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Recent Research Implications on (Re)Calibrating Your Higher-Education Institution's Chief Online Education Officer Role

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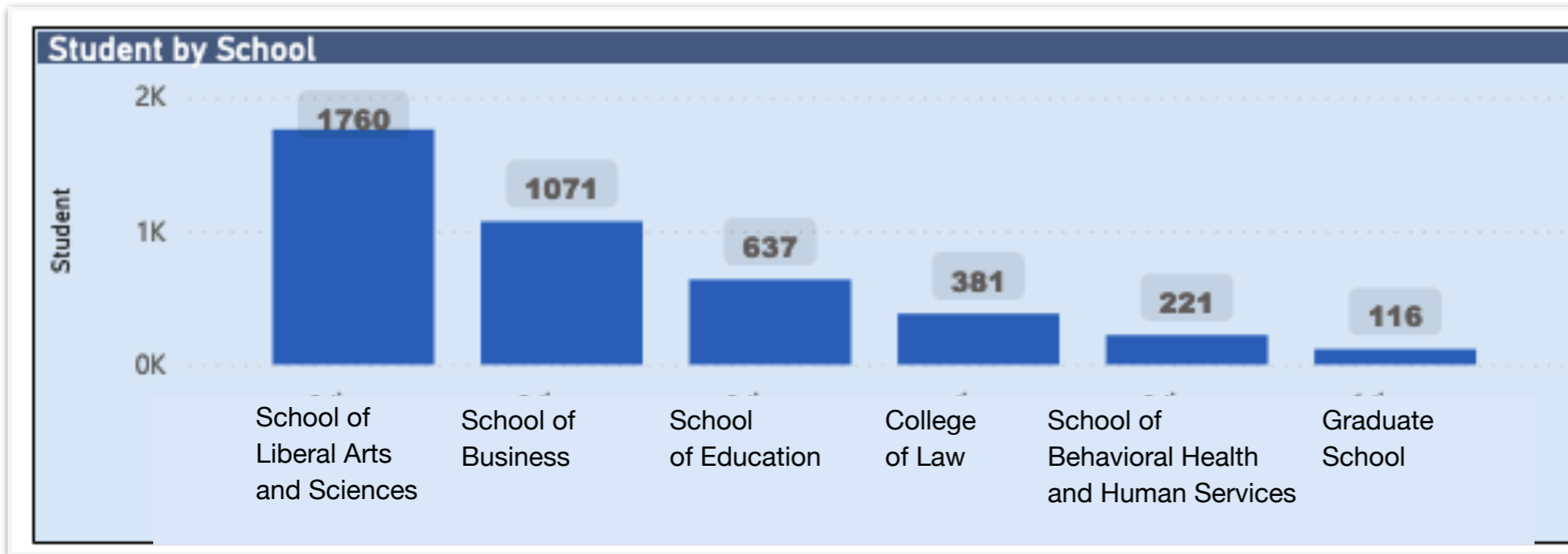
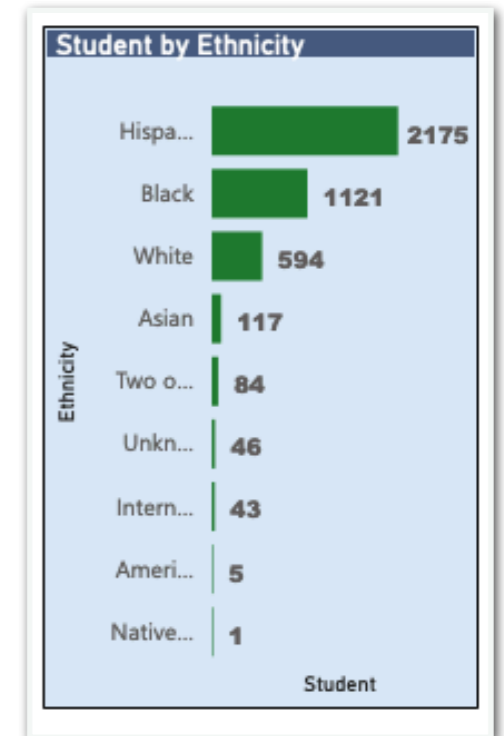
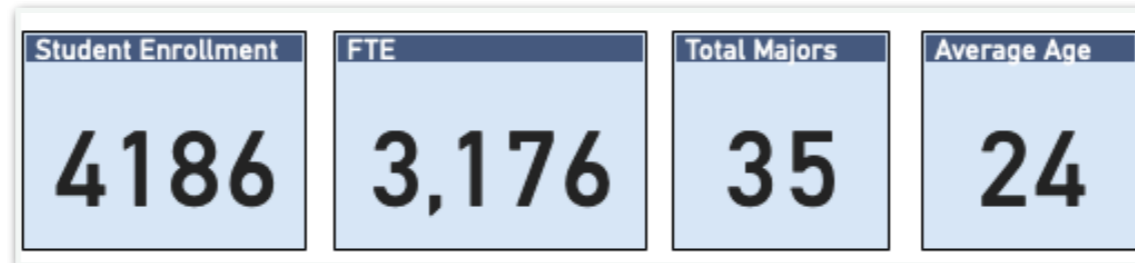
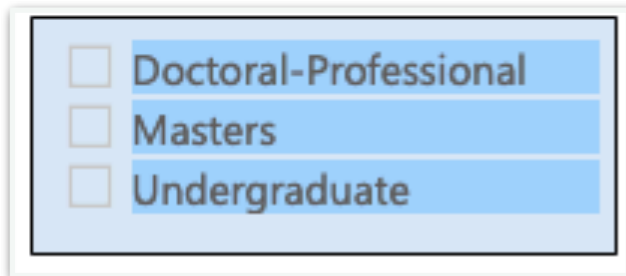
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The Study

Relevance

The study may be of interest to:

- senior leadership hiring COEOs
- COEOs themselves
- aspiring COEOS professionals
- COEO's internal peers
- external stakeholders

Why Chief Online Education Officers?

- the OL higher ed market continues to growth
- quality sets OL programs apart in the current competitive market
- presidents/chancellors & provosts at many U.S. higher education institutions have been placing the quality of OL program administration under the purview of a new role known under the umbrella term of COEO



Scope

Quality

- Online education is firmly entrenched in mainstream higher education (1)
- With skyrocketing competition for online students, quality assurance is paramount (2, 3).
- The umbrella term of “chief online education officer” emerged (4) — COEOs focus entirely on the institutional administration/quality of online education (5).

