interest groups hope to survive into the future and thus take on institutional characteristics” (Salisbury, 1984, p. 68). In fact, it is arguable that over time, public university campuses have owed their existence to organized interests: in a study of the political campaigning that went on in the late 1980s to create a new branch campus in Washington state, the primary drivers of the lobbying process were community groups from Puget Sound (de Give & Olswang, 1999). Even earlier in history, there is evidence that localized interests were responsible for the expansion of public higher education. One study charted public opinion through historical records to show that individuals, businesses, and others organized to pressure lawmakers to expand the University of Minnesota system, and that the legislators did so to please their constituencies (Vandenberg-Daves, 2003). These examples suggest that local interests coalesced into a group with sufficient clout to leverage the construction of physical institutions in underserved regions of American states.

2. Space in the Lowery and Gray model may not serve the same purpose within public higher education. As they define it, space is seen not as geographic boundaries but rather as the population of potential new members. Interest groups compete to win these new members by adapting into a niche. A group must obtain new members in order to grow. It is not too far to stretch the model to say that dues-paying interest group members resemble in large part tuition-paying students. Public universities must attract new students, or they will cease to exist. Furthermore, the student’s life with the university is one that continues after graduation, which makes their recruitment and satisfaction all the more desirable an objective. Alumni serve as an important resource for universities in any number of ways, such as donating to the institution or

recruiting new graduates into the workforce. They can also serve to advocate for their alma mater with their appropriate legislators.

3. Finally, energy is found in the Lowery and Gray model in a sort of cycle. Groups take in energy in the form of membership dues, and reward their members with legislative victories. Members, presumably satisfied with the victory, retain their memberships and new members join based on the same success. Lowery and Gray frame this as a straightforward activity. For a public university, energy is what is being lobbied for from the state government, using resources granted by the government or from tuition-paying students.

Whether this model is accurate as applied to public higher education will be tested. It is possible to imagine two public universities, one which lobbies successfully for new or increased funding and one that fails to do so. The successful university can, potentially, subsidize its student body to a greater degree. The other university has to raise tuition. Assuming these universities are similarly-ranked and have similar degree offerings (given the idea that competition happens most frequently between members of the same species), students would likely opt for the university that offered the subsidy. As such, although energy may embody different legislative outcomes (policy decisions for interest groups and appropriations for public universities), clearly both types of organizations are motivated to lobby successfully to continue to draw in new members.

4. Findings

This section of the paper will discuss the results collected from interviews with 4 government relations officials in two states. The goal of this project was to reveal what, if any, the role of a governance board played in lobbying, and if and how public universities competed or worked collectively in lobbying across two different issue areas: one, the issue of gun control on campus; and two, the budget appropriation process. From the interviews, it is clear that public universities in the SGI State and in the Board State have very different options in terms of lobbying, and indeed, do collaborate and compete at different levels and for different reasons.

4.1. Issue One: Gun Control

To reiterate the nature of this issue, bills in both the SGI State and the Board State were drafted that would have permitted licensed firearms owners to bring weapons onto campus. This issue was selected for study because it was assumed that this would be one in which consensus would have been easily reached among institutions.

4.1.1. Board State

In the Board State, both the Urban University and the S&T University reported that they did lobby as part of a coalition of public universities against the passage of this bill. Consensus was easily reached among public universities and the board of governance. The board also lobbied actively against such an amendment.

The Urban University representative described the work of the politically-active public university lobbyists and the relevant board staff as one where allies are well-known to each other.

“[W]e look at each other, and we try to play to our strengths: who do you know? Who do you have really good relationships with? And we try to divide and conquer in terms of legislators. So we all go play to our strengths. So we’re all working for the same goal, we’re saying the same thing, and we’re leveraging our relationships as much as we can. And we work together very well. We see each other every day [of the legislative session].”

Another tactic used, according to the Urban University representative, was to speak directly with the authors of the bill and convince them to limit the areas in question under the bill. The

resulting legislation “took care of an obvious problem” in that it removed penalties for those who had firearms in a car trunk or in an otherwise secured, concealed manner on public roads that crossed through public university borders

4.1.2. SGI State

In the SGI State, whether or not there was a collective lobbying effort was less clear. The Flagship University respondent indicated that Flagship University lobbied on its own. It forbids any firearms on campus, and sent its campus chief of police to the state capital to testify to relevant legislators about the negative repercussions that passage of the bill might have.

Rural University, given its remote location (and, relevantly, its much smaller student body), has a more flexible policy towards gun possession, and permits students to have weapons for the purposes of hunting or target shooting. The respondent from Rural University described a “system where [guns] have to be checked in with public security and they are checked out for specific times that they’re going to be utilized” and that no incidence of gun-related violence had ever been reported on campus. Rural University took a passive stance on the bill, and, according to the interviewee, “if asked” responded that the University did not favor the passage of the bill.

