

**SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST? THE REBRANDING  
OF WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION**

**EXCERPT: CHAPTER ONE: REBRANDING -- AN INTRODUCTION**

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# **SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST? THE REBRANDING OF WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION**

## **CHAPTER ONE: REBRANDING -- AN INTRODUCTION**

*We do what we must, and call it by the best names.* – Ralph Waldo Emerson (n.d.).  
*Your premium brand had better be delivering something special, or it's not going to get the business* –  
Warren Buffet (n.d.).

In an April 2006 editorial, *New York Times* columnist Stephan Budiansky recounted his research for a satirical novel set on the campus of a university. “The idea was to have a bunch of gags about how colleges prostitute themselves to improve their *U.S. News & World Reports*’ rankings and keep up a healthy supply of tuition-paying students while wrapping their craven commercialism in high-minded sounding academic blather.” Budiansky continued, “One of my best bits, or so I thought, was about how the fictional university . . . had hired a branding consultant to come up with a new name with the hip, possibility-rich freshness needed to appeal to today’s students. Two weeks later, a friend called to say it was on the front page of *The Times*: ‘To Woo Students, Colleges Choose Names That Sell’” (p. A19). While listing numerous illustrations of recent college rebranding, Finder (2005) headlined his article with the rebranding experience of Pennsylvania’s Arcadia University. Within a year following the institution’s name change from Beaver College, Arcadia University experienced a 52% rise in freshman applications, a 31% increase in freshman deposits, a 25-point boost in average SAT scores, and a gain excess of 100% in annual giving (O’Neill, 2002). Finder (2005) elaborated, “Names have gained increasing importance in the world of higher education” (p. A1).

An institution’s name is part of its unique branding and part of its overall marketing strategy. Tim Westerbeck (2006), managing director of Chicago based

marketing firm Lipman and Hearn, explained, “Not long ago, the concept of marketing in higher education was shunned as superficial at best, a symbol of crass commercialism unsuitable for the hallowed halls of academe at worst. Today, its unlikely that a campus president could complete a day on the job without some discussion of the institution’s brand, targeted constituents, demographic segments or some other topic that sounds like corporate-CEO-speak” (p. 51).

In Ferguson’s 1986 study of institutional transformations from the previous 20 years, she noted that the competition for students had steadily increased. Therefore, schools had adopted marketing practices from the private sector in order to appear more attractive to potential students. An institution may even enlist the expertise of marketing professionals to improve institutional image. According to Lipman and Hearne, they have provided “market research and planning, strategic positioning, and compelling communications” to over 300 educational institutions (“Home Page,” n.d.; “Our Education Clients,” n.d.). One strategic positioning tactic is to transform an unsuccessful brand to one that is successful. In 2002, Western Maryland College hired Lipman and Hearn for an undisclosed price to make the final selection from over 400 suggestions of new names (Karpovich, 2002). Western Maryland, a private college near Baltimore, emerged as McDaniel College (n.d.) and dispelled several public misconceptions about the school (Lowery, 2002).

During the past several decades, the tendency for American colleges and universities to implement institutional transformations has steadily increased (Morphew, 2000). Spencer (2005; personal communication, May 11, 2006) enumerated 785 colleges and universities that experienced name changes during the years from 1992 to 2001.

While Spencer counted all institutions listed in the *HEP* (Higher Education Publications) *Higher Education Directory* that changed names during this 10-year period, he did not discriminate based upon an institution's accreditation status. A more recent itemization of institutions (see Appendix C) accredited by the six regional accrediting bodies (see Appendix D) yielded 532 rebranded institutions for the years 1996 through 2005. A large percentage of West Virginia institutions of higher education were involved in rebranding strategies during this same 10-year span (see Appendix C). Gumport, Ianozzi, Shaman, and Zemsky (1997b) suggested that institutional re-identification is an emerging trend that will dynamically affect the entire American higher educational arena.

In the recent past, 27 West Virginia higher educational institutions have altered their institutional images via name modifications. In some cases, the identity modification occurred concurrently with changes in accreditation status, mergers into other institutions, becoming regional campuses of larger institutions, or by evolving into an independently accredited community and technical college (CTC). Six institutions (Blue Ridge CTC, Marshall University Graduate College, Mountain State University, Salem International University, West Virginia University Institute of Technology, and Wheeling Jesuit University) experienced multiple transformational activities during the past 30 years. Seven component community and technical colleges achieved independence from their parent institutions. Six institutions (Bluefield State CTC, Fairmont CTC, Glenville State CTC, Marshall University Graduate College, Potomac State College, and West Virginia University Institute of Technology) ceased to exist as independent, unique entities by being absorbed into other institutions. In addition, the legislature authorized the creation of a new freestanding community college: Eastern

West Virginia CTC. As will be discussed further in this chapter, West Virginia experienced a greater proportion of rebranded accredited institutions from 1996 to 2005 than of any other state, territory, or former territory of the United States.