(1) Allen & Seaman, 2004; Allen et al., 2016

(2) Irele, 2013; Palloff & Pratt, 2005; Quality Matters, 2017

(3) Fredericksen, 2017; Herron, Lashley, Salley, & Shaw, 2016; Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018; Legon, Garrett, & Fredericksen, 2019

(4) Legon & Garrett, 2017, p. 8

(5) Fredericksen, 2017; Legon & Garrett, 2017

Legitimate Power

- “Legitimate power” is
 - synonymous with *positional power* or *formal authority*
 - the power derived from having *formal job authority* or *jurisdiction* over certain areas of responsibility, much like a judge has the authority to administer sentences in a courtroom (1)
- COEOs hold legitimate power over QA efforts as they are at the heart of online education “issues and influences that determine present and future policy” (2)

(1) French & Raven, 1959a, 1959b; Lunenburg, 2012

(2) Legon & Garrett, 2017, p. 8

Why This Study?

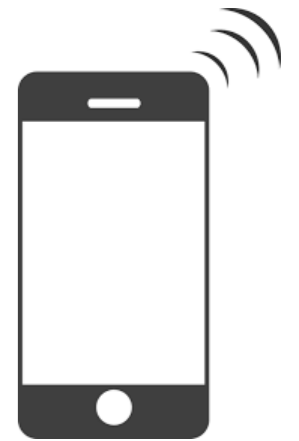
- there was no prior empirical research to help senior leaders calibrate the COEO role in a way that maximizes its influence on quality
- this quantitative, correlative, non-experimental study asked COEOs from all over the nation to
 - use the OLC Quality Scorecard (QSC) to share their perceptions of their institution's online program quality
 - self-assess their ability to influence quality based on their legitimate power
 - describe environmental factors that could potentially impact their legitimate power.

The OLC QSC



Scoring

- 0 = Deficient
- 1 = Developing
- 2 = Accomplished
- 3 = Exemplary



Criteria

Points

Dimensions

Research Gap

- the 3 concepts have been **studied in isolation**:
 1. COEOs and their institutions' unique environmental characteristics
 2. online program quality
 3. legitimate power (1)
- **little research** that can inform the practice of U.S. online education leadership (2) as to
 - the amount of legitimate power
 - necessary to enable their COEO
 - to maximize online program quality at their institution

(1) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018; French & Raven, 1959a, 1959b; Herron et al., 2016; Irele, 2013; Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018; Legon, Garrett, & Fredericksen, 2019; Lunenburg, 2012; Shelton, 2010

(2) Huett & Piña, 2016; Legon & Garrett, 2018; Piña, Lowell, & Harris, 2018

Purpose

- This study links existing *online program quality*, *legitimate power*, and *environmental characteristics* to the COEO role in the United States by:
 - describing the relationship between COEOs’
 - legitimate power landscape
 - ability to influence quality
 - investigating how
 - environmental factors
 - impact the COEO’s legitimate power



Research Questions

Is there a **statistically significant correlation** between:

RQ1:

- COEOs' overall **legitimate power**
- overall online program **quality**
- as self-assessed by COEOs using the Quality Scorecard (QSC)?

RQ2:

- COEOs' perceived overall **legitimate power**
- COEO-reported **environmental factors**?

Lit Review: Online Ed Quality

- a complex and mysterious term—a “black box” (1) obscuring the contents of educational inputs and outputs in the classroom and at the program level (2)
- while many advertise their “quality online education” (3), they lack a way to quantify or benchmark that quality
- “[...] literature has focused on the quality of teaching [...] far more than the overall quality of programs” (4), leaving online program administrators unable to
 - ascertain the quality of online education
 - support strategic planning
 - guide program improvements (5)

(1) Adair & Diaz, 2014, p. 5

(2) Latchem, 2014; Mitchell, 2009; Shattuck, 2014; Shelton & Saltsman, 2005

(3) Shelton, 2010b, p. 60

(4) Shelton, 2010a, p. 34

(5) Shelton & Saltzman, 2005; Shelton, 2010a

Lit Review: Online Ed Quality

- Dr. Kaye Shelton built
 - on the 24 *Institute for Higher Education Policy* quality indicators
 - through a 6-round Delphi research study conducted with 43 experts (1)
 - revealing 9 quality categories, each comprised of one or more quality indicators scored on a scale of 0 to 3 (2)
 - instrument known today as the **Online Learning Consortium's QSC instrument for the administration of online programs** (3)
- Shelton recommended for others to conduct research “with a group of online education administrators who would use the scorecard to self-assess their own online programs and report their findings” (4)
 - this study enacted those recommendations and invited COEOs to self-assess their institution's online programs through the lens of the QSC

(1) Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; Shelton, 2010a

(2) OLC, 2018

(3) Shelton, 2010a

(4) Shelton, 2010a, p. 172

Literature Review

Lit Review: COEOs

- **2003** — article on the type of distance education leadership needed in the 21st century (1).
- **2010** — many institutions began adopting a COEO role, leading to intensified research regarding this role (2).
- **2012** — an article was published about the types of leadership theories applicable to COEO-like roles in higher education (3).
- **2016** — a team of researchers published an article describing what it takes for one to fulfill the duties of a COEO-type role as well as what this leader's promotional prospects may be (4).

(1) Beaudoin, 2003

(2) Fredericksen, 2017

(3) Nworie, 2012

(4) Herron et al., 2016

(5) Fredericksen, 2017; Legon and Garrett, 2017

Lit Review: COEOs

- **2017** — two publications came out
 1. offered a composite description of COEOs serving in 4-year U.S. institutions (1)
 2. captured the current landscape of U.S. online education (2)
- **2018** — two sequel publications added to the literature:
 2. offered a composite description of COEOs serving in 2-year U.S. institutions (3)
 3. captured the landscape of online education at the time (4)
 - first connection between jurisdiction and COEOs' ability assure program quality
- **2019** — the third survey to capture the current landscape of online education (5)

(1) Fredericksen, 2017

(2) Legon and Garrett, 2017

(3) Fredericksen, 2018

(4) Legon & Garrett, 2018

(5) Legon, Garrett, & Fredericksen, 2019

Lit Review: COEOs

- Presidents/chancellors and provosts created the COEO role to:
 - direct organizational innovation of strategic importance
 - absorb all duties associated with online education, including:
 - mission
 - accreditation
 - course scheduling
 - quality assurance
 - Curriculum
 - technology
 - faculty needs
 - resources (1)
- The COEO
 - functions “beyond middle management, offering an institution-wide strategic vision as part of senior academic leadership” (2)
 - sits “at the center of the issues and influences that determine present and future [online education] policy” (3)