It is important to note that the SGI State bill’s wording differed slightly from the bill in the Board State. The bill in the Board State was directed broadly towards all public spaces—concealed weapons were to be permitted in public university spaces, parks, recreation areas, etc. In comparison, the bill in the SGI State was specifically directed at public universities and the goal of the bill was to prohibit the campus governance bodies from making any policies that would prevent licensed gun owners from bringing concealed weapons onto campus. (Concealed weapons were already permitted in other public spaces.) In other words, this bill not only would have allowed for guns on campus, but it would also have eroded university autonomy.

When asked by the interviewer if the Executive Committee of public universities in SGI State (the body that is supposed to represent the broad interests of the public university system), both the Flagship representative and the Rural representative indicated that the executive committee did its own lobbying on behalf of the institutions in the state against the passage of this bill.

Notably, however, an interview published in an on-line newspaper obtained by this researcher would indicate that the Director of the Executive Committee publicly and stridently argued against passage of the bill, on the basis that guns do not belong on campus, not on the basis of the erosion of autonomy as might be expected given the diverse approaches to gun control exercised by public universities in the SGI State. However, the strident approach taken by the Director might be explained if one assumes that concealed weapons were the question at hand and that other public universities that permitted guns had a system of declaring and/or registering weapons as did Rural University.

Further, neither the Flagship University nor the Rural University representatives had much information about what other campuses (or the Executive Committee) actually did in terms of lobbying. Ultimately, while Flagship University and the Rural University (and the Executive Committee) agreed on the position to this bill, their actions were seemingly unknown to each other. If there is a base line for calling some coordinated action “collective lobbying,” then it is questionable if this activity actually meets it.

4.2. Issue Two: Budget

Respondents were asked to explain their lobbying activities in terms of securing funding for their institutions in the budget process in their state.

4.2.1. Board State

Given the nature of state appropriations in the Board State, it is unsurprising to learn that both respondents in the Board State indicated that they engaged in a lobbying alliance to influence the amount of funds designated by the Governor’s office and subsequently passed by the legislature. In the Board State, all public universities are funded under the same budget line, and the money is appropriated directly to the Board. It is the Board’s decision to then allocate funding directly to the universities.

Asked if the Board itself was subject to a form of lobbying by individual institutions, the representative from Urban University indicated that it in fact was, along with the specific office of the Board that deals with putting the budget together. While there is ostensibly formula funding in the Board State, the Urban University contact indicated it was simply a guideline,

based on student numbers and square footage (towards maintenance and operations costs.) Both individuals from the Board State seemed to feel that the process with the board was fair, and based on frequent interactions at the highest levels of institutional and system governance. The Board makes its budget decisions based on “discussion between the board and the Chancellor and the Chancellor and the Presidents about their needs and how much the allocation of the headcount funding they’re going to get.”

The representative of the Urban University explained that the larger universities end up subsidizing some of the smaller universities:

“Some of the schools don’t have a large enough student body, so we pay a tax to keep them afloat to fulfill their mission. It happens more often with the 2 year schools. They don’t have the research funding to indirect revenues and they don’t have a large enough student body to keep everything going. So [Urban University] for example, may only get 80 % of their headcount budget and that 20% will be divided up between other people.”

Yet both he and the representative from S&T University seemed satisfied with the fairness of the budget process and of the board’s treatment of the large and small public universities.

Beyond the Board, the public university government relations staff also lobby the Governor’s office. The Governor in the Board State holds a great number of powers, so the interviewees stressed that it was important to court his favor. The S&T University representative noted that because the Governor has line-item veto power over the state budget, very little could be done without his express approval. The Governor is also permitted to make revenue forecasts, meaning he bases the budget on what he (and a team of economic advisors) thinks the revenues for the upcoming year will be. Further, the Board serves the role of a traditional state agency in its role as an interface between the public universities and the Governor’s office.

As the Urban University contact explained:

“So basically we have to tell the [Board] if we have something of interest to us that we’ll go through the process. If it is proactive legislation, in other words, we’re asking in a change in the law for our benefit, the Governor’s office has to be told.

Now the Governor asks this of all the state agencies because they like to keep track of what the agencies are asking for. They exercise veto power before you even draft the legislation—they’ll tell you whether you can do it or not. Obviously if the Governor doesn’t want you to do it, you’re not going to do it because he’ll just veto it at the end of

the day. Obviously you don't want to make him mad because he sets your budget. So he has a lot of say.

So in order to comply with that, we have to submit our request to the [Board] office and they kind of do an internal political check and then they turn that package in to the Governor's office and then you wait for time to run out for the Governor's office to let you know what's good and what's bad."

