Diversity "Versus" Quality: How Public Liberal Arts Universities Manage Pressures to Increase Ranking, Selectivity, Access, and Diversity

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DIVERSITY "VERSUS" QUALITY: HOW PUBLIC LIBERAL ARTS UNIVERSITIES
MANAGE PRESSURES TO INCREASE RANKING, SELECTIVITY, ACCESS, AND
DIVERSITY

by

HERSHEDA PATEL

Under the Direction of Tomeka Davis, PhD

ABSTRACT

The higher education system is strongly influenced by perceptions of university prestige (selectivity) and rankings. However, increasing selectivity has an adverse impact on university racial and economic diversity. Despite this negative impact, universities succumb to isomorphic pressures, mimicking the methods of higher ranking universities by attempting to increase the selectivity of incoming cohorts. This study aimed to establish the presence and function of isomorphic pressures on Council of Public Liberal Art Colleges (COPLAC) member universities and the extent to which those pressures impact selectivity and diversity, in comparison to state flagships, over time using longitudinal IPEDS data and original survey data. The analyses determined COPLACs are experiencing isomorphic pressures. COPLACs are becoming like state flagships in terms of Black, Hispanic, and underrepresented racial minority enrollments. However, COPLACs are serving more low-income students than state flagships. Overall, increasing selectivity does decrease racial minority and low-income enrollments at COPLAC and state flagship.

INDEX WORDS: Neoinstitutional theory, Isomorphic Pressures, Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, Underrepresented Minorities, Higher Education
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by

HERSHEDA PATEL

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and Sciences Georgia State University 2018
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MANAGE PRESSURES TO INCREASE RANKING, SELECTIVITY, ACCESS, AND
DIVERSITY

by

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May 2018
DEDICATION

First, I would like to dedicate this work to all People of Color whose intelligence and worth have been questioned and disregarded in academia and the world. You are smart, you are worthy, and you deserve better.

I also dedicate this work to my parents who have sacrificed so much for me for so long, my ingenious brother for whom I hope to help create a more just world, and my dear friends who have always encouraged me and believed in me when I could not see an end to this incredibly long process.
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Thank you all and I’ll see you on the next one!
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... v

1 INTRODUCTION...................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Why Diversity Matters ........................................................................................................ 3

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ........................................ 5

2.1 Neoinstitutional Theory Applied to the Prestige/Diversity Tension ......................... 8

2.2 COPLAC ............................................................................................................................. 15

3 METHODS ............................................................................................................................. 18

3.1 Data .................................................................................................................................. 20

3.1.1 IPEDS data ...................................................................................................................... 20

3.1.2 Independent Survey data ............................................................................................... 24

3.2 Analysis .............................................................................................................................. 26

3.2.1 IPEDS Data Analyses .................................................................................................... 26

3.2.2 Original Survey Analyses .............................................................................................. 28

4 RESULTS ............................................................................................................................... 29

4.1 Aim 1: Effects of Time on COPLACs’ and State Flagships’ Selectivity, Enrollment, and Cost ........................................................................................................................................... 30

4.2 Aim 2: Effects of Institutional Form on COPLACs’ and State Flagships’ Selectivity, Enrollment, and Cost ........................................................................................................................................... 32
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Aim 3: Impact of Selectivity on Enrollment at COPLAC universities and State Flagship universities</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Aim 4: COPLAC Universities’ Awareness of Isomorphic Pressures</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Aim 5: Sources and Impact of Isomorphic Pressures on COPLAC Universities</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>DISCUSSION and conclusion</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Future Directions</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SOURCES</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix A: Original IPEDS Variables</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix B: Survey Instrument</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appendix C: Original Survey Instrument</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 INTRODUCTION

Universities are highly bureaucratic institutions with specific goals, some of which are central to the organization while others are peripheral. Over the last few decades, it seems the central goal of universities has been to increase their prestige and position in the higher education hierarchy (Hazelkorn 2015; Astin 1985; Milem 2003; Hurtado 1992; Morphew and Huisman 2002). On the other hand, diversity has long been an important, but peripheral goal to universities¹ (Hurtado 1992; Milem 2003; Haycock, Lynch, and Engle 2010). The failure of universities to make diversity a central goal, while holding increasing university prestige, in particular, as a central goal, has led to a lack of diversity. This has occurred because the primary methods of increasing prestige, typically by increasing average entrance exam scores like the SAT or ACT, are known to reduce diversity (Hurtado 1992; Bowen and Bok 1998). Ranking organizations, such as US News & World Report enforce these methods by relying on selectivity measures (standardized test scores, acceptance rate, etc) to rank the “academic quality” (proxy for prestige), of universities and specific programs within universities², (Toma 2008; Millem 2003; Meredith 2004; Astin and Henson 1977).

Astin (1985 and 2012) and Hurtado (1992) argue that universities are too focused on prestige as a direct byproduct of the hierarchal structure of higher education, and the specific methods universities must use to increasing their prestige, via university rankings, are detrimental to the goal of increasing diversity. A university’s position in the hierarchy is determined by its prestige, which is supposed to be indicative of the quality of educational

¹ Particularly racial diversity of student bodies.
² A majority of all other ranking organizations use the same methods of ranking university prestige, including Forbes, Princeton Review, and Newsweek.
training provided by the university (Astin 1985; 2012). However, the rankings systems used to measure excellence utilize problematic criteria to determine rankings, so that rankings end up being a measure of a university’s resources and characteristics of students before they arrive at the university instead of an actual measure of the educational training the university provides its students (Astin 1985; 2012). Despite this flaw, high rankings are important to universities, since prestige draws competitive, high scoring, upper-class students and prestigious faculty\(^3\), large donations, and grants (Toma 2008; Milem 2003). Although racial diversity in student bodies has been shown to provide many benefits to universities’ actual academic training and quality (Gurin 1999; Alger 1998), diversity does not generally bring in money or other types of resources that are valued in ranking evaluations. For that reason, while universities may value and aim to increase diversity, they generally do not pursue diversity as intensely as increased ranking and are willing to engage in practices that increase ranking but are known to be detrimental for increasing diversity (Bowen and Bok 1998; Hurtado 1992; Milem 2003; Haycock et al 2010).

Using original data from independent surveys administered to select university administrators and administrative (demographic) data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, IPEDS, this study explores the specific pressures placed on universities in a national consortium of public liberal arts colleges (COPLAC) to increase their rankings and increase diversity, the source of those pressures, how those universities have responded to those pressures over time, and how well these universities are doing in achieving these goals.

COPLAC has a stated mission of providing high quality and selective liberal arts education to populations who previously have not had widespread access to selective and

\(^3\) Both of which bring in monetary resources to universities
prestigious private liberal arts colleges, which epitomizes the struggle between increasing
diversity (as well as access) and increasing prestige and rankings via selectivity. However,
despite the focus on diversity in the consortium, most COPLAC universities currently have low
levels of racial diversity, similar to many other selective universities that do not share similar
goals regarding access and diversity. This tension between the access mission and prestige makes
COPLAC universities excellent cases for exploring university responses to the pressures to
prioritize increasing rankings, prestige, and selectivity over increasing diversity.

1.1 Why Diversity Matters

Research shows the most selective and prestigious U.S. universities have historically
been and remain majority White with relatively low numbers of racial minorities (Ashkenas,
Park, and Pearce 2017). This trend means racial minorities are less likely to be accepted to and
graduate from prestigious and selective universities, placing them at a disadvantage in the labor
market which greatly values degrees from selective and prestigious universities (Brittain and
Bloom 2010; Carnevale and Rose 2003; Karen 2002; Schiffin 2015). While affirmative action
policies were successful in increasing minority enrollments at prestigious and selective
universities, particularly at public flagship universities, several court cases and political pressure
has led to a decrease in the use of such policies and dampened the upward trajectory of racial
minority enrollments (Hurtado 1992; Milem 2003; Niu and Tienda 2012; Long 2004). In some
places, such as Texas, across the board acceptance programs for students in the top ten percent of
high school graduating classes have rebounded the minority enrollment rates, but not to the same
level as under more open and widespread affirmative action policies (Ashkenas et al 2017, Niu
and Tienda 2012; Long 2004).
This lack of diversity is problematic for universities. Research shows a significant increase in learning outcomes for all groups when classrooms are racially and economically diverse (Alger 1998; Gurin 1999). Students greatly benefit from being able to exchange ideas and experiences with other students from different backgrounds, because diverse classrooms push students to be critical of their social and ideological position by exposing them to an array of ideas and experiences often different or contradictory to their own (Alger 1998; Gurin 1999; AAU 1997 and 2015). Furthermore, when universities infuse diversity and multiculturalism directly into the curriculum, students are more likely to gain critical thinking skills (MacPhee, Krueter, and Fritz 1994). This increase in critical thinking skills is valued in the labor market and benefits society by creating well-rounded citizens (Schneider 2009; Conference Board 2006; Hart Research for AACU 2013 and 2015).