While institutional rebranding is on the rise, there is a void in the literature regarding a high percentage of institutional rebranding for any single geographic area, let alone West Virginia. Koku (1997) and Morpew (2000) analyzed a number of rebranded institutions by comparing institutional enrollments from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Koku's (1997) study of enrollment gains and losses at rebranded four-year colleges and universities only included a partial list of the 140 institutions he studied. While it is unknown if any West Virginia schools were represented, the partial listing of 45 schools did not include any West Virginia institutions. Unfortunately, Morpew's (2000) study of colleges that rebranded as universities did not list any of his sample institutions; therefore, it is uncertain if he analyzed any West Virginia schools. While Spencer (2005) included nine West Virginia schools in his count of institutions that rebranded during a 10-year period, only one WV school transformation qualified for inclusion in his sample – The College of West Virginia's evolution from Beckley College. Spencer reported very little information regarding the phenomenon as it directly related to West Virginia or its institutions.

As with Koku (1997), Morpew (2000), and Spencer (2005); several other researchers pursued a variety of institutional rebranding topics. Garvey (2007), Hauck (1998), Taccone (1999), Perry (2003), Rosenthal (2003), and Tisdell (2003) each examined a single institution and the reasons and results of the rebranding process. Ferguson (1986) conducted a descriptive study of 12 institutions in the Middle Atlantic

States that underwent a significant change in name, status, or admission based on gender during the years 1966 to 1986. Her study explored the marketing strategies of four schools in each of the three categories. While Ferguson analyzed schools in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, her study was limited to the marketing practices of 1986. Hartford (1975) analyzed the factors that influenced Colorado state legislators to confer university status upon Southern Colorado State College to become the University of Southern Colorado (now Colorado State University – Pueblo). Reed (1978) and Misite (1996) chronicled the process of merging one institution into another. Morphew, Toma, and Hedstrom (2001) compared two rebranded institutions with a third that had experienced other significant changes. Furthermore, Toma and Morphew (2001) compared and contrasted the repackaging of two anonymous institutions: one from the Midwest and one from the East.

In addition, three researchers studied brand perceptions in higher education. Morrison (2000) compared students' brand perception at 10 well-known liberal arts colleges in the South and correlated these perceptions with enrollment trends. Cobb (2001) analyzed brand perception in relationship to students' intent to persist and concluded that successful branding efforts were a predictor of retention. Kelly (2004) surveyed stakeholders at 25 Jesuit branded institutions (including Wheeling Jesuit University) and concluded that the Jesuit brand was synonymous with quality education. Although these researchers examined a variety of themes, there were no studies on institutional identification from one single state or region and no qualitative multi-institutional studies regarding college-to-university upgrades.

The transformation of West Virginia colleges to universities merited further research and such a study added to the body of knowledge. Ehrenberg (2001) expressed “We do not have wide base of empirical knowledge about the . . . characteristics of institutions that change classifications” (p. 4). In addition, a mixed method study provided information rich data that can aid administrators and become the basis for future research. In his 2000 study on college-to-university transformations, Morpew concluded: “An in-depth qualitative study of several of these institutions, their motivations, and the outcomes associated with their change would go a long way toward documenting and understanding this trend in higher education and determining the organizational impact of this kind of transformation, their students, and their faculty” (p. 22).

Employing an atypical dissertation model, the structure of this mixed method study emerged during the data analysis process. The final document includes eight independent chapters related to the findings – the subject matter for which was determined as primary themes emerged from the final analysis. An introductory chapter identifies West Virginia’s rebranded institutions since 1976, and it explains the rationale, background, and process for the study. The independent chapters relate to the following major themes: the rationale for the change, processes involved in the change, legislation and regulatory bodies, stakeholder reactions, enrollment, prestige, administrative advice, and brand protection and retention. The final chapter concludes the entire document.

## **Changes at WV Public Four-Year Colleges, Campuses, & Graduate Institutions**

### ***Concord University***

On February 27, 1867, West Virginia's first governor Arthur I. Boreman signed into law House Bill 76 establishing the "West Virginia Normal School for the instruction and practice of teachers of common schools in the science of education and the art of teaching to be established at Marshall College in the county of Cabell" (Lewis, 1912). In 1868, the name of Marshall College was permitted to be retained and, over the next several years, five branches of the State Normal School (Marshall College) were established (Fast & Maxwell, 1901; Lewis, 1912; Maury & Fontaine, 1876).

Founded in 1872 at Concord Church (now Athens), Mercer County, Concord University had its beginning as the Concord Branch of the West Virginia Normal School. The school officially opened in 1875 (Miller, 1907). On July 1, 1919, all of the branches of the West Virginia Normal School became independent of each other and the legislature officially rechristened the Mercer County branch as Concord State Normal School – a name that had been in use since the 1870s (Ford, 1921). During Dr. Frank Marsh's administration, the institution's name changed twice: in 1931 to Concord State Teachers College and in 1943 to Concord College ("History," n.d.). In 1973, the state merged Concord College and Bluefield State College (BSC) under one administration in preparation for a complete institutional merger. During this period, BSC discontinued a number of liberal arts programs, closed its dorms, and increased its emphasis on community college education. The merger plans having failed, Concord and BSC separated in 1976 (Brown, 2004; Poole, 1989). With Concord having met criteria



outlined in the West Virginia State Code, Senate Bill 448 (2004) authorized the designation of Concord University (“University Status,” 2004).