(1) Herron et al., 2016; Fredericksen, 2017; Legon & Garrett, 2017

(2) Herron et al., 2016, p. 1

(3) Legon & Garrett, 2017, p. 8

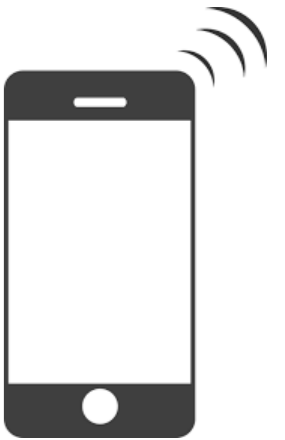
Lit Review: COEO Environmental Factors

Existing literature (1) mentions **environmental factors** that shape the COEO role at each unique higher education institution, including:

- job title
- reporting line
- reporting units
- length of the role at the institution
- length of time as COEO at the current institution
- type and length experience
- portfolio of responsibilities
- leadership responsibilities

Lit Review: Job Titles

- the literature refers to the COEO-type role as (1):
 - online learning leader
 - chief online officer
 - chief online learning officer
 - chief online education officer
- in the higher education arena, those who identify as COEOs hold a variety of unique titles (2), such as:
 - Coordinator of Distance Learning
 - Director of Distance Education
 - Dean of Distance and Continuing Education
 - Director of E-Learning
 - Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning
 - Dean of Online Learning
 - Assistant/Associate Vice President for Distance Education



(1) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018; Herron et al., 2016; Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018; Legon, Garrett, & Fredericksen, 2019
(2) Fredericksen, 2017; Legon & Garrett, 2017; Nworie, 2012, p. 3

Lit Review: Upstream Reporting Line

- COEOs report upstream through the **provost/chief academic officer** or another senior academic leader
 - in 75% of universities
 - in 61% of community colleges (1)
- community college COEOs are two times more likely to
 - report upstream through the **dean of a school** (7%) compared to university COEOs (3%)
 - report through a **nonacademic vice president/senior vice president** (14%) compared to their university counterparts (7%)
- in both types of institutions, a small number of COEOs (3% in community colleges and 5% in universities) report through the **chief information officer**, giving some validity to the view that online education is an academic rather than an IT function (1).

Lit Review: Upstream Reporting Line

- in both types of institutions, only 5% report directly to a **president** (1)
- other sources indicate
 - 10% of higher education COEOs reported to the president in 2017
 - increasing to 15% in 2018 (2)
- Ray Schroeder, UPCEA Director for the Online Leadership Center & Associate Vice Chancellor of Online Learning at the University of Illinois Springfield
 - advocates for COEOs to report directly to the **president or chancellor** and to be accepted by the chief officer leadership suite (3)
- Mike Abbiati, WICHE Vice President and WCET Executive Director
 - believes it is critical for the COEO to work **on equal footing with the CIO and CFO** and to have the **support of the president** (3)



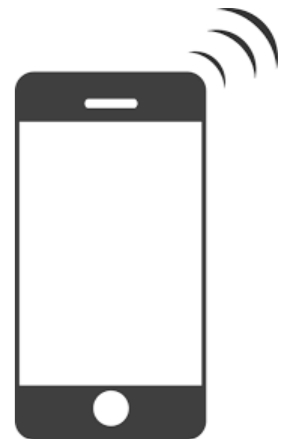
(1) Fredericksen, 2017

(2) Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018

(3) Herron et al., 2016

Lit Review: Downstream Reporting Line

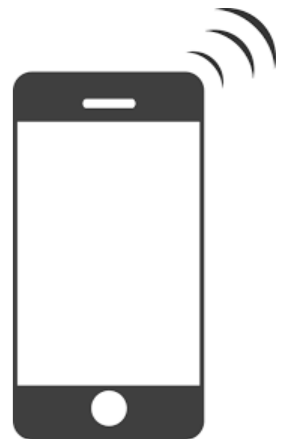
- **in over 50%** of higher education institutions, the following report to the COEO role:
 - instructional design
 - course design
 - multimedia development
 - faculty development and training
 - learning management systems
 - online learning policy development
 - academic/education technology units (1)
- **less common** are reports from:
 - the center for teaching and learning
 - faculty IT support
 - faculty library support
 - student services
 - advising
 - marketing
 - educational research units (1)
- the COEO, therefore, is “not bound to a single discipline in particular but to effective learning practices in general” (2)



(1) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018
(2) Herron et al., 2016, p. 3

Lit Review: Introduction of the COEO Role at the Institution

- the **earliest adoption** of the COEO role occurred
 - a decade or more ago in 29% of 4-year institutions
 - compared to 39% of 2-year institutions (1)
- the **latest adoption** of the COEO role (less than year) was reported in
 - 6% of universities
 - compared 2% of community colleges (1)
- suggests administrators at 2-year institutions were quicker to introduce the COEO-type role than their 4-year counterparts.

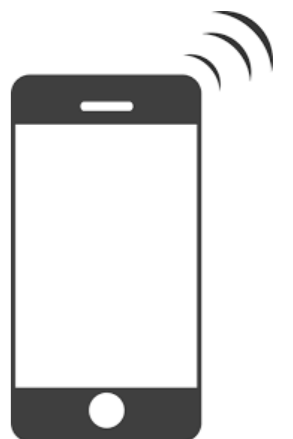


Lit Review: COEO Responsibilities

- COEOs could be **responsible for** the
 - mission
 - accreditation
 - student demand
 - quality assurance
 - curriculum
 - technology
 - faculty needs
 - resources related to online education (1)
- 50% of COEOs hold a **faculty appointment** in addition to their online leadership role (2)
- faculty appointments are split roughly evenly between
 - **tenure**/tenure track
 - **non-tenure** appointments (2)

(1) Legon & Garrett, 2017

(2) Fredericksen, 2017



Lit Review: Legitimate Power

- legitimate power:
 - is “a person’s ability to influence others’ behavior because of the position that person holds within the organization” (1)
 - derived from having *jurisdiction* over certain areas of responsibility
 - synonymous with *positional power* or *formal authority* (2)
- **French and Raven** identified **six power bases** through which leaders influence others’ attitudes, values, or behaviors:
 1. **legitimate**: the leader has formal authority on the job
 2. **reward**: the leader can provide rewards to followers
 3. **coercive**: the leader can reprimand the followers
 4. **information**: the leader possesses information that followers need
 5. **expert**: followers perceive the leader’s competence
 6. **referent**: followers identify with and like the leader (3)
- criticism: the relationship between the 6 power bases and subordinate outcome variables cannot account for **all** organizational circumstances (4)