Racially diverse classrooms also provide all racial groups with the opportunity to find commonalities across racial lines, which helps students gain more complex and accepting attitudes towards other racial groups, which is both valuable and necessary in our increasingly diverse society (Alger 1998; Gurin 1999). Students who socialize with students of different races, engage in regular discussion of social, political, and racial issues, and participate in courses or workshops on race or ethnicity show more dedication to promoting racial understanding than those who do not engage with diverse people or issues of race and racism (Milem 1994). While the mere presence of minorities alone is not enough to ensure these positive learning and social outcomes (this requires active engagement in classrooms and campus activities, as well as multicultural curriculum) (Milem, Chang, and Antonio 2005), surely the presence of diverse bodies and minds in classrooms and on campus is a prerequisite for such diverse interactions, engagements, and exchanges (Gurin 1999; Change 1996 and 1997). The
perpetuation of racially and economically homogenous classrooms prevents this exchange of cultures and ideas which dampens the potential learning outcomes of all the students.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The United States higher education system is highly stratified in terms of prestige, and the amount of prestige a university possesses is used as an indicator of the academic quality of the university (Astin 1985; 2012). Although prestige is not necessarily a true measure of a university’s academic quality, it is certainly treated as so in the higher education system. University ranking and reputation are generally just reflections of the university’s selectivity, determined by average SAT scores of incoming freshmen and acceptance rate, and a university’s resources, which is measured in terms of endowments and quality of faculty (whether faculty were trained at prestigious universities and their research productivity (Astin 2012). Of these criteria, average SAT scores of entering freshman class is a major benchmark used in determining a university’s ranking by U.S. News and World Report and other ranking entities (Toma 2008; Milem 2003; Meredith 2004; Astin and Henson 1977). This pushes universities to create more policies that increase the selectivity of the school, which often comes at the cost of admitting racial minority students who have similar grades but, on average, lower average SAT scores than White applicants (Bowen and Bok 1998; Rothstein 2004).

University ranking is meant to be a signifier of the academic quality of a university, but the measure of university ranking is heavily based on SAT scores which measure characteristics of students before they come to the university. This does little to nothing to showcase the quality of academic training or experiences provided by the university itself (Astin 1985) but is instead a simple reflection of the fact that upper-class students with high test scores desire to attend the institution because they perceive the university to have a high academic quality (Collins 1979).
This practice is problematic for diversity because students from upper-middle class backgrounds tend to score higher on standardized tests, regardless of ability, due to cultural biases in the tests with which favor more affluent students (Freedle 2003; Bowen and Bok 1998; Crouse and Trusheim 1988; Zwick 2004; Hurtado 1992). This link between student background and standardized test performance is so strong that, on average, every $10,000 increase in yearly family income is associated with a 10 to 15-point increase in math and verbal SAT scores (College Board 2015 and 2010).

The common defense for the continued use of SAT scores despite these biases is that SAT scores are a standardized measure of applicants’ ability to succeed in college courses (Bowen and Bok 1998; Zwick 2004; Kobrin and Michel 2006), but a wide body of research on the effectiveness of standardized test scores, particularly the SAT, as predictors of college performance and success show that standardized tests are very poor measures of student ability and college performance (Bowen and Bok 1998; Zwick and Sklar 2005; Rothstein 2004; Niu and Tienda 2012). In fact, SAT scores are only somewhat reliable in predicting first-year grade point average, but fail to predict college GPA beyond that and fail to predict college retention or graduation altogether (Niu and Tienda 2012; Zwick 2004; Bowen and Bok 1998; Willingham, Lewis, Morgan, and Ramist 1990).

Despite these issues with the SAT, the average SAT score of a university’s incoming freshman class is still a major factor in the evaluation of the university’s ranking for the year from organizations such as US News & World Report. Given the ability of rankings to draw upper-class students, faculty, and staff (and their money, which colleges desperately need as operating costs skyrocket and public funding continues to decrease), colleges are compelled to use any criteria set by the rankings organizations (Meredith 2004; Heller and Rogers 2006;
Slaughter and Rhoades 2004). Furthermore, select few universities possess high levels of prestige, and upper-class families tend to favor those universities. These preferences engender a cyclical system in which high-scoring, upper-class students select highly ranked universities for their prestige, and highly ranked universities select high-scoring, upper-class students to preserve their prestige (Rivera 2015; Collins 1979; Lifschitz, Saunders, and Stevens 2014; Milem 2003; Hurtado 1992). These high-scoring, upper-class students are most often White, and, although there are many qualified racial minority applicants, they tend to have lower test scores. Prestigious universities often do not accept these lower scoring racial minority applicants due to their desire to preserve their prestige and rank.

Universities with low or moderate levels of prestige often employ the practices of high prestige universities in order to increase their own rankings (Berdahl 1985). Both Riesman (1956) and Astin (1985) have described this phenomenon. Riesman (1956) described higher education as a snakelike entity with the most prestigious universities serving as the head of the snake. These top universities serve as the standard by which selective but not reputationally prestigious middle range universities aim to achieve by incorporating the practices and policies of the top universities. Similarly, the lower ranked universities make up the snake’s tail, and they are attempting to look more like the selective middle range universities. Through this process, the body of the snake begins to look more like the head of the snake, and the tail begins to look like the body, which leads to less distinctiveness in institutional forms and practices as

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4 Applicants with lower test scores lower the university’s average entering test scores, which is a major factor in establishing rankings
5 selective but not the most prestigious
universities become trapped in a cycle of mimicry to achieve upward mobility in the hierarchy (Riesman 1956).

Astin (1985) expands upon this model and articulates the specific methods universities use to mimic higher ranked universities. Astin argues that universities move up the hierarchy and mimic more prestigious universities by maximizing the resources by which position in the hierarchy is determined. In Astin’s model, the subsequent struggle to move up the hierarchy by competing for the same resources, such as high scoring students, highly productive and prestigiously trained faculty, and increasing endowments, leads to institutional conformity and the homogeneity that Riesman describes (Astin 1985; Riesman 1956).

2.1 Neoinstitutional Theory Applied to the Prestige/Diversity Tension

Neoinstitutional theory provides the best framework for understanding how and why universities are becoming homogeneous. Neoinstitutionalism builds upon a multidisciplinary body of literature aimed at explaining organizations’ creation, growth, development, and change. Neoinstitutional theory argues that institutional change is constant and a necessary step in every organizations’ development and longevity (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Furthermore, these changes tend to be in ways that lead institutions to become more like other institutions in their fields in terms of goals and practices through the process of isomorphism (DiMaggio and Powell1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) argue this “standardization” is common and, most often, the natural result of the diffusion of successful models from “dominant professional elites” and this “diffusion” is a response to environmental pressures. The process of standardization moves organizations towards the practices of standard-bearers in the field, which Brint and Karabel argue emerge because “organizational fields [are] arenas of power relations with some actors – generally those possessing superior material and /or symbolic resources – occupying
more advantaged positions than others” (1991: 355). Universities that want to occupy a more
advantaged position in the field than they currently do will look to the models of universities that
have already succeeded in reaching those positions as guides for achieving similar success.

Per neoinstitutional theory, various environmental pressures and institutional events
catalyze changes towards homogeneity. Demographic changes, addition or increase in power of
competitors in a given field, and major historical events are prevalent pressures. However, the
main stimulants for isomorphism in the higher education field are the conflict between current
status and aspirational status in the field, competition among institutions for resources and
prestige, and the desire for higher academic reputation (Brint and Karabel 1991; DiMaggio and

There are three specific ways in which institutions become isomorphic: through coercive,
mimetic, and normative isomorphic pressures (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). DiMaggio and
Powell (1991) state that while these three types of pressures are unique and have separate causes
and outcomes, they often work in conjunction with one another, meaning there is usually more
than one of the following types of pressures present in any institutional setting.

Coercive pressures occur when a legitimate authority mandates certain actions and
behaviors from all institutions within the power of its authority (DiMaggio and Powell
1991). DiMaggio and Powell (1991) give many examples of coercive isomorphism, including
manufacturers adopting new pollution control technology to conform to environmental
regulations, organizations hiring affirmative action officers to proactively counter discrimination
suits, and nonprofits hiring accountants to comply with federal tax laws. In higher education,
these pressures can come from the federal government through financial aid policies, the
governing body of the state higher education system through budget allocations, and commercial
rankings organizations which set criteria by which rankings are determined (Hackett 1990; Haycock et al 2010).

The governing bodies of state systems of higher education are often the greatest source of coercive pressures on universities in intended and unintended ways. The intended coercive pressures are generally in the form of policies regulating certain behaviors and practices on campuses, such as smoking and carrying firearms on campus, as well as more comprehensive policies about yearly enrollment growth, retention, and graduation rates (Hurtado 2003; Levinson 1989; Scott 1995). Institutions in the system respond to the pressures of the state governing body because these bodies regulate the distribution of state funding to institutions in the system, and compliance with the policies and desires of the governing board generally leads to better funding and greater access to state resources for these institutions (Astin 1985).

Additionally, these governing bodies aim to allocate state resources, generally funding, to institutions in the system in a way that minimizes redundancy and maximize productivity and efficiency throughout the system (Hines 1988; Berdahl 1985; Birnbaum 1983; Mangeiri and Arnn 1986). For instance, the governing body may prevent a university from starting a medical program due to the presence of such a program at another university in close proximity, or it may require a university to start a physics program due to the lack of such a program in the local region. In this sense, it would seem that state governing boards actually prevent universities from becoming homogeneous. However, the restriction of certain programs and practices is not enough to increase diverse institutional forms and practices or prevent homogenization (Birnbaum 1983; Astin 1985). Despite the intentions of the state governing body, the governing body actually ends up promoting homogeneity by providing the most resources to the top tier universities in the state, based on variety of programs offered and levels of degrees granted, and
the least funding to the bottom tier institutions, which tend of have fewer programs and grant only associates or some bachelor’s degrees. This practice incentivizes all universities in the hierarchy to model themselves on institutions in the tier above them to procure more state funding, fitting with Reisman’s (1958) and Astin’s (1985) description of the higher education hierarchy. This is the unintended coercive pressure presented by state governing boards on institutions.