### ***Fairmont State University (FSU)***

West Virginia Normal School at Fairmont originated as a private teacher preparatory school in 1865. The same year, a stock company took control of the institution and received a charter under the corporate name of “The Regency of the West Virginia Normal School.” In March 1868, the state of West Virginia purchased the institute and renamed it as the Fairmont Branch of the West Virginia Normal School (Marshall College). Throughout its early years, the State Normal School branch was known as Fairmont State Normal School. Fairmont’s subsequent appellations mirror Concord’s with changes occurring in 1919 as becoming independent of Marshall and officially known as Fairmont State Normal School, 1931 as Fairmont State Teachers College, 1943 as Fairmont State College, and 2004 as Fairmont State University (Fast & Maxwell, 1901; Ford, 1921; Miller, 1907; “The Story,” n.d.).

### ***Marshall University Graduate College (MUGC)***

Established in 1958, Marshall University Graduate College began as the Kanawha Valley Graduate Center of Science and Engineering of West Virginia University (SB 79, 1958). In 1972, West Virginia House Bill 618 created the West Virginia College of Graduate Studies as an independent public institution. During the same year, the institution began occupying space on the campus of West Virginia State College located in Institute. When the state legislature restructured West Virginia's Board of Regents into two systems in 1989, the school was renamed as the University of West Virginia College

of Graduate Studies (SB 420, 1989). Within three years, the legislature re-identified the institution as West Virginia Graduate College (HB 4596, 1992). In June 1995, West Virginia Graduate College moved from West Virginia State's campus to its own facility in South Charleston. The campus library followed after a merger with Marshall University and the construction of the Robert C. Byrd Academic and Technology Center in 1998 ("The History of Marshall," n.d.). While Marshall and West Virginia Graduate College entered into an affiliation status in 1996, WVGC was wholly absorbed by Marshall University and was re-christened Marshall University Graduate College in July 1997 ("The Merger," 1998).

Although its name suggests that MUGC is a regional campus of Marshall, Senate Bill 67 (1997) called for the institutions to integrate operations, budgets, and programs completely. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission ("Locations of Public Higher Education Institutions," n.d.) does not currently list Marshall University Graduate College as a distinct institution. This is unlike institutions identified as regional campuses of West Virginia University; WVU regional campuses have distinct accreditation and budgetary independence.

Although MUGC is Marshall, the level of control MU exerted over MUGC was not always clear from MU's own marketing efforts. One area that segregated the intuitions was the graduate college's unique web presence. Beginning June 4, 1997, MUGC operated its own Internet domain: [mugc.edu](http://mugc.edu) ("Whois Lookup: [mugc.edu](http://mugc.edu)," 2006). This site, which additionally redirected traffic from the former [wvgc.edu](http://wvgc.edu) domain, acted as a separate web presence for MUGC for two years ("Internet Archive for [wvgc.edu](http://wvgc.edu)," 2006). Although linked to and from [marshall.edu](http://marshall.edu), the [mugc.edu](http://mugc.edu) Internet domain depicted

MUGC as being distinct from the Huntington main campus; this distinction was compounded by the issuance of mugc.edu and not marshall.edu email addresses to faculty and staff in South Charleston (“Internet Archive for mugc.edu,” 2006).

As early as September 1997, the usage of the mugc.edu domain became an internal issue regarding MUGC’s identity and the Strategic Plan Task Force (1997a & 1997b) voted that all of Marshall, including Marshall University Graduate College, utilize the marshall.edu domain; however, the issue emerged for discussion again at the Task Force’s December 1997 meeting. Although the committee approved domain integration to marshall.edu in 1997, the mugc.edu domain was officially used through 1999, and some faculty continued using the mugc.edu email address in syllabi as late as spring 2000 (Hankins, 2000; “Satellite and Video Networks,” 1999). The last update to the mugc.edu website occurred on April 29, 1999 (“Internet Archive for mugc.edu,” 2006). The October 6, 1999 update to the Marshall University homepage had the mugc.edu domain replaced with a marshall.edu address for the South Charleston campus. Although unused, Marshall University renewed both the mugc.edu and wvgc.edu domains up through 2006; the domains are no longer retained by MU (“Whois Lookup: mugc.edu & wvgc.edu,” 2006).

Identity confusion also occurred in the 1998-1999 Marshall University Graduate College catalog. In most references, the initial catalog following the merger utilized the name “Marshall University Graduate College” globally as a distinct school encompassing all graduate education at Marshall University regardless of campus location; however, other passages in the same catalog used the name exclusively for the South Charleston location.