(1) Lunenburg, 2012, p. 2

(2) French & Raven, 1959a, 1959b; Lunenburg, 2012

(3) French and Raven, 1959b; Raven, 1965

(4) Hersey, Blanchard, & Johnson, 2008; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1983; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Matteson & Ivancevich, 1998; Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985; Robbins, 2009; Thompson, 2003

Lit Review: Legitimate Power

French and Raven (1) see:

- **power** as influence and
- **influence** as psychological change and as the relationship between
 - followers
 - a leader in a specific a role (such the COEO)
 - and group norms (1)
- through **legitimate power**
 - the leader has a legitimate right to influence followers
 - followers must accept the leader's influence
- **legitimacy** involves standards accepted by followers through which the leader can assert their power
 - **justified LP:**
 - followers see the leader as being justified in prescribing behavior since the leader has been granted that power by a legitimizing agent accepted by the followers
 - **unjustified LP:**
 - if the leader uses his or her legitimate power outside of the range of influence accepted by followers, such action will be considered **illegitimate** and erode the leader's desirability

Theoretical Framework

Theoretical Framework: Bureaucracy

- legitimate power and the role of the COEO are **bureaucratic constructs**
- **organizations** represent rational, precise, and efficient ways to meet goals ~
Max Weber, “the father of bureaucracy” (1)
- bureaucracies are **hierarchical** in nature (2)
- the **COEO**
 - represents the apex of the online-education chain of command
 - sits side-by-side with fellow chief officers
 - reports to a senior leadership role (president/chancellor or provost)
 - may implement change using their formal legitimate power

(1) Manning, 2013, p. 113

(2) Birnbaum, 1989

Theoretical Framework: Contingency

- there is **no ideal way** to manage organizations
- the effectiveness of an organization has to do with the close alignment between its **design and environment** (1)
- the **degree of complexity** of the environment should match the complexity of processes and structures (2)
 - the more complex the environment, the more important it becomes for the organization to balance
 - high degrees of **differentiation** (the organization's segmentation into subsystems with unique attributes)
 - high degrees of **integration** (unity of effort among the organization's subsystems toward the completion of institutional tasks)

(1) Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967

(2) Birnbaum, 1989

Research Methods

Methods: Scope

Rooted in the history of past studies of this population, this study included COEOs representing **public, private, non-profit, and for-profit 2- and 4-year** institutions

- Dr. Eric **Fredericksen** seminal studies captured samples of individuals from 2-year and 4-year institutions representing, public, private, for-profit, and nonprofit institutions across the nation (1)
- the **Herron research team** analyzed all published COEO-type job descriptions for higher education in the nation and interviewed several leaders in the field (2)
- the authors of the **Changing Landscape of Online Education (CHLOE)** studies captured
 - 104 individuals through CHLOE 1
 - 182 through CHLOE 2
 - 280 through CHLOE 3—all COEOs from public, private, non-profit, and for-profit 2- and 4-year institutions with Quality Matters and Eduventures membership (3)

(1) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018

(2) Herron, et al., 2016

(3) Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018; Legon, Garrett, Fredericksen, 2019

Methods: Inclusion Criteria

To take part in the study, participants had to:

- be currently employed as a COEO by a U.S. higher education institution of any type (public or private, for-profit or nonprofit, and 2- or 4 year)
- where COEO represents the highest role on the organization chart to focus on online education.

Excluded from participation were those who:

- were not the only individual in a COEO role at their institution
- served as a COEO in the past
- served as COEO in the corporate world (i.e., outside higher education)
- were employed outside the U.S.

Methods: Assumptions

Study design assumptions:

- all institutions with an online program have an individual with COEO responsibilities
- there is only one COEO at each higher education institution
- COEOs are knowledgeable about their institution's environment and online program quality
- COEOs have legitimate power over at least one QSC criterion at their institution

Methods: Sampling

Since there is no list of all COEO-type professionals in American higher education, this study used:

- **non-probability** sampling
- **convenience** sampling
- **snowball** sampling (1)

The sample was captured through:

- **electronic advertisement** through the OLC newsletter and social media
- a list of **65 COEO emails** provided by the authors of the CHLOE 2017 survey.

(1) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018; Legon, Garrett, Fredericksen, 2019

Methods

Sent out in summer of 2019, the anonymous survey:

- asked participants to consent to the research, if interested/meet the inclusion criteria
- took participants through each component in the QSC, asking COEOs to provide two sets of scores per QSC quality indicator:
 - a QSC **quality** score
 - on a scale of 0 (deficient) to 3 (exemplary)
 - a corresponding **legitimate power** score
 - on a scale of 0 (I have no LP and no input) to 3 (I have full LP)
- participants answered questions about the unique **environment** in which they operate (that could potentially impact their legitimate power)

Methods: Researcher Bias

- I am an administrator in online education
- to minimize the potential effects of researcher bias:
 - standard evaluation tools and instruments common to the field of online education provided the foundation for the study
 - results were peer-reviewed by professional researchers

Methods: Data Analysis

Coding:

- the **score** of each indicator within the nine QSC categories was used to construct quality and power average scores

Data Cleaning:

- **problem:** some participants skipped questions
 - taking the sum of the quality and power answers could have led to a lower quality or power score for COEOs who
 - provided incomplete responses vs.
 - provided complete responses (risk of a spurious relationship between quality and power)
- **solution:** average scores were constructed by:
 - taking the sum of the score for each QSC indicator
 - dividing it by the total number of QSC indicators to which respondents had non-missing values within the respective QSC criterion

SPSS Analysis:

- **descriptive**
- **correlational**
 - **Pearson's correlation** for categorical environmental variables
 - **Spearman's rho** for ordinal environmental variables

Results

Results: Sample Characteristics

N = 20

Most respondents:

- were **male** (55%)
 - vs. female 50% and 61% (1)
- were **aged 41 or older** (75%)
 - vs. 45 or older 74% and 69% (1)
- earned a **doctoral** degree (65%)
 - consistent with 62% (1)
- **do not teach** (65%)
 - consistent with 50% and 69% (1)
- represented
 - **public** (55%)
 - **4-year** (64%)
 - **nonprofit** (89%) institutions
- represented **16 states**:
 - Northeastern (20%)
 - Midwestern (30%)
 - Southern (45%)
 - Western (5%)