*Mimetic pressures* occur when institutions face uncertainty, particularly in relation to increasing legitimacy and prestige (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). As a result of this uncertainty, institutions mimic the organizational model of other institutions they view as more prestigious and legitimate. For example, in the late 1800’s Japan observed and emulated western courts, navies, education systems, and financial systems as the model for its new modern Japan (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

Higher education is a field where the quality of the product produced, i.e. quality of educational training and learning outcomes, is complex and difficult to measure in a single straightforward way. This complexity causes uncertainty in determining which practices actually lead to the best educational outcomes, leading universities to mimic the practices of other institutions in the field which are considered prestigious and legitimate (Brewer, Gates, and Goldman 2002). In the place of a true measurement system for academic quality⁶, a system of ranking based on *perceptions* of quality arises based on characteristics of students entering the university (although this does nothing to measure what quality or skills that are added by the

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⁶ such a system would account for the value added aspect of education, i.e. how much have students learned, what have students achieved, and what skills have students gained while enrolled at the university
university itself and whether students stay and finish) (Bowen and Bok 1998; Brewer et al 2002; Eckel 2008). In the absence of accurate measures of academic quality, universities that already have prestige, generally Ivy League universities, national universities that have long been favored by upper-class families, and state flagship universities are assumed to have the best practices, highest academic quality, and produce the strongest educational outcomes (Brewer et al 2002; Karabel 2005; Stevens 2007). As a result, the general institutional form, policies, and practices of those universities become the standard, and any university that seeks to increase its position in the hierarchy will incorporate those policies and practices in their institutional forms (Brewer et al 2002).

In other words, lower ranked universities will mimic the policies and practices of more prestigious universities because they believe those universities have better academic outcomes and doing so will allow them to move up the hierarchy (Dey, Milem, and Berger 1997; Jencks and Riesman 1968). In order to increase ranking, prestige, and legitimacy, institutions follow the recruitment and acceptance practices of the top tier school, such as maximizing acceptance of students with the highest SAT score, recruiting at predominantly White upper-middle class high schools, obtaining and creating more campus resources aimed at interests of upper and upper middle class White students, such as newer and larger fitness centers, instead of those that are proven to draw racial minorities such as Black, Hispanic, and multicultural Greek letter organizations and need-based financial aid, scholarships, and grants (Scott and Meyer 1994; Brewer et al 2002). These problematic practices are harmful to increasing diversity, but are successful at increasing rankings.

Lifschit, Saunders, and Stevens (2014) work on “status leakage” between academic prestige and prestige in college sports conference membership provides further evidence that
mimicking more prestigious universities provides positive rankings outcomes for universities, and that rankings often measure perceptions over actual academic characteristics of universities. The authors discovered a reciprocal relationship between academic reputation and athletic conference membership. Specifically, they found that the reputation of a college sports team is influenced by the academic reputation of the university, impacting which conference a university is likely to join, and, vice versa, membership in a prestigious sports conference influences the perceived academic reputation of a university (Lifschit et al 2014). The most academically prestigious universities often are in the most prestigious sports conferences. Less academically prestigious universities must mimic the academic programs, practices, and policies of prestigious universities in order to make themselves eligible for entry into prestigious conferences. Furthermore, if a university is accepted into a prestigious sports conference, their academic reputation also increases independent of any actual changes in the university, implying that membership in the prestigious sports conference creates the perception of academic quality which is then measured in rankings as actual academic quality.

**Normative pressures** occur when people within different institutions in a field share similar educational training and professional networks (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Due to socialization during their educational training and current professional network associations, university staff tend to share common values and beliefs about their shared field, individual institutions, and what constitutes legitimate policies and practices for addressing problems faced by institutions in their field, including the problem of increasing university ranking and diversity (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). In other words, admissions professionals at a university in California will share core values and beliefs as well as training with admissions professionals at a university in Maine. These shared beliefs and training lead to isomorphism.
In addition to serving as socialization agents, professional networks are a major source of normative pressures on universities due to their ability to standardize certain behaviors in the field. Riesman articulated in 1958 that faculty, staff, and administrators within universities were becoming more allied with their disciplines and individual fields instead of their local institutions. These professional networks and associations served as socialization agents who continued the socialization that began during their educational training, and allowed them to exchange ideas for solving issues to shared problems in the field. While this collaboration has the potential to lead to new and creative solutions to institutional issues, this networking also is a platform for certain practices and ideas to become standards in the field as they are shared from professional to professional while other new and creative practices may be marginalized.

Furthermore, those seeking to be seen as legitimate practitioners in their fields will conform to the policies, practices, and ideas held by their educational training institutions and professional networks (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). This does not necessarily mean that new and creative ideas are never introduced through these networks. On the contrary, the introduction and success of new ideas are quickly spread across institutions due, in large part, to these professional networks (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). However, the homogeneity of preferred and accepted educational credentials and professional network sanctioned norms hinders the potential introduction of policies and practices that differ significantly from the standard (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). Since Riesman’s initial concerns in 1958, particularly in the past few decades, the exponential growth of professionalization in higher education has exacerbated normative pressures across universities.

Neoinstitutionalism theory’s isomorphism framework applies particularly well to higher education institutions. All universities have unique origins and founding missions, but across
time, they become more like other universities in terms of university goals, standards, and practices (Astin 1985). For example, many universities that began as liberal arts universities have grown to incorporate professional programs. Additionally, Jencks and Riesman (1968) argue homogenization in institutional form occurs faster than differentiation. While universities are certainly looking for creative and new ways to meet their needs, they are also engaging in solutions that have been implemented at more prestigious universities who they aspire to be like, leading to isomorphism in the system as a whole. Scott and Meyer (1994) found universities benefit from this conformity in terms of attracting high scoring students and resources. However, conformity to this single model has done nothing to increase racial diversity, which is desperately needed at so many prestigious and middle range universities (Hackett 1990; Scott and Meyer 1994; Eckel 2008).

2.2 COPLAC

This study examines the presence, types, sources, and outcomes of isomorphic pressures on middle tier universities and their consequences on racial diversity. For this study, the universities in the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges, COPLAC, are a perfect sample of middle tier universities, as all the universities in COPLAC are classified as selective or highly selective by US News & World Report, and have diversity and access in their mission and vision statements or strategic plans, in addition to the focus on access in the COPLAC mission.

While liberal arts training is ubiquitous in the U.S., the vast majority of liberal arts universities are private. Moreover, most private universities, regardless of training type, tend to be majority White, expensive, and often have legacy policies that aid White, upper class, children of alumni in the admissions process over all other applicants (Carnevale and Rose 2003). COPLAC institutions, on the other hand, are dedicated to merging the high ideals of a
liberal arts education with the benefits of a public university, such as affordability, access to public and government funded scholarships, geographical proximity, and a focus on diversity (Urgo 2014; Spellman 2010). These characteristics have been central to COPLAC since 1987, when David Brown, the University of North Carolina Asheville’s Chancellor, and Robert Scott, the Ramapo College of New Jersey’s president, began their search to identify public universities that were providing high-quality liberal arts educations that could compete with the elite, private liberal arts colleges at the same costs as public universities with public standards of access (Schuman 2014; Maxeiner 1997).

In 1987, Brown, Scott, and the UNC Asheville Institutional Research Department conducted a nationwide search to identify standalone⁷ liberal arts focused universities classified at least as “competitive” in Barron’s Guide that had average entering SAT and ACT scores above the national average, the highest average entering SAT and ACT scores in the state among non-flagship state schools, with less than 5,000 undergraduate students and less than 500 graduate students (Maxeiner 1997). Their search identified a small set of universities that were doing exceptionally good work, but were not receiving enough support from state legislators or the general population (Schuman 2014; Maxeiner 1997). Universities that met most of the criteria were invited to meet at UNC Asheville in 1988 to discuss the possible creation of a new sector in higher education: public liberal arts (Schuman 2014; Maxeiner 1997).

Universities that attended the first meeting found common ground in their dedication to providing liberal arts education to public populations, and this shared purpose drove this small group for the following years as they began organizing and pushing for national recognition

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⁷ not a college within a larger university or a branch campus
(Maxeiner 1997). With the help of a public relations agency, the group pushed a distinctive public liberal arts identity and began to receive recognition in higher education circles (Maxeiner 1997). In 1993, Edward Fiske included an introductory section to public liberal arts colleges in his *College Guide*, the Association of American Colleges & Universities published a major article by Robert Scott on public liberal arts colleges, and in 1995, the *US News & World Report* published a feature article on public liberal arts colleges (Maxeiner 1997; Schuman 2014). By 1992, the basic structure, membership criteria, and mission were solidified, and formally announced in Washington D.C. in 1993 (Schuman 2014; Maxeiner 1997). In January of 1994, Robert Black, then COPLAC chair, announced the official founding of the consortium at the annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (Maxeiner 1997).

Their work during this period granted the consortium a small degree of celebrity, and they began using the tagline of “small public ivy’s.” This slogan created some contention in the consortium, because some members felt the “public ivy” image was not accurate and created the perception of elitism, while others felt the group should embrace the slogan, which projected an image of high academic quality (Schuman 2014). This contention over the tagline was a byproduct of a larger issue within the consortium over who they aimed to serve (Schuman 2014). While all the universities in the consortium were selective, some members believed COPLAC universities should admit students who were competitive with those admitted to top national liberal arts college and research universities while others believed a more modest level of selectivity would suffice, allowing COPLAC to better serve the public (Schuman 2014). At the core of this debate over selectivity in admissions was a question of whether COPLAC would pursue the prestige, traditions, and practices of the private liberal arts colleges and public flagship universities or focus on their own brand of public liberal arts education for smart but
underserved students (Maxeiner 1997). Eventually, the consortium decided that while selectivity would be an important characteristic of their universities, they would not be pursuing Ivy League levels of selectivity (Schuman 2014).

However, the contention between increasing prestige and maintaining access remains a major issue within the consortium and is imbedded in the mission of COPLAC which states: “the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges advances the aims of its member institutions and drives awareness of the value of high-quality, public liberal arts education in a student-centered, residential environment” (COPLAC Strategic Plan 2008). COPLAC defines high quality as “offering the best possible education…comparable to the curriculum and approaches of the long-established, private liberal arts institutions,” and public as “committed to making liberal arts education available to all, including students who might not otherwise have access to this type of higher education.” Although the goal of high-quality, rigor, and selectivity does not have to conflict with the goal of access and opportunity, the low rates of minority enrollments at COPLAC universities means the “public” goal of providing liberal arts education to those who, historically, have not has access to prestigious private liberal arts education is not being achieved.