Over time, the identity discrepancies have lessened, but some still exist nine years after the merger. The Marshall University Graduate College (2006) website stated “MUGC has two main offices to serve you: one on the Huntington campus and one in South Charleston. In addition, graduate courses or even full programs are sometimes offered through Marshall University’s regional centers in locations like Teays Valley, Point Pleasant, or Beckley.” Other older pages still accessible on the Marshall site, however, clearly label the former West Virginia Graduate College as MUGC (“MUGC Virtual Tour,” 2000). Marshall University’s most recent graduate catalog (2004) referenced the MUGC campus location as Marshall University’s South Charleston campus; however, campus signs identify the site under both names, albeit “South Charleston Campus” takes precedence. While the terminology “Marshall University Graduate College” originated with acquisition of the former West Virginia Graduate College, it appears that officially the name no longer refers solely to the South Charleston campus, but rather identifies a cadre of graduate offerings irrespective of the campus location.

### ***Potomac State College West Virginia University (PSC)***

Established in 1901 as the Keyser Preparatory Branch of West Virginia University, PSC began operations during the following year as West Virginia Preparatory School. In 1921, the state legislature granted the institution junior college status as Potomac State School. Academically linked to West Virginia University, legislators solidified this relationship in 1935 by officially naming Potomac State School of West Virginia as a regional campus of WVU. The name was officially shortened to Potomac State College in 1953 (“Role and Mission,” 2002). As a regional campus of WVU, PSC

operated with budgetary independence and its own president until 2005. House Bill 2224 (2003), however, dissolved PSC's regional campus status and called for PSC to fully merge into WVU as a divisional branch campus on July 1, 2005. Solidifying the change from regional to divisional status, WVU replaced the position of institutional president with a campus provost at Potomac State College West Virginia University ("Dr. Kerry O'Dell," 2005).

### ***Shepherd University***

Formed in 1871 as a private school named Shepherd College, the institution came under the auspices of Marshall College as Shepherd College and Branch of the West Virginia State Normal School in 1872 when the state legislature assumed control of the institution. During the next several decades, the school was referenced variously as the Shepherdstown Branch of the West Virginia State Normal School, Shepherd College, Shepherd College and State Normal School, and Shepherd State Normal School. Similar to other state normal schools, it became independent of Marshall in 1919 officially as Shepherd College State Normal School. The legislature renamed the school as Shepherd State Teachers College in 1931. It returned to its original name in 1943. With the passage of SB 448 in 2004, the term "College" was replaced with "University" in the school's name (Fast & Maxwell, 1901; Ford, 1921; Miller, 1907; "Shepherd University," 2004).

### ***West Liberty State College (WLSC)***

Although its name has not changed since 1943, West Liberty State College is included in this study as it anticipates becoming West Liberty University by 2009. West

Liberty's beginnings date from its March 30, 1837 charter by the Virginia General Assembly. Instruction, however, did not begin until 1838. From 1838 to 1870, the school operated as West Liberty Academy (Snively, 1955). For 32 years, West Liberty served as a preparatory high school and not as a college.

In 1870, the State purchased the building and grounds of West Liberty Academy for \$6,000 and transitioned the campus to the West Liberty Branch of the State Normal School (Marshall College) (Fast & Maxwell, 1901; Lewis, 1912; Maury & Fontaine, 1876; Shaw, 1917). As with the other branches of the State Normal School, the legislature on July 1, 1919 individualized all as independent institutions. The standardized name of West Liberty State Normal School began to be used exclusively, whereas up to this time, several naming variations were in use (Ford, 1921). Further name changes occurred in 1931 and 1943 with West Liberty State Teachers College and West Liberty State College respectively (Brenner, 2003).

Because of its early founding, West Liberty touts the honor of being the oldest higher educational institution in the state; however, there are several challengers to this claim. Marshall University has also claimed the distinction as being one of the oldest if not the oldest. Marshall's claim dates to Isaac Peck's school of instruction that began during summer 1837 at Mt. Hebron Church. Peck's subscription school evolved into Marshall Academy during the following year. Even though the Virginia General Assembly chartered Marshall Academy on March 13, 1838, Marshall's instruction predated West Liberty's operations by nearly a year (Lewis, 1912).

Because these schools were founded as academies, Bethany College takes exception to the claim that either West Liberty or Marshall is the oldest college in the

State. At time of the West Virginia's formation in 1863, Bethany was the only institution providing collegial curricula and has continued to do so since. Chartered as a "college" by the Virginia General Assembly on March 2, 1840, Bethany College considers itself as the oldest higher educational institution in West Virginia (Sandercox, 1989). If Bethany claimed its forerunner institution, Buffalo Academy, its 1822 founding predated West Liberty's charter by 15 years.

Using the academy argument, two other schools could claim an earlier establishment date. On November 29, 1814, Monongalia Academy was founded. This institution and its property was donated to the State in 1867 and was the genesis of West Virginia University. The public school system purchased the old Monongalia Academy and a building from WVU in 1868 and the school resumed operation as a high school that year (Fast & Maxwell, 1901; Miller, 1907).

Although WVU is directly descended from the Monongalia Academy, it chooses not to count the academy as part of its official history. WVU prefers to chart its founding from 1867 (Brenner, 2003; Songe, 1978). Likewise, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM), which succeeded the Greenbrier Military Academy, could claim Lewisburg Academy's 1812 founding as its own. Like WVU, the WVSOM prefers to disregard all forerunner institutions as being part of its own lineage ("WVSOM at a Glance," 2004).