Sample Characteristics	n	Percentage
Gender		
Female	9	45%
Male	11	55%
Age		
18 – 30	0	0%
31 – 40	5	25%
41 – 50	7	35%
51 – 60	5	25%
61 – 70	3	15%
Over 71	0	0%
Highest Degree Earned		
Bachelor's	0	0%
Master's	7	35%
Specialist's	0	0%
Doctoral	13	65%
Other	0	0%
Teaching		
Tenured/tenure track	1	5%
Non-tenure track	1	5%
Adjunct	5	25%
None	13	65%
Institution Type		
Public	11	55%
Private	9	45%
2-year	6	35%
4-year	14	64%
For profit	2	10%
Not for profit	17	89%
Region		
Northeastern states	4	20%
Midwestern states	6	30%
Southern states	9	45%
Western states	1	5%

(1) Fredericksen, 2017; 2018

Results: Sample Characteristics

Descriptive Statistics for Sample Characteristics

Sample Characteristics	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Number of areas in which COEOs have experience	8.5	.89
Number of responsibilities under the COEO's current portfolio	6.1	2.17

Respondents had **experience** in most of the 9 areas of experience ($M = 8.5$)

1. higher education
2. leadership/management
3. educational research
4. faculty development
5. instructional design
6. information technology
7. learning online
8. teaching online
9. teaching face-to-face

Respondents had **jurisdiction** over most of the 8 portfolio areas ($M = 6.1$)

1. mission
2. accreditation
3. student demand
4. faculty needs
5. curriculum
6. quality assurance
7. technology
8. resources

Results: QSC Categories

Descriptive Statistics for Quality and Power Average Scores at the QSC Category Level

QSC Categories	<u>Average Quality Score</u>		<u>Average Power Score</u>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
QSC 1. Institutional Support	1.42	.69	1.69	.66
QSC 2. Technology Support	1.91	.72	1.54	.76
QSC 3. Course Development and Instructional Design	1.48	.79	1.74	.82
QSC 4. Course Structure	1.81	.63	1.77	.86
QSC 5. Teaching and Learning	1.76	.68	1.52	1.01
QSC 6. Social and Student Engagement	1.45	.94	1.65	.88
QSC 7. Faculty Support	1.78	.78	2.12	.83
QSC 8. Student Support	1.76	.52	1.55	.65
QSC 9. Evaluation and Assessment	1.39	.59	1.36	.84
Overall Average	1.64	.56	1.66	.66

Note. Scores range between zero and three.

The overall average across all QSC categories was:

- 1.64 for online program **quality**
- 1.66 for **legitimate power**

Research Questions

Research Question 1

- RQ1:** Is there a statistically significant correlation between COEOs’
- overall legitimate power
 - overall online program quality
 - as self-assessed by COEOs using the Quality Scorecard (QSC)?

Correlation Between Overall Average Power and Average Quality

QSC Category	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
--------------	----------	----------

1. Institutional Support	.66**	.00
2. Technology Support	.61**	.00
3. Course Development and Instructional Design	.71**	.00
4. Course Structure	.86**	.00
5. Teaching and Learning	.85**	.00
6. Student and Social Engagement	.71**	.00
7. Faculty Support	.86**	.00
8. Student Support	.55*	.01
9. Evaluation and Assessment	.60**	.00

Note. * $p < .05$ (two-tail); ** $p < .01$ (two-tail).

- There is a **statistically significant correlation** between
 - average LP
 - average quality (r values ranged from .55 to .86, $p < .05$)
- Average legitimate power had a **strong positive effect** on average online program quality in each QSC category.

Research Question 1

Correlation Between Average Power and Average Quality (QSC Category Level)

Average Power	Average Quality								
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5	Q6	Q7	Q8	Q9
P1	.66**(.00)	.47* (.04)	.67**(.00)	.65**(.00)	.70**(.00)	.36 (.12)	.71**(.00)	.47* (.04)	.71**(.00)
P2	.52* (.02)	.61**(.00)	.40 (.08)	.39 (.09)	.33 (.15)	.19 (.42)	.21 (.37)	.38 (.10)	.48* (.03)
P3	.54* (.01)	.22 (.35)	.71**(.00)	.82**(.00)	.83**(.00)	.46* (.04)	.71**(.00)	.52* (.02)	.72**(.00)
P4	.61**(.01)	.15 (.54)	.73**(.00)	.86**(.00)	.80**(.00)	.56* (.01)	.69**(.00)	.66**(.00)	.77**(.00)
P5	.35 (.13)	.01 (.96)	.56**(.01)	.79**(.00)	.85**(.00)	.65**(.00)	.66**(.00)	.54* (.01)	.66**(.00)
P6	.17 (.47)	-.18 (.45)	.15 (.52)	.52* (.02)	.56* (.01)	.71**(.00)	.36 (.12)	.43 (.06)	.41 (.07)
P7	.48* (.03)	.24 (.30)	.57**(.01)	.77**(.00)	.77**(.00)	.45* (.04)	.86**(.00)	.44* (.05)	.65**(.00)
P8	.22 (.35)	-.03 (.91)	.32 (.17)	.64**(.00)	.74**(.00)	.62**(.00)	.54* (.01)	.55* (.01)	.54* (.01)
P9	.25 (.28)	-.26 (.27)	.44 (.05)	.57**(.01)	.66**(.00)	.46* (.04)	.53* (.02)	.37 (.11)	.60**(.00)

Note: * $p < .05$ (two-tail), ** $p < .01$ (two-tail)

QSC (power [P] and quality [Q]) categories: 1 = institutional support, 2 = technology support, 3 = course development/instructional design, 4 = course structure, 5 = teaching and learning, 6 = social and student engagement, 7 = faculty support, 8 = student support, 9 = evaluation and assessment.

Looking at the relationships between average power and average quality per QSC category

- **most** (not all) relationships are **statistically significant**
 - **most** relationships are **positive** (except for P6-Q2, P8-Q2, and P9-Q2)
 - **most influential** among these strong relationships are those at the level of
 - institutional support (P1)
 - course development/instructional design (P3)
 - course structure (P4)
 - **least influential** relationship is at the level of technology support (P2).

Research Question 2

RQ2: Is there a statistically significant correlation between

- COEOs' perceived overall legitimate power
- COEO-reported environmental factors?