3 METHODS

This study is based on the premise that membership in COPLAC allows non-flagship universities to differentiate themselves from other middle range universities and become competitive with the top tier universities. The idea that differentiation allows universities to increase their prestige and ranking is supported by Lifschit, Saunders, and Stevens (2014) work where universities use sports teams and membership in prestigious sports conferences to differentiate themselves from other universities and mimic more prestigious universities to
increases their rankings and prestige. Differentiation from same status peers facilitates isomorphism with higher ranked universities and their policies, practices, and institutional forms. The COPLAC designation helps universities differentiate themselves from middle range universities, and it creates the potential to increase prestige, but the designation alone does not guarantee an increase in ranking. This study tests the hypothesis that isomorphic pressures compel COPLAC institutions to engage in the problematic practices to increase ranking at the cost of diversity (see Figure 1: Causal Model Depicting Relationship Between Isomorphism, Selectivity, and Diversity).

This study aims to:

1) determine how COPLAC universities’ and comparison universities’ racial enrollments, low-income enrollments, and selectivity has changed over time

2) establish similarities and difference between COPLAC universities’ and comparison universities’ student racial diversities and selectivity,

3) determine if changes in COPLAC universities’ and comparison universities’ selectivity have impacted their racial and low-income enrollments,

4) determine if COPLAC universities value forms of selectivity that are known to reduce student racial diversity and asses if COPLAC universities are aware of isomorphic pressures on decisions and policies on diversity and ranking, and

5) establish the sources and extent of influence these pressures play on COPLAC universities diversity and rankings decisions and policies.

This study utilizes longitudinal administrative data from IPEDS to answer the first, second, and third aims, and cross-sectional original data from an independent survey.
administered to enrollment management directors\textsuperscript{8} and admissions directors of COPLAC universities to answer the fourth and fifth aims.

3.1 Data

3.1.1 IPEDS data

The IPEDS data provides information on how isomorphic pressures have impacted COPLAC universities’ diversity, via racial and low-income enrollments, and selectivity, via SAT scores and admissions yields, over time, using IPEDS data from the Fall 2001 to Fall 2015 incoming freshman classes from COPLAC universities’ as well as state flagship universities.

3.1.1.1 Data Collection

In order to determine if COPLAC universities are enrolling underrepresented minority students and increasing selecting, I analyze admissions and enrollment trends using the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System\textsuperscript{9} (IPEDS). The IPEDS survey is conducted by the U.S. Department’s National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and is composed of annual surveys of all higher education institutions that participate in federal student financial aid programs. IPEDS assesses nine major topics such as enrollment, the demographic characteristics of enrolled students, student costs and financial aid, facilities, and types of degrees offered (IPEDS 2013). Data is reported at the institutional level. A major benefit of using IPEDS data is the level of stringency and accountability that exists with using data from a large-scale

\textsuperscript{8} I previously considered using provosts, but decided against using that population because provosts are highly transient and less likely to be familiar with the university history in relation to COPLAC. Furthermore, they are less involved with the processes and pressures associated with enrolling students than enrollment management directors, who are very closely aligned with this area and generally less transient.

\textsuperscript{9} See Appendix A: Original IPED Variables for full variable information
government agency. All institutions receiving federal student financial aid are required to submit administrative data to all nine IPEDS surveys or risk losing their financial aid programs, resulting in a nearly non-existent nonresponse rate. IPEDS data is publically available for download from the NCES Data Center website.

3.1.1.2 Dependent Variables

The primary outcome of interest is racial and economic diversity. In order to measure racial diversity, I use variables from the Fall Enrollment IPEDS survey that measure the percentage of students in the incoming freshman class (first-time, full-time freshmen) that are White, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Underrepresented Minorities (which I define as Black, Hispanic, and Other Underrepresented Minorities\(^\text{10}\)). The racial enrollment data are reported as total number of students in each category that are enrolled. I converted these variables from total enrollment numbers to percentages by dividing each racial category variable by the variable that measure the total number of first time, full time students enrolled at each university. I use the percentage of the incoming freshman class that received federal grant aid, primarily Pell grants and other need-based grants, from the Student Financial Aid and Net Price IPEDS survey as a measure of economic diversity.

3.1.1.3 Independent Variables

**Selectivity.** The primary predictor of interest in this study is selectivity\(^\text{11}\). I operationalize selectivity using two commonly used measures: the percentage of first-time, degree seeking

\(^{10}\) The Other Underrepresented minority group includes Native Americans, two or more races, and unknown races.

\(^{11}\) Selectivity variables are also dependent variables in the effect of time analyses and effect of institutional form analyses
students in the freshman class who scored at the 75\textsuperscript{th} percentile of verbal and math sections of the SAT/ACT as well as each institutions’ annual acceptance rate, operationalized as the percentage of applicants who were accepted into the incoming freshman class.\textsuperscript{12}

**COPLAC and State Flagship universities.** In addition to determining the overall trajectory of COPLAC universities’ selectivity, racial enrollment, and economic diversity and the effect of selectivity on the racial and economic diversity of COPLAC institutions, I compare the trajectories and effects of COPLAC universities to state flagship universities\textsuperscript{13}. State flagship universities are generally regionally prestigious, moderately expensive, offer moderate financial aid, and have low minority enrollments. State flagship universities are geographically proximate to COPLAC universities, the primary competitors for high achieving in-state students, and the standard to which COPLAC universities are pushed via coercive pressures (particularly governing bodies of state higher education systems). The comparison between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities tests whether COPLAC universities are becoming isomorphic to state flagship universities in terms of selectivity and diversity, and which aspects of the COPLAC mission (prestige or access) COPLAC universities are achieving.

The universities designated as COPLAC in this sample were pulled based on the membership list available on the COPLAC website (COPLAC 2017). This list also included the states in which each COPLAC university was located. This information was used to determine

\textsuperscript{12} IPEDS includes a measure of the percent of applicants who were granted admissions into the university in the Admissions and Test Score version of the survey. However, this variable is only available from 2006 to 2015. I created an admissions yield variable for 2001 to 2005 by dividing the variable that measures the number of applicants accepted into the university by the variable that measures the total number of applicants.

\textsuperscript{13} I previously intended to compare COPLAC universities to their public and private aspirational peers as well. However, I was not able to create these comparison groups due to an inability to collect data on what universities COPLAC universities consider peer.
which flagship universities to include in the sample. Using a recent study from The New York Times on racial enrollments of major US universities (Ashkenas et al 2017), I created a list of state flagship universities in states with COPLAC universities. This yielded an n of 55, with 28 COPLAC universities and 27 flagship universities. Most states had one COPLAC university, but one state (Virginia) had two COPLAC universities, resulting in only one corresponding flagship university between those two COPLAC universities.

I created a dichotomous variable, flagship, where COPLAC universities are the reference category, to designate universities as COPLAC universities or state flagship universities in order to estimate the effect of institutional form.

3.1.1.4 Control Variables

In addition to the main selectivity variables, I include additional variables in the analyses which can also affect the racial and economic diversity of incoming students. The variables account for the costs associated with applying to and attending the universities in the sample. I use the application fee variable from the Student Charges IPEDS survey to measure the cost of applying to each university. This is a ratio variable, measured in dollars, with a potential minimum value of $0 and no set maximum value. I use the published in-state tuition and fees variables from the Student Charges IPEDS survey to measure the cost of attendance (not including other academic costs, such as books, or living expenses such as rent, food costs, and utilities). This is a ratio variable, and has the same potential minimum and maximum dollar values as the application fee variable\textsuperscript{14}.

\textsuperscript{14} I originally included a control variable for degree of urbanization, which I later dropped due to the need to be parsimonious with a small n and lack of significance.
3.1.2 Independent Survey data

In addition to the IPEDS data, I also collected data from COPLAC admissions officials using a web-based survey. The survey consists of four questions on general issues regarding university context and background, as well as the source and impact of isomorphic pressures (See Appendix C: Survey Instrument). In the survey, participants are asked to select the importance of applicants’ SAT scores in their university’s admissions decision from a Likert scale ranging from “extremely important” to “Not at all important\(^{15}\).” This question establishes if COPLAC universities engage in practices known to reduce diversity. Participants are also asked if any external organization, including the governing board of state system of higher education, COPLAC, and ranking agencies, place pressure on or demand the university increase student racial diversity or ranking\(^{16}\). Respondents select “yes” or “no” for this question. This information establishes whether common sources of coercive isomorphic pressures are openly exerting pressures on COPLAC universities and if COPLAC universities are aware of external organizations’ desires for COPLAC universities to exhibit certain behaviors. The survey also includes two questions in which respondents are asked to identify sources that influence their university’s decisions and policies about student racial diversity and rankings. A number of sources consistent with neoinstitutional theory (state, peer networks, or competitors) are presented and participants must report if and the extent to which each source impacts the university’s policies and decisions about diversity and rankings. The first part of each question requires respondents to select “yes” or “no” for each source. Respondents can then indicate the

\(^{15}\) For ease of comparison, the two highest categories were collapsed and the two lowest categories were collapsed to mirror the categories for extent of impact questions.

\(^{16}\) Although this is one question, it contains two separate sections in which the question is asked once for student racial diversity and once for rankings.
extent to which that source impacts university policies and practices. The level of impact options are “barely impacts,” “somewhat impacts,” and “greatly impacts.” The sources are: aspirational peer universities, the state system of higher education’s governing body, COPLAC, universities at which employees have previously been employed, employees’ professional organizations and networks, and employees’ educational training. Aspirational peers are sources of mimetic isomorphic pressures, the state system of higher education’s governing body and COPLAC are sources of coercive isomorphic pressures, and universities where employees were previously employed, employee’s professional organization, and employees’ educational training are sources of normative isomorphic pressures.