The representative from the S&T University echoed that assessment. He noted that during the budget process, specifically, if the Governor did not recommend a particular capital project (funded separately from the block allocation, and to be discussed further below,) it was possible for the individual public university lobbyist to have one added back in during the legislative session, but only with the tacit approval of the Governor's office. Further, the S&T University representative indicated it engaged in *site visits* as a form of lobbying, which does not appear very frequently in academic studies of lobbying behaviors (for example, in the comprehensive list of behaviors found in Nownes and Freeman, 1998):

"[W]hat we would do is during the summertime here, we would have the Governor's budget director over and appropriate staff, over here to campus where we would maybe host them for half a day, and the whole objective is to educate them on what the needs and priorities are of [S&T University]. We did this last year, and we do it every year. Then essentially they go into the late fall budget planning season with the governor and they have, I hope, a deeper understanding of what is accorded to [S&T University] and why and I want them to see it, touch it, feel it, know it first hand and not just from a piece of paper I sent them."

Other tactics deployed for the budget campaign appear to be largely informational. The Urban University official stated that the main objective, in the current economic climate, is to maintain the level of funding that the Governor recommends as it passes through the legislature.

"So we have to take our lumps and make sure that everybody [*i.e., legislators*] understands that we can't do this multiple years in a row or it'll have lasting damage. Then all of us work together with members of the [Board] office to make sure that the members of the legislature in the budgeting process understand the need to at least toe the line on the governor's recommendation. And we work that."

4.2.2. SGI State

In the SGI State, public universities compete more directly for state dollars. Each university is funded on its own line in the budget, so the amount of the state's appropriation is more of a selective good than a collective one (as in the Board State.) However, the Executive Committee

does lobby (especially through direct testimony) on the need to fund all public universities. So, in an indirect way, there is cooperation in the lobbying arena.

The Flagship University stated that within the Executive Committee's subcommittee of University Presidents, members tried to tamp down any "infuriating or hurtful" messages that would unnecessarily penalize another institution. Ultimately, though, public universities lobby on their own for the level of their own funding. Flagship University did not think the process was very fair. Similar to the Board State, the SGI State tries to apply a formula to determine the amount of funding, but the Flagship University indicated that there was general agreement among public universities that the formula had failed to account for any institutional differences. Basing the formula solely on headcount underfunds smaller public institutions. Basing it on retention and graduation rates, according to Flagship University, punishes commuter campuses that cater to part-time students. The general injustice of a singular formula funding model to be applied to all public universities was one area that the Flagship University representative indicated that there was full agreement among universities in the SGI State. The Flagship University continued to say that beyond this agreement, "I think that's there's some vast disagreement among universities, because everyone wants to take care of their own, sometimes passionately."

The Rural University representative echoed to a large extent the comments by the Flagship University, similarly indicating dissatisfaction in the formula funding model. Rural University would benefit, he felt, by a formula model that took into account the types of degrees offered noting that his campus offered a preponderance of degrees in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, which are more expensive to offer. Further, the Rural University interviewee was proud of its rate of placement of graduates into the job market, and felt that such a positive placement rate should be considered in any formula model. In terms of how Rural University went about lobbying for its funding, the representative indicated that he had "carte blanche to do whatever it takes to do that" [i.e., avoid budget cuts.]

Beyond the two issues that were explicitly the subject of inquiry here, the interviews revealed some other key differences in how public universities lobby the state, the role of the governance board, and the areas of competition. The following section will present those issues.

4.3. Position-Taking and Lobbying Strategies

4.3.1. Board State

Representatives of Urban University and S&T University described a very close-knit group of public university lobbyists. From their statements, it would appear that only six or eight of the public universities have a specifically-dedicated staff member for lobbying, and that those people tend to represent only the largest of the public universities. (If the exact number is eight, this is only about one-quarter of the total number of public universities in the Board State.)

Lobbyists meet under the auspices of the Board's own government relations staff (two people) so essentially there are ten people representing the public university sector in the legislature. Urban University indicated communication with his counterparts at other universities happened "every day" and during the legislative session, S&T University said that "when we go to the capital we go together, we congregate in the same place. We connect with one another and share information. We work very well as a team alerting each other to things that are happening."

In addition, after the session, the government relations staff of both the public universities and the Board attend "a post-session retreat, where we'll talk about the successes and failures, and the things we need to keep on the horizon going forward," according to the S&T University lobbyist.

Deciding a position towards policy issue happens at each institution with the university president, but ultimately, the Board requires that all the universities come to a consensus on policy issues. The presidents need not always be involved. Urban University indicated that the presidents would receive "weekly broadcasts" from the Board staff, but that communication could be "daily, if necessary."

Interviewees describe the general atmosphere as friendly, harmonious and close-knit, with disagreements being very few in number. One particular disagreement will be presented under the "Areas of Competition" heading below.

4.3.2. SGI State

Lobbying in the SGI State is predominantly an individual institution's endeavor, so positions taken on a particular issue are thusly individualized. However, the Executive Committee of the state has a number of subcommittees (government relations, for example, or financial aid) where such positions are shared. Where consensus is easily reached, the Executive Committee crafts a cohesive message and that the public universities use that in their own lobbying strategies, if any.

Flagship University indicated that much of the lobbying they do was indirect, in the sense that an overarching body represented its interests. The Executive Committee would represent their interests where those interests dovetailed with the rest of the public university sector. For the universities engaged in the largest share of research in the state, a separate Research University Committee exists to advocate for them. (This alliance has several other roles, and is especially charged to encourage and promote the research done at the public universities among industry and for other economic purposes.) This Research alliance has a key role in advocating for the universities' research agenda and is involved with matters related to science policy.