### ***West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (WVSOM)***

When the Greenbrier Military School announced its closing following the 1972 graduation, the school's administration announced that the campus was going to be

transferred lock, stock, and cannon barrels to the West Virginia Society of Osteopathic Medicine to establish a new osteopathic college. This occurred within days of the closing of the Military School. It was hoped that the new school would begin operation during fall 1972; however, due to funding issues and a general confusion over osteopathic medicine, its opening was delayed (“GMS to Become,” 1972; Kerr, 1974).

Established as a private institution, the Greenbrier College of Osteopathic Medicine eventually accepted an initial class of 36 students during fall 1974. After two financially disappointing years, the school appealed to the State of West Virginia for assistance. In 1976, the WV Board of Regents assumed control and changed the institution’s identity to the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (“Centennial Celebration,” 2002; “WVSOM at a Glance,” 2004).

Often a topic of legislative debate, WVSOM sparked controversy because of perceived competition with the allopathic programs at Marshall and WVU. In 1989, the Carnegie Foundation recommended that the state either privatize WVSOM or merge the school with Marshall University. While the Foundation did not believe that West Virginia could adequately support three medical schools, supporters appealed to Governor Gaston Caperton to allow the school to continue as an independent, state supported institution. Under a recommendation of the Senate Education Committee, WVSOM continued under the newly created University of West Virginia system (Kabler, 1989; Vandergrift, 1989). Although the name and control of ownership have changed, the school’s mission to train osteopathic physicians for service in rural Appalachia remains intact (“WVSOM at a Glance,” 2004).



### ***West Virginia State University (WVSU)***

West Virginia Colored Institute was founded in 1891 as a land-grant institution under the Second Morrill Act. Originally offering secondary and vocational education for the state's African-American population, a transition to college classes occurred in 1915 in tandem with a name change to West Virginia Collegiate Institute. In 1929, the name was further changed to West Virginia State College – a name it utilized until 2004 when legislation permitted its current identity as West Virginia State University (SB 448, 2004; Thorn, n.d.).

In 1956, the West Virginia State Board of Education voted for West Virginia State College to surrender its land-grant status and funding to West Virginia University effective July 1, 1957. Due to alumni requests that WV State return to its original land-grant status, President Hazo W. Carter, Jr. began an effort to reverse the decision in 1988. After a series of incremental steps beginning in 1991, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reinstated West Virginia State as a full status, land-grant institution in 2001 (“History of Land-Grant Status,” 2006).

### ***West Virginia University Institute of Technology (WVUIT)***

West Virginia University Institute of Technology began operation as Montgomery Preparatory School in 1895 as a branch of West Virginia University. Over the years, it has experienced significant institutional change. With a focus on vocational education in 1917, the school became West Virginia Trade School. As the school moved into junior college status in 1921, the name changed to New River State School. A further name alteration occurred when the addition of baccalaureate programs precipitated a 1931 re-

identification as New River State College. Ten years later, the introduction of business and technical programs resulted in the institution's fifth name: West Virginia Institute of Technology.

While its identity had remained constant for over 50 years, the West Virginia state legislature designated its status as a regional campus of West Virginia University in 1996 (SB 591, 1996). Reflecting the change, its name was adjusted to represent its affiliation with WVU as West Virginia University Institute of Technology ("Profile & History," n.d.). At the beginning of the 2006 legislative session, Governor Joe Manchin, III announced another planned change to the Fayette County based institution. In Manchin's state of the state address, he announced the removal of the WVUIT's engineering program from the Montgomery regional campus to become "a division of WVU's College of Engineering and Mineral Resources" housed at a new technology park in South Charleston (pp. 10-11). Many WVU Tech stakeholders considered the loss of WVUIT's flagship program as the institution's death knell (Keenan, 2006b). To compensate, Manchin's (2006) plan called for WVUIT and its former component Community and Technical College to merge back into a single institution with the CTC president assuming duties as president of the entire institution.

The governor's announcement created a firestorm and numerous bills followed in the 2006 legislative session. House Bill 4560 and Senate Bills 720 and 740 (2006) all attempted, unsuccessfully, to return WVUIT to its independent status and the former name of West Virginia Institute of Technology. The passage of HB 4690 (2006), however, sealed WVUIT's fate. While allowing the engineering program to remain

partially in Montgomery and partially in South Charleston, the bill removed the school from its regional campus status and fully integrated the site as a division of WVU.

While the version of the bill at its passage called for the institution to become identified as the Montgomery Campus of West Virginia University, the final version retained the name West Virginia University Institute of Technology. With the change that occurred on July 1 2007, the president transitioned to a provost's position and WVUIT surrendered its specific site accreditation and came under the accreditation umbrella of WVU. Not affected by these changes, the Community and Technical College of West Virginia University Institute of Technology retained its own independent status, presidential appointment, and accreditation status ("Summary of HB 4690," 2006). In a report prepared on October 12, 2006, the Community and Technical College of WVU Institute of Technology recommended that the CTC remain a separate institution, continue to be administratively linked to WVU Tech, and retain its current name.