3.1.2.1 Survey Data Collection and Sample

The original, cross-sectional data was collected via a Qualtrics survey. I contacted the enrollment management director and admissions director at all 28 COPLAC universities in the United States\textsuperscript{17} via telephone and email. I sent an introductory email to explain the purpose of my study\textsuperscript{2} and elicit participation. Each introductory email included a unique URL survey link for each individual in the sample. Each participant’s link was valid for 30 days from the time they begin the survey. If the participant has not completed the survey within 30 days, the survey closed, at which time responses were stored, and unanswered questions were classified as missing data.

I sent follow-up emails after 30 days, 45 days, and 60 days to each individual in the sample.

\textsuperscript{17} I am excluding the one Canadian COPLAC university, which leaves 28 members institutions and a \( n \) of 56 when accounting for two respondents (one admission director and one enrollment management director) from each institution. However, the university is the unit of analysis so the true \( n=28 \), and most respondents were the only respondant from their university.
who had not completed the survey. Additionally, I called every person in the sample three times, between emails, to elicit participation. During the second round of phone calls several individuals in the sample stated they wanted to participate but the length of the survey was time prohibitive. This explanation correlated with a pattern of participants opening the survey, completed between 1-3 questions and not finishing the survey. In order to fix this issue, I reduced the length of the survey from the original 28 questions to four main, multipart close ended questions (See Appendix D for original survey instrument). This drastically increased the survey response rate.

Twenty-three respondents opened the original survey, but only twelve completed it. In comparison, fourteen people opened the revised survey and all fourteen participants who viewed it completed the survey.

Twenty-six out 55\textsuperscript{18} COPLAC administrators completed the survey. Eleven respondents were admissions directors and 15 were enrollment management vice presidents. Respondents were from 20 different COPLAC universities out of 28 universities in the consortium.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 IPEDS Data Analyses

I use two sample t-tests to determine if the selectivity, costs, and enrollments of COPLAC universities and state flagship universities are significantly different in 2015 in comparison to 2001. Two sample t-tests are suited to this analysis for their ability to compare means between two groups for significant differences. This analysis will determine how COPLAC universities and state flagship universities, as distinct groups, have changed from 2001 to 2015. The two-\textsuperscript{18} One Enrollment Management Vice President position was vacant
sample t-test test within-group (COPLAC universities in 2001 compared to COPLAC universities in 2015 or state flagship universities in 2001 compared to state flagship universities in 2015) differences. While these tests can establish simple changes (or lack of change) within the same institutional type, they cannot compare COPLAC universities to state flagship universities over multiple time points. Random effects Generalized Least Squares regressions (xtreg in STATA) were used to test for between-group differences over time, because this analysis can account for longitudinal data\textsuperscript{19}. This analysis establishes if the trajectory of COPLAC universities and state flagship universities on each variable is similar or significantly different\textsuperscript{20}.

I also use random effects GLS regressions to estimate the effect of the selectivity and cost variables on racial group enrollments and low-income enrollments at COPLAC universities and state flagship universities. These analyses included fixed effects dummy variables for states in which universities are located to account for state level differences and pair each COPLAC university to their state flagship so that the dependent variable can be estimated without interference from state level contexts. This analysis will provide information on the impact of selectivity on racial and economic diversity at COPLAC institutions over time in comparison to state flagship universities.

\textit{Equation 1: Effect of Institutional Form on Enrollment, Selectivity, and Costs}

\textsuperscript{19} observations do not have to be independent
\textsuperscript{20} These analyses were later run as interactions between institutional form and predictor variables, time and predictor variables, and time and flagship and predictor variables within the GLS regression models estimating the effect of selectivity on racial and low-income enrollments. These interactions did not substantially change the effect sizes of significant variables and the same variables that were significant in the separated analyses were significant in the combined analyses with interaction terms.
\[ Y_{st} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{flagship}_t \]

Where \( Y \) is enrollment/selectivity/cost for university \( s \) in year \( t \) and flagship is a time invariant university characteristic that is coded for 0 for COPLAC and 1 for flagship.

*Equation 2: Effect Selectivity on Enrollment*

\[ Y_{est} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{admissions yield}_t + \beta_2 \text{75th percentile SAT Math}_t + \beta_3 \text{75th percentile SAT Reading}_t + \beta_4 \text{application fee}_t + \beta_5 \text{yearly in-state tuition and fees}_t + \beta_6 \text{flagship}_t + \mu(\text{state}_t) + \varepsilon \]

Some variables contained missing data. On SAT variables, schools who reported ACT variables often did not report SAT variables. For these cases, I converted the ACT scores into SAT scores using conversions charts. This process yielded estimated scores for nearly all missing data. However, some data remained missing on SAT variables and other variables. In order to estimate the remaining missing data, I averaged the values of geographical proximate universities\(^{21}\) of the same type (COPLAC universities or state flagship universities in a single year for each variable. I then replaced the missing value with the average. For example, if a COPLAC university in Georgia was missing the application fee for 2006, I would average the 2006 application fees of COPLAC universities in Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland and replace the Georgia COPLAC universities missing 2006 application fee value with the averaged value. This method combines the benefits of replacing missing data with group averages and hot decking.

### 3.2.2 Original Survey Analyses

I use chi-square goodness of fit tests to determine if there are significant patterns in the responses to each question and to determine if COPLAC universities are reporting significantly

\(^{21}\) using the five main US Census geographic regions
more or less influence of certain types of isomorphic pressures. The extremely small sample size and even smaller number of responses make these data unsuitable for higher level statistical testing. Chi square goodness of fit tests for significant differences between expected and reported values within a single variable. This test only requires a minimum of five cases in each expected frequency category, which makes this test most suitable for the categorical data available. The findings from these chi square goodness of fit tests provide information that can be further tested in future studies on this population with qualitative methods.

4 RESULTS

Analysis of 2015 IPEDS data show dismally low rates of minority enrollment at COPLAC universities (IPEDS 2016) (See Figure 2). Five out of 28 COPLAC universities have between 21% and 30% underrepresented minority enrollment, 15 have between 11% and 20% underrepresented minority enrollment, and four have between 1% and 10% underrepresented minority enrollment. Only four COPLAC universities have between 31% and 40% underrepresented minority enrollments. Conversely, 11 out of 28 COPLAC universities have between 81% and 90% White enrollment, 11 have between 71% and 80% White enrollment, and 6 have between 61% and 70% White enrollment, meaning 22 out of 28 COPLAC universities have White enrollments exceeding 70%. These figures show greater White enrollments than the percentage of White students graduating from high schools in the United States. The majority of COPLAC universities have higher White enrollments in 2015 than Whites’ share of the high school graduates in their states (See Table 3) (WICHE 2017). Only four COPLAC universities had White enrollments that did not exceed Whites’ share of high school graduate in their states. The stark differences between the racial composition of high school graduates and the racial
compositions of COPLAC universities means the “public” goal of providing liberal arts education to those who, historically, have not has access to prestigious private liberal arts education is not being realized.

4.1 Aim 1: Effects of Time on COPLACs’ and State Flagships’ Selectivity, Enrollment, and Cost

Table 1 shows the results of the two-sample t-tests for COPLAC universities and state flagship universities. In these analyses, I aimed to determine how COPLAC universities’ enrollment, selectivity, and cost has changed over time and how state flagship universities’ enrollments, selectivity, and costs have changed over time. All analyses were run separately for COPLAC universities and state flagships.

Overall, COPLAC universities were very stable from 2001 to 2015. There was no significant change in COPLAC universities racial enrollments during this period. Similarly, there was no significant change in state flagship universities’ racial enrollments during this period. Black and Hispanic enrollments were particularly low at both COPLAC and state flagship universities, ranging from the five to seven percent. Underrepresent minority enrollment was also very similar at COPLAC universities and state flagship universities, hovering around 25 percent. White enrollment was very high at both COPLAC and state flagship universities.

These findings suggest that both COPLAC universities and state flagships had very low racial minority enrollment prior to 2001, because these low enrollments were stable over time. While this assumption could be tested by including data from prior to 2001, this study is limited by the data available from IPEDS. IPEDS did not collect any of the selectivity variables included in this study prior to 2001.
Additionally, there was no significant change in COPLAC universities’ selectivity from 2001 to 2015. During this same period, however, state flagships became significantly more selective. State flagships decreased their admissions yield (meaning they accepted a smaller percentage of the total number of applicants), and increased the 75th percentile scores of the math and verbal portions of the SAT. The increase in selectivity at state flagships strongly aligns with the hypothesized relationship between state flagship universities and selectivity in the literature.

This finding supports Haycock, Lynch, and Engle’s (2010) argument that state flagship universities are continuing to increase selectivity via SAT scores and at the cost of their public missions. According to Haycock, Lynch, and Engle (2010), the continued increase of selectivity at state flagship universities favors upper class applicants with higher test scores, effectively shutting out many qualified applicants of color. Although there is no evidence of COPLAC universities increasing their selectivity in these analyses, the low rate of enrollment for racial minorities at COPLAC universities (at very similar levels as state flagship universities) suggest that COPLAC universities’ racial enrollments may be becoming similar to state flagships via some method other than selectivity. It could also be possible that COPLAC universities drastically changed their selectivity to become more like state flagships prior to 2001 and are now in a plateau, having reached the highest level of selectivity possible for their current status in the higher education system. Both of these possibilities need to be tested further with other data sources.

COPLAC universities and state flagships did experience some additional changes from 2001 to 2015. During this period, both COPLAC universities and state flagship universities
increased their low-income enrollments, application fees, and in-state tuition and fees\textsuperscript{22}. These findings present an interesting paradox where costs of attending COPLAC universities and state flagship universities have increased at the same time that the enrollments of those who would be least likely to afford those increases has also risen. This may be a result of the overall US society’s focus on higher education and the growth of low interest rate student loans instead of any particular intervention on the part of COPLAC universities or state flagship universities.