Finally, Flagship University indicated that for high-profile, "hot-button" topics (an example given was research using stem cells), that Flagship University might see its interests represented by a Political Action Committee (PAC.) Flagship University said that in one specific case that there were alumni who "cared passionately about the issue, and were willing to help raise the funds, donate the funds, and be the voice on behalf of it." Given campaign finance law restrictions, the public university is not a campaign and has limits to how it operates in the political arena, specifically as to how it spends money. However, an independent alumnus has much more latitude in how he or she operates, and can raise and donate money with much less restraint.

Even while the Flagship University is represented indirectly by a number of institutions (the Executive Committee, the Research University Committee, PACs, etc.), the Flagship representative did provide numerous examples of how that campus responded to different social policy issues. Similar to the issue of guns on campus, Flagship University frequently employs information campaigns in the form of direct testimony on a particular issue. Similar to the campus chief of police testifying in regards to the gun issue, when faced with onerous new

legislation that would have required the development of a vaccine-tracking system, Flagship was able to utilize its head of health services to testify as to the unnecessary nature of the new regulation.

The Rural University seems to have less involvement in lobbying than Flagship University, and cited “a small operation” in terms of the size of the government relations staff as a predominant reason. The main strategy for lobbying at the Rural University was information sharing through direct contact with legislators, though this was often accomplished through telephone.

4.4. Areas of Competition

4.4.1. Board State

In the Board State, the budget process engenders mostly cooperation among public universities, unless there is potential for capital projects to be funded. Capital projects prove to be a competitive arena, as they are funded individually. At the Urban University, the pursuit of funds for capital projects was the site of the “heaviest lobbying.”

The representative of S&T University agreed that capital project lobbying was the site of the most pitched competition. Lobbying for a capital project is done by individual campuses, so there is no room for cooperation. Moreover, the Board does not lobby on behalf of any project.

However, the Board does play an important role in tempering the severity of this competition. According to the S&T University, the Board approves “6-year plans” for each campus seeking capital projects. Institutional lobbyists are only permitted to pursue projects that are explicitly listed within that plan. As the Urban University representative put it, “there are no secrets.”

If an institution went outside the board’s directives to lobby on behalf of an unauthorized project, the Board would engage in some sort of punishment (as the S&T University put it, “you’ll get your number called.”) He continued to say:

“If you went and had something that you just woke up and you just said you know what we just got to have \$25 million to build the XYZ Building, and even though the XYZ Building is not on the [board’s] list, we’re going to promote it with the legislature, if you did that, you’d probably be pretty counterproductive to your overall, long-term health.”

4.4.2. SGI State

As already explained, competition is inherent in the budget process and disagreements on policy issues, if not frequent, are also not uncommon. Beyond the already competitive nature of lobbying for funding, the Flagship University also reported that it was at times the target of undue budget cuts.

Flagship University and the other large, research universities receive the lion's share of the annual budget, and Flagship also reports having a large endowment. The interviewee at Flagship University said:

“We can't afford to subsidize everybody else. And I think, you know, some of the other universities are convinced that we can, because they have to do what they have to do. Our endowment fund comes up, “Oh you have a huge endowment, why don't you just tap into that?” Well, those monies are spoken for, and they're not for general fill-in-the-gap things.

A unique area of concern for Flagship University was the encroachment by another public university in the state to become a research university. The Flagship University official indicated that individuals at the other university were reportedly “mad” because the three major research universities did not grant it inclusion in the Research University Committee.

Similarly, the Rural University representative spoke to the fact that some of the other universities in the state were planning to build medical schools, which would, in turn, change the amount of money those universities would seek from the state. The Rural University official indicated that there was no opposition to those new initiatives on the part of Rural University. However, at the same time, he noted the potential for Rural University (which has a STEM focus) to contribute to this surge in healthcare sciences, noting the integral role STEM fields play in, for example, biotechnology.

5. Analysis

In analyzing the results of the interviews, this study takes the approach of first discussing the most notable practical differences between the two states and their lobbying practices as per Yin's cross-case comparisons (1994). After this discussion, this study will apply the theoretical framework of Lowery and Gray (1995) in an effort to explain those differences in terms of the population ecology model.

5.1. Comparative Analysis

The interviews reveal a great number of differences between lobbying by public universities in the two states studied here. At the system level, the Executive Committee in the SGI State differs greatly from the board in the Board State. While both represent broadly the interests of public universities under their purview, the Executive Committee's lack of authority curtails its involvement in lobbying. The Board requires a single position on social issues and campus policies, whereas the Executive Committee serves, at least in an initial capacity, as an information-sharing body. In the event that universities in the SGI State are unified around a single policy issue, the Executive Committee will then lobby on the system's behalf. But even the Rural University representative, whose campus is much smaller than the Flagship University's, whose government relations office has a much smaller staff, and whose distance from the state capital inhibits travel between Rural University and the legislature, did not express an interest in compromising its own goals so as to gain allies for lobbying purposes.