### **Changes in West Virginia Public Institutional Governing Boards**

It is worthwhile to enumerate other public higher education brand changes in the last three decades. These include the various iterations of state controlled governance and policy boards. Prior to 1969, the State Board of Education governed all West Virginia public institutions of higher learning with the exception of West Virginia University. As the state's flagship institution, WVU was the only public college or university with its own governing board. In 1969, legislators abolished the WVU Board of Governors and transferred control of all public higher educational institutions from the State Board of Education to the newly created West Virginia Board of Regents.

At the recommendation of the Carnegie Commission, the state legislature revamped the institutional reporting structure into two separate boards in 1989. The Board of Trustees of the University of West Virginia System (University System) governed WVU, Marshall, the College of Graduate Studies, and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine. All other public colleges reported to the State College System Board of Directors (College System). Each board employed its own chancellor and permitted individual institutions to have their own boards of advisors, who served to advise current institutional presidents and actively participate in presidential succession (Hoblitzel, n.d.). The passage of SB 653 in 2000 dissolved the separate university and college boards and reorganized policy reporting of all public colleges and universities under the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC). The HEPC serves as a policy board and not as an institutional governing board. Newly created boards representing each institution assumed the governance responsibilities; WVU and its regional campuses retained a single board for its entire organization.

### **Changes at WV Community and Technical Colleges**

As with the state boards, community college education in West Virginia has experienced a significant amount of recent change. West Virginia has two types of community colleges: freestanding (i.e., West Virginia Northern Community College and Southern West Virginia Community College) and the former community college components (now known as affiliates) of larger four-year institutions. The genesis of West Virginia's current community and technical college system developed during the decades of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. During the 1970s, three freestanding community colleges were created. Further legislation in the 1990s officially designated services areas

for the state's community colleges and established a new freestanding institution in the Eastern Panhandle. During the first decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century, changes in governance, control, accreditation, and institutional names occurred almost as frequent as every legislative session.

The earliest documented excursion into community and technical college education began at West Virginia State College. WV State began the development of community college courses and degree programs during 1953. The school's first associate's degree program was in commerce. During subsequent years, WV State introduced programs designed to prepare students in technical and vocational fields. Although community education began in the 1950s, West Virginia State's Community College was not recognized as a division until 1971 ("History of the Community and Technical College," n.d.).

In 1961, the state legislature allowed four-year colleges to establish two-year branch campuses to provide associate degrees and serve an adult population. That same year, West Virginia University established its Parkersburg branch campus. Operating under the jurisdiction of WVU for 10 years, the legislature granted the school status as an independent entity as Parkersburg Community College in 1971. With the reorganization of the West Virginia higher educational system in 1989, Parkersburg Community College returned to regional campus status as West Virginia University at Parkersburg (SB 420, 1989; "WVU at Parkersburg," n.d.).

Also in 1961, West Liberty State College established its first branch campus in Hancock County, WV. On May 9, 1972, West Liberty's branches in Ohio and Hancock counties became West Virginia Northern Community College. The school began

servicing Wetzel County in 1973 and opened its New Martinsville branch in 1975 (“About Northern,” n.d.; Asbury, 2001).

In 1963, Marshall University established branch campuses in Logan and Williamson, WV. The two campus locations merged into the independent Logan-Williamson Community College in 1971. During the same year, the school adopted the name Southern West Virginia Community College. Southern extended its service area to Wyoming County in 1974 and to Boone County in 1977 (“History of Southern,” 2006; “Statement of Affiliation Status: SWVCTC,” 2006).

Already having offered vocational programs, West Virginia Institute of Technology was the first four-year institution in the state to establish an official community college division. Beginning in 1966, the division emerged from existing programs in technical education and business. In 1971, Davis Hall was designated as the division’s permanent home on WV Tech’s campus (“Profile: Community and Technical,” 2004).

Bluefield State College’s (BSC) entrance into community college education also began in 1966. Brown (2004) explained that the school moved toward a commuter based community college model of education during the tenure of six white presidents at the historically black college. In 1975, Bluefield State acquired Greenbrier Valley Education Center in Lewisburg from WVU. Renamed as the Greenbrier Valley College Center, the center was established in 1969 (“Greenbrier Valley Center,” 1975). The center eventually moved to the former campus site of Greenbrier College for Women, which operated from 1812 to 1972 under a variety of names (“Timeline of West Virginia’s Women’s History,”

2006). With an expansion of BSC's service area in 1995, the school began offering programs in Beckley (Brown, 2004; SB 547, 1995).

Glenville State College offered its first extension classes in Nicholas County, WV during Fall 1973. Because of the popularity of course offerings both in Summersville and Craigs ville, the Nicholas County Commission sought permission to secure a permanent location for Glenville State in Summersville. Dedicated in 1986, the Nicholas County Center of Glenville State College offered associate's degrees and general studies courses leading to four-year degrees ("Nicholas County Campus," 2006), Senate Bill 653 (2000) established the center as the headquarters of Glenville State Community and Technical College. All of Glenville's Community and Technical College offerings, including those delivered on the main campus, were coordinated from Summersville.