\textbf{INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE}

\section*{4.2 Aim 2: Effects of Institutional Form on COPLACs’ and State Flagships’ Selectivity, Enrollment, and Cost}

Table 2 presents the effects of institutional form and time on each enrollment, selectivity, and cost variable. These analyses determine how COPLAC universities and state flagship universities compare to each other on each variable over time.

These analyses show that there is no significant difference between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities in Black, Hispanic, and underrepresented minority enrollment. This finding provides further evidence that the least represented US racial groups in higher education are similarly underrepresented at COPLAC universities and state flagships. Although this analysis cannot establish if one institutional form possessed these levels of racial enrollments

\textsuperscript{22} The total enrollment variable is not included in the major analyses of this study; however, it is interesting to note that during this period, the total first time, full time enrollment of state flagship universities significantly increased from an average of 3942.63 in 2001 to 4989.15 in 2015 (p=0.01). During this same period, COPLAC did not significantly increase their first time, full time enrollments, although the average enrollment did increase slightly from 607.86 students to 726.
prior to the other, Ashkenas et al’s (2017) report on the racial enrollments of state flagships provides strong evidence that state flagships possessed the same racial enrollments from 1980 to 2015, suggesting COPLAC universities have changed to become homogenous with state flagship universities.

There are also some significant differences between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities’ racial enrollments. COPLAC universities are enrolling significantly more low-income students than state flagship universities. Both COPLAC universities and state flagship universities showed increases in low-income enrollment in the effect of time t-tests, suggesting that both types of universities are increasing low-income enrollment over time, but COPLACs are enrolling this population at a higher rate. Furthermore, state flagships have significantly higher application fees and in-state tuitions than COPLAC universities. Taken together, these findings are in line with Haycock et al’s (2010) argument that state flagships are increasing costs of attendance to fund projects that draw elite, high scoring applicants and then providing a large portion of their financial aid to those elite, upper-class students to encourage them to enroll at these universities. Most COPLAC universities do not have the money to provide this type of merit based aid, and are, generally, only able to provide financial aid to applicants from lower income families.

Additionally, COPLAC universities are enrolling significantly more White students than state flagship universities and state flagships are enrolling significantly more Asian students. The effect of time t-tests established that White and Asian enrollments have not changed at COPLACs or state flagships from 2001 to 2015, suggesting that COPLACs have had higher

\[\text{The report presents a line graph for each flagship university in the US, where each racial groups’ share of the freshman class is presented as a percentage}\]
White enrollments than state flagships and state flagships were enrolling more Asians than COPLACs in 2001. Ashkenas et al (2017) once again provide evidence that at most state flagships (with the exception of California and New Jersey$^{24}$), White and Asian enrollments have not changed more than a few percentage points from 1980 to 2015, suggesting COPLAC universities have become homogenous to state flagships.

State flagship universities are also significantly more selective than COPLAC universities. The analyses show state flagships have lower admissions yield (accept fewer applicants) and higher math and verbal SAT scores than COPLAC universities. This finding, in addition to the lack of change in COPLAC selectivity over time (established in the effects of time t-tests), suggests that increasing selectivity may not be the mechanism by which COPLAC universities are becoming more like state flagships, despite evidence that COPLAC universities underrepresented racial minority enrollments are homogenous.

In addition to establishing differences between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities, additional models with a time variable and an interaction between time and institutional form were also run. Table 3 shows the results of these analyses in which I aimed to determine if any COPLAC universities and state flagships were changing the enrollments, selectivity, or costs at different rates over time. Time was not significant for any enrollment or selectivity variable. The time variable was significant for application fee, suggesting that application fees significantly increased every year. The time and institutional form interaction was not significant for any model, suggesting that differences between state flagships and COPLAC universities occurred in a consistent way over time.

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$^{24}$ There was a spike in Asian enrollment and decrease in White enrollment in California and New Jersey starting in 1990
4.3 Aim 3: Impact of Selectivity on Enrollment at COPLAC universities and State

Flagship universities

Table 4 shows the results of analyses that estimate the effects of the selectivity variables and associated cost variables (with fixed effects state variables) on the racial and low-income enrollment variables. These analyses aim to determine the size and direction of the relationship between selectivity and enrollment at COPLAC and state flagship universities.

Selectivity strongly influences low-income racial enrollments. Decreases in admissions yield (increase in selectivity) and increases in 75th percentile score of the math portion of the SAT significantly decreased low-income enrollment. These findings support the relationship outlined in the literature between selectivity and low-income enrollment (see Haycock et al 2010, Carnevale and Rose 2003, and Collins 1979), where increases in selectivity result in decreases in low-income enrollments.

Admissions yield also significantly predicted changes in Black, Hispanic, underrepresented minority, Asian, and White enrollment. Decreases in admissions yield (increases in selectivity) substantially decreased Hispanic and underrepresented racial minority enrollments and slightly decreased Black and Asian enrollments. Decreases in admissions yield substantially increased White enrollment. These findings also support the established relationship between selectivity and racial enrollments, where increases in selectivity tend to decrease racial minority enrollments and increase White enrollments (see Brittain and Bloom 2010, Stevens 2007, Karen 2002, Carnevale and Rose 2003, and Bowen and Bok 1998).
Cost variables also significantly predicted enrollments, although these findings are somewhat problematic. Application fee was generally not a significant predictor of any racial or low-income enrollment except for White enrollment. Increases in application fees were associated with increases in White enrollments, which fits with previous findings on higher White enrollments at more expensive universities. However, this finding is somewhat reversed when accounting for the effect of in-state tuition and fees on enrollments. White enrollment somewhat decreases as in-state tuition and fees increase, while Hispanic, underrepresented racial minority, and low-income enrollments slightly increase as tuition and fees increase. These findings are inverse to the hypothesized relationship between costs and racial minority and low-income enrollments. These findings may be the result of increased access to student loans and grants for racial minority and low-income students and the increasing pressures to attend college despite costs. Middle class White applicants who do not qualify for federal grants or who may have high estimated family contributions may be more sensitive to increases in tuition and fees.

Overall, these findings suggest, regardless of institution type, selectivity tends to decrease racial minority and low-income enrollments and increase White enrollments.

INSERT TABLE 4A AND 4B ABOUT HERE

4.4 Aim 4: COPLAC Universities’ Awareness of Isomorphic Pressures

In Table 5, I present the results of my unique data collection where I attempt to determine if COPLAC universities are aware of external pressures meant to elicit certain behaviors from their universities. COPLAC administrators were asked if any external agency or organization (such as COPLAC, state higher education system, or ranking agencies) placed pressures on their universities to increase student racial diversity or rankings. A majority of respondents reported that no external agency placed pressures on their universities to increase either student racial
diversity or rankings. Chi Square Goodness of Fit tests confirmed that significantly more respondents reported a lack of such pressures rather than their presence.

A wide body of literature on higher education, diversity, and rankings suggest this is not the case, and most universities are under pressure from a variety of sources to increase their rankings and student racial diversity (see Toma 2008, Steven 2007, Meredith 2004, and Bowen and Bok 1998). These findings suggest that COPLAC administrators either are not aware of such pressures, do not interpret external demands as “pressure,” did not wish to report these occurrences, or genuinely do not experience such pressures (although this is unlikely).

**INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE**

### 4.5 Aim 5: Sources and Impact of Isomorphic Pressures on COPLAC Universities

Tables 6 and 7 present the results of the Chi Square Goodness of Fit tests where I attempt to determine which types of isomorphic pressures are present in COPLAC universities’ student racial diversity decisions and the extent of their impact on those decisions. COPLAC administrators were asked if the practices of aspirational peer universities (mimetic pressures), suggested practices from COPLAC or the state higher education system’s governing body (coercive pressures), practices from employees’ educational training, professional networks, or previous employing universities (normative pressures) influenced the COPLAC university’s student racial diversity or rankings decisions, and the extent to which each of those sources impacted those decisions (greatly, somewhat, or barely).

Mimetic pressures appear to be a factor in COPLAC universities student racial diversity and rankings decisions. A majority of COPLAC administrators reported that mimetic pressures at least somewhat impact their student racial diversity and rankings decisions. These findings suggest that COPLAC universities are substantially influenced by the practices of aspirational
peer universities, which may explain the similarities in Black, Hispanic, and underrepresented minority enrollments between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities established in the effects of institutional form analyses.

Normative pressures were also a factor in both student racial diversity and rankings decisions and practices. Respondents reported that practices COPLAC employees learned from their previous college or university employment somewhat to greatly influenced their universities student racial diversity and rankings decisions. Additionally, a significant number of respondents reported COPLAC employees’ educational training and professional networks somewhat influenced COPLAC universities rankings decisions, but the influence of these sources was not significant in any category (the distribution of responses was equal across categories).