Information sharing is one incentive for organizations to lobbying as an alliance, but only in the Board State did such sharing lead definitively towards collective action. In the SGI State, the Flagship University interviewee stated that some communication among public universities under the aegis of the Executive Committee served only to inform other members of the types of issues that a member intended to pursue, especially if negative repercussions to other members were likely to result. In other cases, information sharing did lead to an example of a lobbying alliance in the SGI State, although as in the gun control example here, such an alliance might be weakly established.

The composition and cohesion of lobbying alliances between the two states is also notably different. From these interviews alone, it is not possible to have the full picture of what all public universities in both states did in terms of lobbying around the two focus issues here. However, in the Board State, the interviewees were able to easily identify their allies in the lobbying alliance. The descriptions of the lobbying alliance in the Board State demonstrated that lobbyists in that state meet together to form their positions and develop lobbying strategies, congregate together and coordinate activities during the legislative session, and attend post-session retreats to discuss the results of their lobbying. The Urban University lobbyist indicated that the members of this lobbying team included only the largest public institutions in the state. What, if any, actions were taken by other public universities in the state (those that do not maintain a government relations office) is unknown.

In the SGI State, the ambiguity of individual efforts as part of a lobbying alliance is even greater. When public universities enter into system-wide lobbying alliances, the Director of the Executive Committee takes the lead in lobbying and sets the message that the universities should follow. Whether those institutions choose to do so appears to be up to them. The issue of guns on campus showed that the Flagship University sent a public safety official to testify to lawmakers, while the Rural University responded only “if asked” that they opposed the law limiting university autonomy to prohibit firearms on campus. Neither Flagship University nor Rural University were involved in lobbying together, nor did they indicate any knowledge or involvement of other universities around the issue. Clearly, as compared to the Board State’s lobbying alliance, this is a much more loosely-associated group.

The aspect of information sharing in terms of pre-political activities is important, because as the gun control issue shows, the universities in the SGI State have adopted individualized stances on social issues. This is another factor in which a Board has great potential to influence lobbying: the fact that the Board makes policy for all the campuses in the system implies that the reactions that individual campuses will take on future issues will be informed by the present policies shared across the system. Sharing such initial positions may help to create agreement on new issues facing the system. The divergent policies on gun possession between Flagship University and Rural University in the SGI State, for example, would not be permitted in the Board State.

In the presence of the Board's mandate of uniform policy positions, the benefits to individual campuses to engage in-house lobbyists are less clear. The Board's presence would seem to indicate a propensity for free riding, where institutions benefit from its existence without any commitment of time or resources (Hojnacki, 1997). However, both the S&T University and the Urban University in the Board State indicated that representing their positions to the Board was of paramount importance as the Board does not decide positions on new legislation unilaterally. Rather, both of those lobbyists said that they are able to engage in debate with their counterparts in the presence of Board staff and to find compromises that are amenable to the members of the system and the Board. One issue in which there was some debate, according to the S&T University interviewee, involved stem cell research. The lobbyist stated that another lobbyist expressed moral concerns in the use of stem cell research, while S&T University saw work with stem cells as important to its research agenda. Ultimately, according to the S&T University lobbyist, they reached a compromise that neither endorsed nor condemned the use of stem cells. Instead, the public university system took the position that their state should be one in which science innovation should be encouraged, especially as such an outlook was more attractive to biomedical and pharmaceutical firms that might have interest in setting up facilities in that state.

5.2. Theoretical Analysis

Population ecology theory serves as a useful theoretical basis for understanding the differences among lobbying behaviors in the two states studied in this paper. As applied to interest group systems, Lowery and Gray (1995) suggest that organizations that require similar resources must either compete for those resources, or will attempt to occupy individualized niches that allow them to partition access to the resources they need to survive, (a concept they call the "competitive exclusion principle.")

Insofar as public universities are founded with specific missions, whether to serve as a research center or to cater to a certain geographic or demographic populations, public universities are designed to fill specific niches. The difference that this study perceives in the lobbying activities of public universities in the two states examined here is in the permanence and integrity of the partitions that separate these niches.

In the SGI State, the fact that no centralized, controlling board exists creates the conditions in which public universities are able to exercise greater autonomy to create their own policies and to set their own budgets. The result of this is the proliferation of diverse policies on different campuses, which in turn, leads to diverse positions being taken on social issues arising in the legislature.

What may be more enlightening in terms of population ecology theory is the ways in which competition among lobbying by public universities was similar in the two states. Competition only occurred in the situations where public universities were unable to partition their resources. In the Board State, competition was limited to the area of capital projects, where the Board played no role except one in which long-term building plans had to be first submitted for review by the Board, and which were subsequently made public among the public institutions. In the SGI State, this took the form of state funding, but it also was demonstrated in the changing nature of institutional missions.