Fairmont State and Shepherd established community college divisions in 1974 and Marshall established a campus based community college in 1975. Fairmont expanded its offerings to over 25 sites including the Gaston Caperton Center in Clarksburg and the Robert C. Byrd National Aerospace Education Center in Bridgeport. Likewise, The Community and Technical College of Shepherd began offering classes in Martinsburg in 2001. By May 2003, the CTC completely relocated to Martinsburg (Casto, 2005; "Fairmont State Community and Technical College," 2006; "History of Blue Ridge," n.d.).

Senate Bill 547 (1995) designated the official service areas of all community colleges. The bill also authorized a minor name change for all community colleges to become community and technical colleges (CTC). At the time of the transformation, CTC components were associated with Bluefield State College, Fairmont State College,

Glenville State College, Marshall University, Shepherd College, West Virginia University Institute of Technology, and West Virginia State College. In 1999, the legislature authorized the establishment of freestanding Eastern West Virginia CTC to serve Grant, Hampshire, Hardy, Mineral, Pendleton, and Tucker counties. While currently operating under the accreditation of Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (as a regional campus), Eastern was to begin the process to attain its own regional accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools by 2006 (HB 3019, 1999). The NCA granted candidacy status to Eastern on October 10, 2006 (“Statement of Affiliation – Eastern,” 2007).

In 2001, the state legislature authorized the seven component CTCs to emerge from their parent schools as distinct and independently accredited institutions; each former component CTC would have its own faculty, president, and administration. Inextricably linked, all seven of the newly designated independent CTCs would remain affiliated with their parent institutions through the sharing of cultural heritage, facilities, library resources, and similar names. While the same board jointly governs the independent CTCs and their parent schools, the CTCs operate under the jurisdiction of the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia and not the Higher Education Policy Commission. The newly independent CTCs were Bluefield State CTC, Fairmont State CTC, Glenville State CTC, Marshall CTC, CTC of Shepherd, CTC of West Virginia University Institute of Technology, and West Virginia State CTC. In addition, West Virginia University at Parkersburg reports to the WVCCTCE for policy initiatives and to the WVU governing board for institutional control (“Process for Achieving,” 2001).



Further changes among the CTCs occurred on July 1, 2003 when New River Community and Technical College (NRCTC) emerged as a new institution based in Beckley. Administratively linked to Bluefield State, New River CTC absorbed two recently separated and independent CTCs, dissolving these institutions in the process: Bluefield State CTC (campus locations in Beckley, Bluefield, and Lewisburg) and Glenville CTC (campus location in Summersville). NRCTC operated under the simultaneous regional accreditation of its parent schools until it achieved its own accreditation (“Preliminary Information Form,” 2004).

The complete separation of the community college components from their parent institution, as illustrated in Table 1.1, contributed to the overall loss of full time equivalent (FTE) students for four of the seven parent schools. All existing CTCs, except Eastern WV CTC, have achieved regional accreditation from the North Central Association (“Directory of Higher Learning Commission Affiliated Institutions,” 2006).

Table 1.1

*Net Enrollment Gain or Loss at CTC Parent Institutions (WVHEPC, 2004).*

PARENT SCHOOL	2003 FTE	2005 FTE	NET GAIN OR LOSS	% GAIN OR LOSS	CTC 2005 FTE
Bluefield State College	2,937	3,506	569	19.37%	1,200
Fairmont State University	6,806	7,423	617	9.07%	3,287
Glenville State College	2,184	1,313	-871	-39.88%	466
Marshall University	16,551	13,920	-2,631	-15.90%	2,400
Shepherd University	4,676	5,206	530	11.33%	1,524
West Virginia State University	4,997	3,344	-1,653	-33.08%	1,614
WVU Institute of Technology	2,395	1,698	-697	-29.10%	666

FTE comparisons are between 2003 and 2005, as the CTCs began to be listed as separate institutions beginning in 2004. New River CTC's 2005 FTE of 1,666 was split 72% to 28% based on the percentage of the total number of degrees and certificates offered by Bluefield State CTC and Glenville State CTC from 1992-2002. Source HEP Higher Education Directories 2004 & 2006.

In 2004, Senate Bill 448 created the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education (WVCCTCE). This board, a peer counterpart to the HEPC, exercises policy jurisdiction over the state's community and technical colleges (CTC). Like the HEPC and the former University System and College System Boards, the WVCCTCE has its own chancellor.

The 2006 legislative session provided for additional changes in the community and technical college system. Senate Bill 792 (2006) rebranded the Community and Technical College of Shepherd as Blue Ridge Community and Technical College. Under the same bill, the legislature called for Fairmont State University to reabsorb Fairmont Community and Technical College on July 1, 2006. "The bill to reunite the schools was proposed after Blair Montgomery, president of Fairmont State Community and Technical College, learned that the school's 3,000 students would have to reapply for financial aid because it was accredited separately from Fairmont State University" (Porterfield, 2006). Additionally, the reunification bill renamed the school as Pierpont CTC of Fairmont State University in honor of Marion County native and West Virginia's provisional governor Francis Harrison Pierpont (Byrd, 2006).