Correlation Between Environmental Factors and Average Power

Environmental Factors	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
E1. COEO's job title (hierarchy)	.66**	.00
E2. The job title of the COEO's supervisor (hierarchy)	.3	.18
E3. Units making a partial or full report to the COEO (number)	.38	.10
E4. COEO role existence at the respondents' institutions (duration)	.04	.87
E5. Public or private institution	-.02	.94
E6. For- or non-profit institution	-.41	.08
E7. 2- or 4-year institution	-.25	.29
E8. Institution's Carnegie classification	-.37	.15
E9. Highest degree earned by the COEO	.30	.20
E10. Length of experience as COEO, including current employment	.18	.44
E11. Number of areas in which the COEO has any degree of experience	.17	.48
E12. Current responsibility portfolio	.42	.07
E13. Teaching responsibility at the current institution	.13	.58
E14. Age	.01	.95
E15. Gender	.32	.17

Note. ** $p < .01$ (two-tail).

- correlation coefficients ranged from $-.37$ to $.66$
- the only statistically significant correlation between
 - job title (E1)
 - overall LP

Research Question 2

Correlation Between Environmental Factors and Average Power

E	Correlation Coefficient (Significance)								
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
E1 ^a	.48* (.03)	.00 (.99)	.61**(.01)	.66**(.00)	.60**(.01)	.48*(.02)	.73** (.00)	.55*(.01)	.64**(.00)
E2 ^a	.14 (.55)	.27 (.25)	.20 (.40)	.19 (.44)	.31 (.18)	.33 (.16)	.35 (.13)	.27 (.26)	.17 (.47)
E3 ^b	.57**(.01)	.50*(.03)	.43 (.06)	.37 (.11)	.20 (.39)	-.01 (.96)	.57** (.01)	.19 (.43)	.07 (.77)
E4 ^a	.41 (.10)	.55*(.02)	.34 (.18)	.01 (.97)	.05 (.85)	-.34 (.18)	-.02 (.94)	-.20 (.45)	-.03 (.92)
E5 ^b	-.26 (.27)	-.07 (.76)	.05 (.85)	.11 (.65)	.05 (.82)	.02 (.94)	-.17 (.47)	-.10 (.69)	.13 (.58)
E6 ^b	-.18 (.45)	-.36 (.13)	-.49*(.03)	-.40 (.09)	-.33 (.17)	-.13 (.61)	-.36 (.13)	-.31 (.19)	-.42 (.07)
E7 ^b	-.19 (.43)	-.03 (.90)	-.16 (.50)	-.20 (.40)	-.14 (.55)	-.27 (.25)	-.33 (.15)	-.30 (.20)	-.22 (.36)
E8 ^a	-.24 (.36)	-.16 (.53)	-.36 (.16)	-.58*(.02)	-.20 (.43)	-.47 (.06)	-.29 (.27)	-.25 (.34)	-.29 (.26)
E9 ^a	.27 (.24)	-.17 (.46)	.40 (.08)	.27 (.24)	.28 (.24)	.17 (.46)	.46*(.04)	.27 (.24)	.32 (.17)
E10 ^a	.17 (.48)	.20 (.40)	.38 (.10)	.30 (.20)	.27 (.25)	.03 (.90)	.12 (.60)	-.07 (.77)	.29 (.21)
E11 ^b	.04 (.87)	.29 (.21)	.09 (.71)	.17 (.48)	.05 (.84)	.30 (.19)	.07 (.77)	.12 (.61)	.09 (.71)
E12 ^b	.41 (.07)	.12 (.63)	.44 (.05)	.51*(.02)	.29 (.21)	.16 (.51)	.63**(.00)	.18 (.45)	.30 (.20)
E13 ^a	.28 (.24)	.21 (.37)	.12 (.60)	-.11 (.63)	.08 (.72)	-.13 (.59)	.29 (.22)	.25 (.28)	.11 (.64)
E14 ^a	-.19 (.43)	-.19 (.43)	.03 (.91)	.18 (.44)	.14 (.55)	-.03 (.92)	-.12 (.62)	-.21 (.38)	.07 (.77)
E15 ^b	.43 (.06)	.38 (.10)	.30 (.20)	.16 (.49)	.29 (.21)	.10 (.67)	.34 (.15)	.17 (.48)	.19 (.43)

Note. * $p < .05$ (two-tail); ** $p < .01$ (two-tail).

a = Analyzed through Spearman rho's correlation (r_s); b = Analyzed through Pearson's correlation (r).

E = Environmental factors; E1 = COEO's job title (hierarchy); E2 = the job title of the COEO's supervisor (hierarchy); E3 = units making a partial or full report to the COEO (number); E4 = COEO role existence at the respondents' institutions (duration); E5 = public or private institution; E6 = for- or non-profit institution; E7 = 2- or 4-year institution; E8 = institution's Carnegie classification; E9 = highest degree earned by the COEO; E10 = length of experience as COEO, including current employment; E11 = number of areas in which the COEO has any degree of experience; E12 = current responsibility portfolio; E13 = teaching responsibility at the current institution; E14 = age; E15 = gender.

P1 = institutional support; P2 = technology support; P3 = course development/instructional design; P4 = course structure; P5 = teaching and learning; P6 = social and student engagement; P7 = faculty support; P8 = student support; P9 = evaluation and assessment.

Research Question 2

- there's wide variations in
 - the magnitude
 - direction of correlations (ranging from $-.58$ to $.73$)
- 7 environmental factors (E1, E3, E4, E6, E8, E9, and E12) hold statistically significant correlations with at least one average power value
- most impactful are:
 - COEO job title (hierarchy, E1)
 - number of units reporting to the COEO (E3)

Discussion

Discussion: LP & Quality

- the study found **overall power** had a **positive** effect on **overall quality**
- **power and quality** at the QSC category level were strongly correlated **except in** how quality in **technology support** (Q2) relates to power in
 - social and student engagement (P6)
 - student support (P8)
 - evaluation and assessment (P9)
 - **consistent** with the Fredericksen (1) studies
 - online education is not an IT function
 - institutions depend on IT to provide a platform for learning and engagement
- it would be advisable for senior leaders to consider
 - crafting their COEO's job description such that **power** levels are **commensurate** with the desired **quality** levels for which the hired COEO will be responsible
 - placing the COEOs on **equal footing with the CIO and CFO**, with a **direct report to the president** (2), to fully empower the COEO
 - assign **power levels** to their COEO that are **commensurate** with the **specific quality** standard set for online programs
 - e.g., it would be very difficult for a COEO tasked with assuring exceptional quality levels of *course development and instructional design* not to have full authority over *online course development and instructional design* efforts at the institution

(1) Fredericksen 2017, 2018

(2) Herron et al., 2016

Discussion: Job Title & LP

- the study identified a statistically significant correlation between the **COEO's job title (E1)** and **overall power**
- it would be advisable for senior leaders to assign their COEO a job title commensurate with the power level necessary to enact the desired quality level
- the more critical the online program is to the institution, the higher the COEO would need to be placed within the organizational chart.