The Flagship University interviewee indicated that conflict arose in the instance when a public university that had not been engaged in a substantial amount of research sought membership in the Research Committee, a state-wide body representing the three largest public research universities. The position of the Flagship University and its fellow members was to deny that institution entrance into the Committee and thusly to the benefits membership conferred.

In the framework of population ecology theory, this can be seen as a conflict arising from unstable niches: the non-research university sought to redefine its role in the state and to increase its profile, and the extant research universities sought to limit this expansion of roles. The Rural University interviewee, when questioned about potential competitors, responded that a number of public universities were building medical schools, which would entitle them to a greater share of public funds. However, in that case, the interviewee indicated that this expansion into medical education did not pose a threat to the Rural University. Rather, the increase in attention to medical education could be beneficial for Rural University, because Rural University supported a large amount of biomedical research. While conflict did not result from this situation and its lack of partitions or unstable niches, it does illustrate the fact that in the SGI State, niches are subject to change and that these changes provokes responses from other institutions in the system.

Of course, higher education institutions are subject to change and adapt in most states, including those with consolidated governing boards. However, the clear difference in the Board State compared to the unstable niches in the SGI State is that institutions in the Board State cannot assume new niches of their own volition. The authority of the Board is such that even academic programs must be approved by the Board. As such, an institution seeking new missions or new facilities, and in turn new resources, must go through the Board before doing so. Given the Board's purview over an entire system of universities, and from the perspective that Boards want to use their resources efficiently, the Board would likely avoid committing resources such that two public universities were put into direct competition. The fact that the Board holds universities accountable on behalf of the state and has authority over much of their planning and activities promotes a transparency among system actors that does not exist in, for example, the SGI State, where universities are free to pursue their own agendas. This suggests that public universities under the authority of a consolidated governing board have a greater level of independence among themselves: while universities in the SGI State must adapt or react to their counterparts' actions, the universities in the Board State simply need only monitor the Board's decisions to coordinate their activities. This independence is the result of strong partitions.

The result of these partitions means that the competitive exclusion principle is upheld: universities need not compete because the Board is responsible for the distribution of resources, including the annual state appropriation. Both interviewees in the Board State indicate that they believe this to be a fair process, one partially determined by formula funding.

The fact that formula funding is also used in the SGI State could also incentivize public universities to lobby collectively for funding. However, funding is still a competitive arena in the SGI State. The Flagship University respondent stated that its formula-derived income was being gradually eroded to help subsidize institutions whose core costs were not met by the formula currently in use. This is another example of porous partitions—the Flagship University is unable to secure its funding from other universities, thus competition remains.

6. Conclusions

From the interviews and analysis presented here, it is clear that competition, cooperation, and governance have effects on lobbying practices in both states under study. In this section, the initial research questions presented in chapter 1 are reintroduced (below, in italics) and conclusions drawn. The literature presented in chapter 2 will also be referred to, in order to try to make sense of the information this study uncovered.

How and in what circumstances do public higher education institutions opt to lobby collectively with other institutions?

Collective lobbying practices are part of the policy-shaping agenda of universities in both states. However, in the Board State, collective action was a mandate by the consolidated governing board. The institutions in the Board State addressed any differences of opinion in meetings with their counterparts from other institutions and with representatives of the Board, ensuring that the public university system lobbied in well-coordinated, cooperative ways. Institutional and Board lobbyists work together closely in legislative sessions and engage in post-session retreats to evaluate their efforts.

In the SGI State, collective lobbying is pursued only when the positions of institutions are closely aligned. When institutions are aligned, the Executive Committee serves as a central coordinator and represents the system's interests. Based on the response to the gun control issue under study here, the level of coordination among campuses and the Executive Committee was low; respondents did not accurately recall the position and approach in lobbying taken by the Director of the Executive Committee, based on an interview the Director gave to a local news agency.

How does competition among public higher education institutions influence decisions in lobbying strategies?

Competition exists in both the system with a board and that without, but the presence of the board limits institutional autonomy and the areas where public universities are able to compete. In the Board State, competition in lobbying among institutions is permitted only in the quest for capital project funds, and even then, institutions are limited to lobbying only for projects

designated in 6-year plans approved by the Board. Other issues about which institutions might compete are mitigated in consultation with other institutional representatives and the Board prior to any lobbying activities.

In the SGI State, competition is much more prevalent. Without a board of governance, institutions modify policies and offerings, leading to both a diversity of on-campus policies and the potential to overlap (and compete) on the types of courses offered or the type of research pursued. Using a concept from population ecology theory, institutions are unable to exercise the competitive exclusion principle, which would allow them, by partitioning resources, to avoid competing with other institutions.

How do certain types of governance arrangements promote or preclude collective lobbying by public universities?

From the above, it is clear that the Board of governance has a significant effect on lobbying, as compared to the state without such a board. The Board serves to unify the views of institutions in the system such that lobbying activities can be coordinated to the benefit of the entire system. The Board serves in a mediating role if there are conflicts among institutions as to positions on certain issues, and representatives of the Board act in concert with university lobbyists in the legislature and in related activities.