Although COPLAC employee’s previous employing universities are sources of normative pressures (as defined by neoinstitutional theory), given the relatively small size of the public liberal arts niche, COPLAC employees may have worked at mainstream middle range universities or state flagships prior to their employment at COPLACs. Furthermore, respondents reported that practices from COPLAC employee’s previous employers impacted COPLACs diversity decisions than rankings decisions. This suggest many COPLAC employees come from more diverse, less prestigious middle ranked universities. This provides COPLACs with templates for their diversity decisions but not rankings decisions. This may lead to COPLAC universities to utilize practices either directly from state flagship universities or other middle range universities that have themselves mimicked state flagship universities. This could serve to bolster the influence of aspirational peers on COPLAC universities’ student racial diversity and rankings decisions.
Coercive pressures are also significantly present at COPLAC universities, and tell an interesting story. Respondents overwhelmingly reported that COPLAC (the consortium, not member universities) were a significant source for their university’s student racial diversity decisions and practices and rankings decisions and practices. However, respondents were varied on the state higher education system’s governing body’s influence on universities diversity and rankings decisions and policies. These findings suggest that COPLAC (the consortium) is encouraging their member universities to increase their student racial diversity and hold true to their public mission while pursuing academic quality, but various state level context and a lack of clear direction from state higher education systems may be creating the uncertainty the precedes mimetic isomorphic pressures, which then push COPLAC universities further towards the models of state flagship universities.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to determine if isomorphic pressures, pressures that drive universities toward homogeneity with other universities, have caused COPLAC universities to become more selective and less diverse. I have tested this assertion by 1) determining if COPLAC universities had become more selective and less diverse over time, 2) determining if COPLAC universities were becoming isomorphic to comparison universities, particularly state flagship universities, 3) determining if COPLAC universities’ selectivity was influencing their racial and low income enrollments, 4) determining if COPLAC universities were aware of isomorphic pressures from external sources, 5) and determining if COPLAC universities reported isomorphic pressures in the student racial diversity and rankings decisions.
As Astin (1985) and Riesman (1956) predicted, the middle range universities in this study, COPLAC universities, are becoming homogenous to universities that hold more prestigious positions in the higher education hierarchy. This study showcases the relationship between lower ranked universities’ homogenization, in terms of selectivity, and racial minority enrollments, which has been undertheorized and rarely tested within neoinstitutional theory. Furthermore, this study establishes the presence of isomorphic pressures in these university contexts as influencing middle range universities’ diversity decisions, which has previously been lacking in higher education access and diversity literature.

Overall, it seems that COPLAC universities are becoming isomorphic and homogenous to state flagship universities, to an extent. Black, Hispanic, and underrepresented minority enrollments are similar at COPLAC universities and state flagship universities, although White and Asian enrollments vary. This may be the result of a ceiling effect, where COPLAC universities have become homogenous enough to state flagship universities to impact vulnerable student populations, but do not yet possess the financial means to draw the number of elite, high scoring applicant necessary to become fully homogenous.

Additionally, this study reveals competing pressures on COPLAC universities. The original survey data suggests that COPLAC universities experience isomorphic pressures to both increase student racial diversity and increase prestige. However, the enrollment data presented in the effects of time and effects of institutional form analyses, along with the comparison of COPLAC enrollments to the racial composition of high school graduates, suggests that the pressures to increase rankings are winning and historically underserved racial groups are losing.

Despite the dismal Black, Hispanic, Asian, and underrepresented racial minority enrollments at COPLAC universities, these universities are successfully enrolling greater
numbers of low income students than comparison universities. This suggests that a greater portion of either the racial minorities or White students that are attending COPLAC universities are poorer than in previous years, as overall racial enrollments have not changed at COPLAC universities from 2001 to 2015. At least in terms of serving low-income students, COPLAC universities are achieving their goal of increasing access to liberal arts education.

5.1 Limitations

Originally, this study attempted to include several other institutional forms to serve as comparison models, including public and private universities that COPLAC universities identified as aspirational peers. These comparison groups would have been generated from data collected in the survey I distributed to COPLAC admissions officials. However, due to low response rates and a reduction in the length of the survey instrument, I was unable to collect this data. Without these comparison groups, COPLAC universities were only compared to state flagship universities, limiting the study’s ability to assess changes and patterns in COPLAC universities’ enrollments, selectivity, and costs against a broader set of comparison schools.

Furthermore, while IPEDS contained data on universities’ enrollments and costs starting in 1988, selectivity data was only available from 2001. This study originally intended to include variables to account for length of membership in COPLAC to test if selectivity and enrollment was affected by length of membership in COPLAC. Since the IPEDS data on selectivity was not available prior to 2001 and COPLAC began accepting members in the early 1990’s, such an analysis could not be completed, further limiting the scope of this study. Furthermore, the results of the effects of time t-tests and effects of institutional form analyses effects of institutional form establish that Black, Hispanic, and underrepresented minority enrollments were already similar between COPLAC and state flagship universities in 2001. COPLAC universities may have
become homogenous before 2001, but this conclusion is only speculative since these analyses necessary to make a more reliable inference cannot be completed due to the lack of selectivity data prior to 2001.

While the original survey data establishes the presence and extent of impact of each type of isomorphic pressure on COPLAC universities’ student racial diversity and rankings decisions and practices, they do not provide information on what those decisions and policies are and how they might impact student racial diversity and rankings. For example, we know that practices from aspiration peer universities influence student racial diversity decisions and practices at COPLAC but we do not know if the resulting decisions and practices increase or decrease student racial diversity.

5.2 Future Directions

This study has only begun to explore the impact of isomorphic pressures on COPLAC universities and their student racial and economic diversity. This study could be extended by including more comparison university models, such as private liberal arts universities, national public research universities, and private research universities. Given the continuing differences between COPLAC universities and state flagship universities, it could be possible that COPLAC universities are becoming homogenous to another institutional type, perhaps private liberal arts universities or some combination of institutional types.

Building on this study, researchers might further interrogate the ways in which each type of isomorphic pressure enters COPLAC universities’ decision-making processes on student racial diversity and rankings using in-depth interviews with COPLAC university administrators. Researchers may also wish to investigate the presence and influence of isomorphic pressures at prestigious comparison universities, such as state flagship universities and private liberal arts
universities. Researchers could also extend beyond COPLAC universities and test for isomorphism among middle range universities, in general. I predict, similar to Riesman (1956), that isomorphic pressures are present at all types and levels of prestige, pushing all universities towards higher levels of prestige and greater isomorphism in the higher education system overall.

Each of these directions would add to the limited body of knowledge that currently exists on the impact of isomorphic pressures on student racial diversity in higher education.
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Figure 1: Causal Model Depicting Relationship Between Isomorphism, Selectivity, and Diversity
Figure 2: COPLAC Universities’ Fall 2015 Racial Enrollment
Table 1: Effects of Time on COPLACs’ and State Flagships’ Selectivity, Enrollment, and Cost Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>COPLAC Universities</th>
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<th></th>
<th>State Flagship Universities</th>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>p-value</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2015</td>
<td>p-value</td>
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<td>71.07</td>
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<td>In-State Tuition and Fees ($)</td>
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<td>(285.838)</td>
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<td>Black Enrollment (%)</td>
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<td>Hispanic Enrollment (%)</td>
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<td>Underrepresented Minority Enrollment (%)</td>
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<td>Asian Enrollment (%)</td>
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<td>White Enrollment (%)</td>
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<td>(2.704)</td>
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<td>Low-Income Enrollment (%)</td>
<td>29.61</td>
<td>35.96</td>
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*Time is the grouping variable. 2001 COPLAC university means are compared to 2015 COPLAC university means. 2001 State Flagship means are compared to 2015 State Flagship university means.*

***p=0.00, **p=0.01, *p=0.05
Table 2A: Effect of Institutional Form on Racial and Economic Composition – Bivariate GLS Regressions Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Low-Income Enrollment</th>
<th>Black Enrollment</th>
<th>Hispanic Enrollment</th>
<th>Underrepresented Minority Enrollment</th>
<th>Asian Enrollment</th>
<th>White Enrollment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flagship</td>
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Model Statistics

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<tr>
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Model Significance determined by Wald Chi Square statistic

***p=0.00, **p=0.01, *p=0.05

Table 2B: Effect of Institutional Form on Selectivity and Costs– Bivariate GLS Regressions Results

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Admissions Yield</th>
<th>75th Percentile SAT Math</th>
<th>75th Percentile SAT Verbal</th>
<th>Application Fee</th>
<th>In-State Tuition and Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>-16.0538***</td>
<td>78.7335***</td>
<td>45.7105***</td>
<td>11.9698***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.9591)</td>
<td>(12.0079)</td>
<td>(12.1337)</td>
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Model Statistics

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<td>Flagship</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.4135***</td>
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Model Significance determined by Wald Chi Square statistic
### Table 3A: Effects of Institutional Form and Time on Racial and Economic Composition - GLS Regression Results

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<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
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<th>Low-Income Enrollment</th>
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<td></td>
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<td>(2.3906)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Time</td>
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<tr>
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Model Significance determined by Wald Chi Square statistic

***p=0.00, **p=0.01, *p=0.05
Table 3B: Effects of Institutional Form and Time on Racial and Economic Composition - GLS Regression Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variables</th>
<th>Admissions Yield</th>
<th>75th Percentile SAT Math</th>
<th>75th Percentile SAT Verbal</th>
<th>Application Fee</th>
<th>In-State Tuition and Fees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flagship</td>
<td>-15.7622***</td>
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<td>12.7967***</td>
<td>1624.669**</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
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Model Significance determined by Wald Chi Square statistic