Degree to which OL Programs Are Important to the Institution	Title Hierarchy Level	Legitimate Power Levels
High	High	High
Mid	Mid	Mid
Low	Low	Low

Discussion: LP & Environmental Factors

- at least 1 of the 9 **average power** values displayed strong positive correlation with
 - COEO job title hierarchy (E1) - generally within the purview of sr leadership
 - units making a partial or full report to the COEO (E3) - generally within the purview of sr leadership
 - the length of time the COEO role existed at the institutions (E4) - generally within the purview of sr leadership
 - for- or non-profit status of institutions (E6)
 - the institution's Carnegie classification (E8)
 - the highest degree earned by the COEO (E9) - generally within the purview of sr leadership
 - the COEO's current responsibility portfolio (E12) - generally within the purview of sr leadership
- it would be advisable for senior leaders to consider increasing their COEO's authority over quality by
 - assigning a higher title on the organizational chart for this officer
 - putting their COEO in charge of a higher number of reporting units
 - delegating a broader portfolio of responsibilities to this role.
- for institutions that have not yet created a COEO-type role but have an investment in online programs, it would be advisable to create this role and to design responsibilities commensurate with institutional goals for online education quality.

Discussion: Title Variations

This study:

- **enacted** Dr. Kaye Shelton's **recommendation** of asking COEOs to self-assess their institution's online programs (1)
- **adds to** the small but **growing body of literature** focused on the American COEO higher education population
- **consistent with previous observations** of COEO title variations (2), data from this study shows seven variations of the COEOs title, including
 - chief officer
 - provost
 - vice president
 - dean
 - director
 - analyst
 - coordinator

(1) Shelton, 2010

(2) Fredericksen, 2017; Legon & Garrett, 2017; Nworie, 2012

(3) Fredericksen, 2017

Discussion: Upstream Reporting Lines

This study:

- indicated **COEOs report to a variety of roles**, primarily
 - the provost (50%)
 - vice presidents (15%)
 - deans (10%)
 - chief officers (10%)
 - the president (10%)
- **consistent with a prior study** (1) indicating COEOs report mostly to
 - the provost (52%)
 - other senior academic leaders (23%)
 - vice presidents (7%)
 - chief information officers (5%)
 - the president (5%)
 - deans (3%)
- **inconsistent with a prior study** (2) advocating for COEOs to
 - be part of the chief officer suite
 - report directly to the president

(1) Fredericksen, 2017

(2) Herron, Lashley, Salley, and Shaw, 2016

Limitations

Limitations

- there are 1,572 known COEOs in the United States (1)
- this study was only able to elicit **20** responses vs **104** responses achieved by CHLOE (2)
- this limitation can be attributed to
 - the nascent nature of this type research
 - the challenge of reaching this population absent a national list of COEO contacts
- the study's low response rate does **not allow for predictive analysis**
- the author opted to begin exploration of this research vein by **obtaining answers directly from COEOs**, who:
 - self-selected for participation in this study
 - described their institution's context based on their own knowledge
 - used their own perceptions to assess their institution's online program quality outside the confines of a typical QSC peer review team
 - self-assessed their role's legitimate power over each QSC quality indicator
- results are limited to a **COEO-centric reality**

(1) Fredericksen, 2017; 2018

(2) Legon & Garrett, 2017

Future Research

Implications for Future Research

Future research could:

- “**paint a more holistic picture**” by including the perspectives of those working closest with COEOs, such as
 - their leadership
 - peers
 - subordinates
- explore quality in online program administration through the
 - **broad lens** of influence
 - **more granular lens** of all six power bases

The **American higher education community** would benefit from forming a centralized **COEO home base** to:

- more easily connect COEOs with one another for collaboration and mentorship purposes
- put professional-development resources at COEO’s fingertips
- give researchers gated access to this population
- with **broader access to COEOs**, studies similar could
 - achieve **higher response rates**
 - permit significant **predictions**
 - allow senior leadership to **more accurately calibrate** their COEO’s legitimate power

Conclusions

Conclusions: Possible Use of Results

This study **responds to the lack of research** around how the LP granted to COEOs correlates with the quality of online programs and unique institutional contexts

- senior leadership needs to **ground** their **practice in research** as they empower their COEO to successfully influence the quality of online programs.

This study's results can be used to **maximize quality** in online programs by calibrating the COEO's levels of legitimate power

- senior leadership can use this article to inform how to **allocate COEO power** to maximize online program quality
 - e.g., most impactful to an online program's quality are designating to the COEO greater authority over
 - instructional support (P1)
 - course development/instructional design (P3)
 - course structure (P4) — are shown to be strongly correlated with an increase in overall quality.
- senior leadership can also use this article to **inform more granular quality decisions**
 - e.g., if the institution's strategic goal is to lead the industry through outstanding faculty support, then
 - placing the COEO's title as high as possible in the organizational chart (E1)
 - increasing the number of units reporting to the COEO (E3)
 - expanding the COEO's portfolio of responsibilities (E12) — are shown be strongly correlated with an increased quality of faculty support (Q7).