Furthermore, the absence of a board allows for a diversification of policy positions, such that public institutions in the SGI State, for example, had less common ground from which they could lobby together.

According to Yin (1994), after conclusions have been drawn by multiple case study, the researcher should reconsider the theory used as the framework of the study. In this case, population ecology theory served well to explain why the existence of the Board had an effect on lobbying behaviors. Since Lowery and Gray (1995) and Haider-Markel (1997) had previously applied population ecology only to interest groups, its expansion into explaining the political behaviors of institutions may be novel. Furthermore, population ecology serves as a bridge between Clark (1983)'s contention that the U.S. higher education system is guided by competition and market forces, with the added caveat that some states tightly control institutions within their borders. By conceptualizing state's higher education systems as ecosystems, both

competition and the role of governance can be explained as part of a system, not as a dichotomous choice between market forces or state control.

The conclusions in this study allow for further contextualization of earlier research. The lack of attention to universities as a type of politically-active organization is one that makes assumptions about the policy-shaping behaviors by institutions particularly difficult. The research here shows that the public institutions under study shared many behaviors with state-level agencies or other non-legislative government bodies, despite the fact that universities operate at a greater remove from the government. The individuals interviewed in this study echoed some of the values that Abney (1988) attributes to government agency lobbyists. The Flagship University representative indicated its long-term, relational engagement in lobbying, including a multi-year outlook on certain issues or funding. Both respondents in the Board State inferred that maintaining cordial relationships with legislators and the governor was important to their success. These aspects differ from societal interest groups, which often engage in negative campaign tactics, or from firms, which have fewer restrictions on financial lobbying strategies.

On the other hand, government agencies tend to represent only a single interest, and are unique in that interest among other agencies (in other words, there is only one Department of Transportation.) Public universities are faced with opportunities and challenges as they contend with other universities engaged in very similar activities. This fact is one reason why population ecology theory appears to apply to public universities and social interest groups as determined by Lowery and Gray (1995).

The contention that all universities engage in lobbying and that the number of public universities in a state constitute interest groups active in lobbying (found in quantitative studies such as Tandberg, 2009; Tandberg, 2010; and McLendon, Hearn & Mokher, 2009) is not well-supported by this research. While all public universities submit budget requests and likely attempt to justify their requests with some form of lobbying, the evidence from the Board State, where university lobbyists work closely together with the Board, reveals that only a fraction of the public universities in that state were politically active. At the very least, it would seem that there are substantive differences in the level of lobbying among institutions that maintain full-time government relations offices and those that do not.

The role of boards in lobbying by and for public universities has been shown in this research to support the description found in Lowry (2001.) Lowry suggested (with little empirical evidence) that boards were both the sites of coordination among public universities and partners in lobbying practices. In turn, this study does not support the assertion by Tandberg (2006), in which he assumed that a consolidated governing board lobbied on behalf of its universities and without institutional partners. However, it is possible that the Board in the Board State is unique in its willingness to work with institutions; other state boards may indeed serve as the single source of public university lobbying.

6.1. Limitations

It is of course necessary to test population ecology in other states to see if the theory can be attributed to other patterns of lobbying behaviors. The strength of case studies is that it allows for the testing of theory, but the generalizability of case studies has been questioned (Yin, 1994, p. 37). Of course, these cases are limited in scope, and this study is necessarily restricted in its applicability to be generalized to other states. These cases were selected in that they are archetypal of certain governance arrangements, but many other state-specific factors may influence the willingness or ability of public universities to join in lobbying alliances or to lobby for their own goals or principles. However, boards in other states might take on different or lesser roles in the lobbying process. Further research may take this study as an example, but results from other states are needed in order to build a more thorough model of public university lobby practices.

This study did not use coordinating boards in its comparison. Coordinating boards are the intermediate form of higher education governance in the American states. In that they neither create a singular agency that would advocate for a university system nor allow universities full autonomy of how they engage in political action, this study exempted them from the comparison. But the fact that coordinating boards exist in over 20 American states makes them important in understanding if and how they influence lobbying decisions in those states. While this study opted not to pursue this line of research, such work should be done to better understand the full phenomenon of lobbying by public universities in the American states.

6.2. Suggestions for Further Research

Further research is clearly merited around the issue of lobbying. While Tandberg (2010) and others contend that the mere presence of a public university is synonymous with that institution engaging in lobbying, this study's interviews with the Board State lobbyists showed that only the largest institutions were routinely and heavily engaged in lobbying. If and how (and in what quantity) smaller public universities engage in lobbying, especially those that do not maintain government relations offices, deserves further attention in order to support Tandberg's position.

Certainly universities have suffered from a lack of focus from traditional political science scholars engaged in research about lobbying. This study has already mentioned that universities share characteristics with other types of organizations, but attempting to slot universities neatly into pre-existing categories is difficult. Researchers would benefit if scholars could isolate specific organizational characteristics that lead to certain types of lobbying behaviors, rather than relying on broad types as evidenced in studies such as Aplin and Hegarty (1980).