***p=0.00, **p=0.01, *p=0.05
Table 4: Effect of Selectivity and Costs on Enrollments - GLS Regressions Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Low-Income Enrollment</th>
<th>Black Enrollment</th>
<th>Hispanic Enrollment</th>
<th>Underrepresented Minority Enrollment</th>
<th>Asian Enrollment</th>
<th>White Enrollment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Yield</td>
<td>0.0392**</td>
<td>0.0027</td>
<td>0.0315***</td>
<td>0.0935***</td>
<td>0.0078**</td>
<td>-0.1007***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.0144)</td>
<td>(0.003)</td>
<td>(0.0047)</td>
<td>(0.0125)</td>
<td>(0.0024)</td>
<td>(0.0131)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75th Percentile</td>
<td>-0.0706***</td>
<td>0.0037</td>
<td>-0.0013</td>
<td>-0.0022</td>
<td>0.0023</td>
<td>-0.0045</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAT Math</td>
<td>(0.0125)</td>
<td>(0.0027)</td>
<td>(0.0039)</td>
<td>(0.0108)</td>
<td>(0.0021)</td>
<td>(0.0114)</td>
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<tr>
<td>75th Percentile</td>
<td>-0.0099</td>
<td>-0.0046*</td>
<td>-0.0038</td>
<td>-0.0089</td>
<td>-0.0006</td>
<td>0.0069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Verbal</td>
<td>(0.0109)</td>
<td>(0.0023)</td>
<td>(0.0034)</td>
<td>(0.0094)</td>
<td>(0.0018)</td>
<td>(0.001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application Fee</td>
<td>-0.0099</td>
<td>-0.0068</td>
<td>-0.0287</td>
<td>-0.0727</td>
<td>-0.0044</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(0.0085)</td>
<td>(0.0118)</td>
<td>(0.0338)</td>
<td>(0.0066)</td>
<td>(0.0358)</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-State Tuition and</td>
<td>0.0012***</td>
<td>6.53E-06</td>
<td>0.0002***</td>
<td>0.0004**</td>
<td>-9.98E-06</td>
<td>-0.003**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fees</td>
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<td>(2.8E-05)</td>
<td>(4.20E-05)</td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
<td>(2.20E-05)</td>
<td>(0.0001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Form</td>
<td>-4.6239*</td>
<td>-0.3916</td>
<td>1.8486***</td>
<td>3.0068</td>
<td>6.913***</td>
<td>-9.4468***</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall $r^2$</td>
<td>0.5482</td>
<td>0.7102</td>
<td>0.7553</td>
<td>0.5014</td>
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<tr>
<td>Model Significance</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Fixed effects for states not included

***p=0.00, **p=0.01, *p=0.05
Table 5: Awareness of Isomorphic Pressures Chi Square Goodness of Fit Test Results for COPLAC Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do any external organizations place pressures or demands on your university to increase student racial diversity?</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do any external organizations place pressures or demands on your university to increase rankings?</td>
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<td>17</td>
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</table>
Table 6: Sources of Isomorphic Pressures Chi Square Goodness of Fit Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do these sources influence your universities’ student racial diversity policies and practices?</td>
<td>Mimetic Pressures</td>
<td>Practices from aspirational peer universities</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive Pressures</td>
<td>State higher education system</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normative Pressures</td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ previous employers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ professional networks</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees educational training</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do these sources influence your universities’ rankings policies and practices?</td>
<td>Mimetic Pressures</td>
<td>Practices from aspirational peer universities</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coercive Pressures</td>
<td>State higher education system</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Normative Pressures</td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ previous employers</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ professional networks</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>COPLAC employees educational training</td>
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Table 7: Impact of Each Source of Isomorphic Pressure Chi Square Goodness of Fit Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>Somewhat Impacts</th>
<th>Barely Impacts</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How much do these sources influence your universities’ student racial diversity policies and practices?</td>
<td>Mimetic Pressures</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Practices from aspirational peer universities</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0.03 *</td>
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<tr>
<td>How much do these sources influence your universities’ rankings policies and practices?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Practices from aspirational peer universities</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.05 *</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State higher education system</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.00 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.00 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ previous employers</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.01 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees’ professional networks</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.01 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>COPLAC employees educational training</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.00 *</td>
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</table>
## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Original IPEDS Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admissions and Test Scores</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Years Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applicants Total</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admissions Total</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of Accepted Applicants</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Percent</td>
<td>2006 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Critical Reading 75th Percentile</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Score</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT Math 75th Percentile</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Score</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT English 75th Percentile</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Score</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT Math 75th Percentile</td>
<td>Selectivity/IV</td>
<td>Continuous Score</td>
<td>2001 to 2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Charges</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Years Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application Fee</td>
<td>Cost of Attendance/Control</td>
<td>Continuous Dollar Amount</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-state Tuition and Fees</td>
<td>Cost of Attendance/Control</td>
<td>Continuous Dollar Amount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Financial Aid and Net Price</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Years Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of FTFT Students receiving federal grant aid, including Pell</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Percent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall Enrollment</th>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>Values</th>
<th>Years Available</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrolled</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian of Alaska Native</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More or Unknown Races</td>
<td>Diversity/DV</td>
<td>Continuous Number</td>
<td>1984; '86; '88-2015</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Survey Instrument

Q1. Which of the following influence your university’s methods for increasing student racial diversity? (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do any of the methods used by your university to increase student racial diversity come from this source?</th>
<th>If yes, how much does this source impact the methods used by your university to increase student racial diversity?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greatly Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices from aspirational peer universities</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions from the state higher education system's governing body</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions from COPLAC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices from universities at which faculty and staff were previously employed</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices suggested by faculty and staff's professional organizations</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices faculty and staff learned during their educational training</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q2. Which of the following influence your university’s methods for increasing ranking? (Check all that apply)

| Do any of the methods used by your university to increase its ranking come from this source? | If yes, how much does this source impact the methods used by your university to increase its ranking? |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Greatly Impacts | Somewhat Impacts | Barely Impacts |
| Practices from aspirational peer universities | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Suggestions from the state higher education system’s governing body | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Suggestions from COPLAC | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Practices from universities at which faculty and staff were previously employed | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Practices suggested by faculty and staff’s professional organizations | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| Practices faculty and staff learned during their educational training | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
Q3. How important are students’ SAT or ACT scores in admission decisions?

Q4. Do any external organizations (such as COPLAC, the state higher education system’s governing body, ranking agencies, etc) place any pressures or demands on your university to increase student racial diversity or university ranking?
Appendix C: Original Survey Instrument

Pressures on COPLAC Universities (Qualtrics Word Output)

(Formatting varies from what respondents see in Qualtrics)

Pressures on COPLAC Universities

Q1 What is your position at your university?
   ☐ Admissions Director
   ☐ Enrollment Management Director
   ☐ Other (specify) ____________________

Q2 How long have you worked at this university?
   ☐ Less than 1 year
   ☐ Less than 2 years
   ☐ Less than 3 years
   ☐ Less than 5 years
   ☐ Less than 10 years
   ☐ More than 10 years

Q3 Select all of the races/ethnicities that apply to you.
   ☐ White or Caucasian
   ☐ Black or African American
   ☐ Latinx
   ☐ Native American or Alaska Native
   ☐ Asian
   ☐ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
   ☐ Other (specify) ____________________

Q4 What is your gender?
   ☐ Woman
   ☐ Man
   ☐ Other (specify) ____________________

Q5 Name one institution that your university considered a comparative peer institution prior to becoming a member of COPLAC.

Q6 Name one public institution that your university currently considers an aspirational peer.

Q7 Name one private institution that your university currently considers an aspirational peer.
Q8 Rank the following goals by level of importance to your university, with 1 being the most important and 5 being the least important. (Drag and Drop)
______ Increasing Campus Resources (tutoring services, library collections, recreational spaces, etc)
______ Increasing University Ranking
______ Increasing Graduation Rates
______ Increasing Student Racial Diversity
______ Increasing Funding for the University

Q9 How would you rate the student racial diversity of your university compared to other universities in your state?
☑ More diverse than other universities in my state
☑ Equal level of diversity compared to other universities in my state
☑ Less diverse than other universities in my state

Q10 How important is increasing student racial diversity to your university?
☑ Extremely important
☑ Very important
☑ Moderately important
☑ Slightly important
☑ Not at all important

Q11 What are the reasons that your university aims to increase student racial diversity?

Q12 Does your university have policies, programs, or practices in place to increase student racial diversity?
☑ Yes
☑ No

Q13 Describe these policies, programs, or practices. (Open Response)
Q14 Which of the following influence your university's methods for increasing student racial diversity? (Check all that apply)

| Do any of the methods used by your university to increase student racial diversity come from this source? | If yes, how much does this source impact the methods used by your university to increase student racial diversity? |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yes | No | Greatly Impacts | Somewhat Impacts | Barely Impacts |
| Practices from aspirational peer universities |  |  |  |  |
| Suggestions from the state higher education system's governing body |  |  |  |  |
| Suggestions from COPLAC |  |  |  |  |
| Practices from universities at which faculty and staff were previously employed |  |  |  |  |
| Practices suggested by faculty and staff's professional organizations |  |  |  |  |
| Practices faculty and staff learned during their educational training |  |  |  |  |
Q15 Is there a conflict between increasing university ranking and increasing student racial diversity at your university?
- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Q16 How does your university balance the need to increase university ranking and increase student racial diversity?

Q17 How important is increasing university ranking to your university?
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Q18 What are the reasons that your university aims to increase its ranking? (Open Response)

Q19 What methods does your university employ to increase its ranking? (Open Response)
Q20 Which of the following influence your university's methods for increasing its ranking? (Check all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practices from aspirational peer universities</th>
<th>Do any of the methods used by your university to increase its ranking come from this source?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions from the state higher education system's governing body</td>
<td>If yes, how much does this source impact the methods used by your university to increase its ranking?</td>
<td>Greatly Impacts</td>
<td>Somewhat Impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices from universities at which faculty and staff were previously employed</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices suggested by faculty and staff's professional organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices faculty and staff learned during their educational training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q21 How important are students' SAT or ACT scores in admissions decisions?
- Extremely important
- Very important
- Moderately important
- Slightly important
- Not at all important

Q22 Does your university submit information about incoming students' SAT or ACT scores to ranking agencies, such as US News & World Report?
- Yes
- No

Q23 Does your university associate increasing average SAT and ACT scores of incoming students with increasing university ranking?
- Yes
- No

Q24 Do any external organizations (such as COPLAC, the state higher education system's governing body, ranking agencies, etc) place any pressures or demands on your university to increase student racial diversity or university ranking?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Increase student racial diversity</th>
<th>Increase university ranking</th>
<th>Do external organizations place pressures or demands on your university</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q25 How do those organizations communicate their desires to your university?

Q26 What are the consequences of failing to meet the demands of these organization for your university?

Q27 Is there currently a model for a highly ranked and highly racially diverse public liberal arts university.
- Yes
- No

Q28 List the universities you identify as highly ranked and highly racially diverse. (Open Response)