Conclusions: Making Progress

Although gaps in the literature remain—particularly regarding what enables a COEO to successfully drive quality in online education—there are promising activities both in practice and inquiry that can maximize the impact of COEOs in American online higher education, including but are not limited to

- **research:**
 - examining how leadership theories apply to COEO-type roles (1)
 - resulting in an instrument for measuring quality in online programs (2)
 - describing the COEO population and its environment (3)
 - examining what makes a COEO successful (4)
 - capturing the voice of COEOs in the context of the changing landscape of online education (5)
- **publications** offering best practices for the COEO-type role (6)
- **national conferences** delineating online education leadership as an audience (7)
- the **UPCEA Online Leadership Roundtable** initiative (8)
- a **National Council for Online Education** formed in 2020 in response to the pandemic (9)

(1) Nworie, 2012

(2) Shelton, 2010

(3) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018

(4) Herron et al., 2016

(5) Legon & Garrett, 2017; 2018 Legon, Garrett, & Fredericksen, 2019; 2020; Legon, Garrett, Fredericksen, & Simunich, 2020

(6) Hillman, Schudy, & Temkin, 2020; Piña & Huett, 2016; Piña, Lowell, & Harris, 2018; Shelton & Saltsman, 2005

(7) DLA, 2019; OLC Accelerate, 2020; USDLA, 2020

(8) UPCEA, 2020

(9) NCOE, 2020

Conclusions: Making Progress

- This research echoes the call for COEO-type professionals to conduct research to inform the practices of online higher education leaders (1)
- Since COEOs are a relatively new and scattered group of higher-education professionals, there is a need to create a unifying national COEO home base to
 - generate a national COEO contact list similar to the list of chief academic officers offered by ACAO (2)
 - enable COEOs to collaborate with one another in research, practice, and advocacy

(1) Piña & Huett, 2016

(2) ACAO (n.d.)

COVID-19

Pandemic Reflections

- this study was **pre-pandemic**
- the **need for a professional to oversee distance learning** became more evident than ever in the spring of 2020
 - 68% of 308 institutions surveyed in CHLOE 5 entrusted a single senior leader with navigating the COVID-19 crisis (1)
 - 13% of cases, that professional was a COEO (1)
- as institutions struggled to navigate multiple complex challenges in meeting the needs of learners without setting foot on campus, the **stark contrast** between the **quality** feasibly achievable through **emergency remote instruction** versus the quality achieved in **online courses** became apparent (2)
- it is critical for institutions to employ an online education expert who not only knows how to **foster quality** but can do so **without compromising on access and cost**
 - **COEOs are the ideal professional** to be entrusted with navigating the institution's pandemic response
 - due to COEOs' **broad portfolio** and **downstream reporting lines** (3)
 - since COEOs are adept at **education, technology, finances, and leadership** (4)

(1) Legon, Garrett, Fredericksen, & Simunich, 2020

(2) Immerwahr, Johnson, & Gasbarra, 2008; Legon, Garrett, Fredericksen, & Simunich, 2020

(3) Fredericksen, 2017, 2018

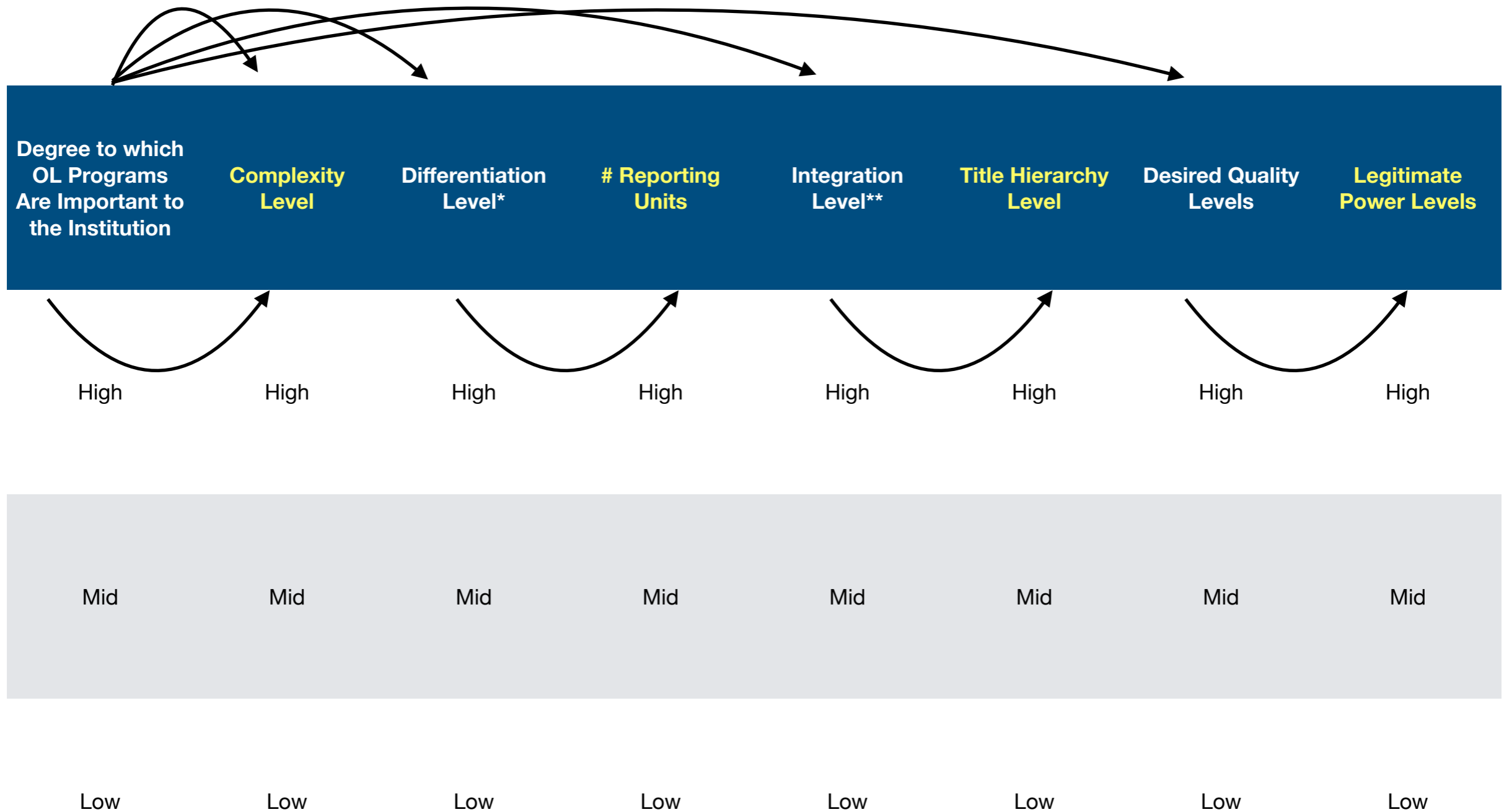
(4) Herron et al., 2016

COEO Role Calibration

(Re)Calibrating Your Institution's COEO Role



(Re)Calibrating Your Institution's COEO Role



* Segmentation into subsystems with unique attributes

** Unity of effort among the organization's subsystems toward the completion of online tasks



The Study



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Practitioner, Educator, and...