The use of PACs by the Flagship University in the SGI State is notable, and adds some information on an under-researched area (McClendon, 2003). The fact that the Flagship University indicates that PACs are useful in terms of controversial issues is one that lends itself to questions as to their effectiveness in such matters, and whether other states and institutions respond in similar ways. In fact, financial inducement lobbying strategies are largely ignored in studies of university lobbying. Ferrin (2005) provides some information as to lobbyists' preferences in using campaign contributions as a form of lobbying, but if there is any pattern to PAC giving among public universities, it has yet to be established in the literature. Of course, the difficulty of identifying these PACs is also suggested in the interview with the Flagship University: the PAC in this case worked on behalf of the university, but not in an overt or closely-linked way. A researcher would necessarily have to search all the PACs in a particular state in order to locate those working on issues relevant to the higher education system.

Another aspect that may deserve further attention is that the universities in both states described their roles slightly differently. Both the Rural University and the Flagship University in the SGI State stated that their work was largely reactive. Both volunteered, without any prompt from this researcher, that term limits in that state created conditions where new and inexperienced

legislators often entered the statehouse with ideas of new policies that should be enacted on college campuses. Both of the respondents stated that much of what they did in terms of lobbying were attempts to mitigate potential damage that these sorts of unfounded initiatives would cause their institutions. In the Board State, however, the Urban University lobbyist described the process in that state through which universities could ask for changes in the law. The Urban University interviewee indicated that the proximity of the Board to the governor was in part responsible for these proactive initiatives. Whether this proximity has led to enactment of policies that benefit universities in any substantial amount greater than the number of policies in non-board states may be a rich source of information on further differences in lobbying among diverse governance structures.

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Appendix A

Table: Categories of Influence Strategies and Specific Techniques Employed to Influence Legislation

Category of Strategy				
	Information	Public Exposure/Appeal	Direct Pressure	Political
Method of Influencing	Expert witness	Publishing voting record	Threat of harm	Constituent Contact
	Personal visit	Third party influence	Financial support	Colleague contact
	Providing specific argument	Letter campaign		
	Technical report	Media campaign		

Source: Aplin & Hegarty (1980)

Appendix B

Table: Percentage of Groups and Lobbyists Using Each Lobbying Technique

Techniques	Lobbyists	Organizations
	<i>(n=595)</i>	<i>(n=301)</i>
1. Testifying at legislative hearings	98	99
2. Contacting government officials directly to present point of view	98	97
3. Helping to draft legislation	98	88
4. Alerting state legislators to the effects of a bill on their districts	96	94
5. Having influential constituents contact legislator's office	94	92
6. Consulting with government officials to plan legislative strategy	88	84
7. Attempting to shape implementation of policies	88	85
8. Mounting grass-roots lobbying efforts	88	86
9. Helping to draft regulations, rules, or guidelines	84	81
10. Shaping government's agenda by raising new issues and calling attention to previously ignored problems	85	83
11. Engaging in informal contacts with officials	83	81
12. Inspiring letter-writing or telegram campaigns	82	83
13. Entering into coalitions with other groups	79	93
14. Talking to media	73	74

15. Serving on advisory commissions and boards	58	76
16. Making monetary contributions to candidates	0	45
17. Attempting to influence appointment to public office	44	42
18. Doing favors for officials who need assistance	41	36
19. Filing suit or otherwise engaging in litigation	36	40
20. Working on election campaign	0	29
21. Endorsing candidates	0	24
22. Running advertisements in media about position	18	21
23. Engaging in protests or demonstrations	13	21

Source: Nownes & Freeman (1998)

Appendix C

Outline of Questions Used in Topical Interviews

1. Did you or someone in your office lobby in regards to legislation, which loosened restrictions on gun possession on university campuses?
 - 1A. If so, did you do so on your own, or as part of a group?
 - What were your motivations in working as part of a group?
 - Did the fact that the gun lobby is a well-represented, prominent player in the American political landscape influence your decision to work with others?
 - Who initiated the formation of such a group, and who were the other members?
 - How was the work divided?
 - Did you feel as though the division of labor was fair? In other words, did you find that members of the group contributed equally?
 - Would you have any hesitance on working with the same group on a similar issue in the future?
 - Do you feel that this instance is representative of your general approach to social issues that affecting the university system in your state?
2. Did you or someone in your office lobby in regards to last year's state budget?
 - 2A. If so, did you do so on your own, or as part of a group?
 - What were your motivations in working as part of a group?
 - Who initiated the formation of such a group, and who were the other members?
 - How was the work divided?
 - Did you feel as though the division of labor was fair? In other words, did you find that members of the group contributed equally?
 - Did you feel that the outcome of the budget process was fair?
 - Would you have any hesitance on working with the same group on a similar issue in the future?
3. (In Board State) What role, if any, did the Board have in organizing the lobbying effort in either of these cases?