Often characterized as the "Father of West Virginia," Pierpont was influential in founding of the state during the Civil War. When the Commonwealth of Virginia seceded from the Union at the outset of the war, 48 counties in the state's western portion opposed this secession. Western Virginia legislators began meeting to question the formation of a new government. At the Second Wheeling Convention, Pierpont, was elected on June 20, 1861 as the provisional governor of the "Reorganized State of Virginia." When these counties became the State of West Virginia in 1863 and its constituents elected a

permanent governor, Pierpont assumed the role as governor of the “restored” state of Virginia. With its seat of government in Alexandria, Pierpont’s jurisdiction eventually encompassed twelve Virginia counties and two independent cities that were under Union control. At the war’s end in 1865, Pierpont became the governor of the entire Commonwealth. With the enactment of reconstruction in 1868, the federal government replaced Pierpont with a military commander and he returned to private law practice in West Virginia. (“Francis Harrison Pierpont,” n.d.; Head, 1908; West Virginia Archives & History, 2006).

### **Institutional Changes at West Virginia Private, Not-for-Profit Institutions**

#### ***Appalachian Bible College (ABC)***

Appalachian Bible Institute had its genesis in September 1950 as a home mission of the Independent Baptist Church in Pettus, Raleigh County, WV. The school’s official mission was to provide biblical training to youth in Appalachia. The next several years were pivotal for the school: it was incorporated in 1954, it became associated with the National Home Mission Fellowship in 1955, and acquired 95 acres of debt free property near Beckley at Bradley, WV.

In 1967, the Accreditation Association of Bible Colleges admitted the school as a member. During the following year, the WV State Board of Education approved Appalachian Bible to offer the Bachelor of Theology degree. With additional baccalaureate degrees added in 1976, the school changed its name to Appalachian Bible College (ABC) in 1978 to more accurately describe its mission. In 2000, the Higher

Learning Commission of the North Central Association approved ABC for regional accreditation (“History,” 2007).

### ***Mountain State University (MSU)***

Founded as a junior college in 1933, Beckley College served southern West Virginia for six decades as a feeder school for the state’s four-year institutions. Within a year following the appointment of Dr. Charles H. Polk as its president, Beckley College advanced to a baccalaureate degree granting institution in 1991 as The College of West Virginia. In 1998 & 1999, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools approved The College of West Virginia for its initial graduate programs in nursing and health science (“Decade of Progress,” 2000). With the accreditation of five additional graduate degrees in 2001, the institution’s change in status precipitated an additional name change to Mountain State University (Schwitzerlette, 2001).

In addition to changes in status and identity, Polk and David Hardesty, president of West Virginia University, signed a quasi affiliation agreement in 1999. This agreement allowed both institutions to collaborate on degree programs and provided to WVU permanent campus facilities in Beckley (“Decade of Progress”). In 1999, the school expanded its service area to include a campus in Martinsburg, WV (“Diehl,” 2005). During the fall of 2003, MSU added the Academy at Mountain State University, an independent college preparatory school (“MSU Academy, 2002). The institution further expanded by opening campuses in Beaver County, PA and Orlando, FL in 2004 and a center in Hickory, NC in 2007 (Amos, 2003; Mountain State University, 2007).

### ***Ohio Valley University (OVU)***

With intent on creating a Church of Christ affiliated college in the Ohio River Valley, the Ohio Educational Foundation was created in 1956. Upon deciding upon Parkersburg, Ohio Valley College was established in 1958 and held classes at the South Parkersburg Church of Christ (“History of OVU,” n.d.). In 1993, Ohio Valley wholly absorbed a suburban Philadelphia institution: Northeastern Christian Junior College (Brenner, 2003). On June 4, 2005, the board of trustees unanimously moved to rename the school officially as Ohio Valley University (“Ohio Valley College,” n.d.). Although OVU had no approved graduate programs at the time of the name change, the North Central Association approved OVU to offer a Master’s in Education on May 22, 2006 (“Statement of Affiliation Status: OVU,” 2006a & 2006b).

### ***The University of Charleston (UC)***

Founded as Barboursville Seminary in 1888 by the Methodist-Episcopal Church, South, The University of Charleston has experienced numerous changes during its 119-year history. Its initial transformation occurred during its second year when the name was adjusted as Barboursville College. The name UC held for the majority of its existence, Morris Harvey College, occurred in 1901 when the school assumed a new name to honor a prominent donor (“About The University of Charleston,” 2002; Brenner, 2003).

To attract a larger student population during the Great Depression, Morris Harvey College relocated to Charleston in 1935, where it merged with Kanawha Junior College in 1939 and the Mason College of Music and Fine Arts in 1956 (“About The University of Charleston,” 2002; Brenner, 2003; “College Takes Option,” 1940; “Morris Harvey to

Merge,” 1956). Following the merger of the three largest Methodist denominations in 1939, the Methodist Church concerned about having two colleges in a small state began efforts to consolidate Morris Harvey with West Virginia Wesleyan and close the Charleston campus. Upon the school’s request, the Methodist Church permitted Morris Harvey College to disaffiliate itself from the organization in 1942 to become an independent college (“About The University of Charleston,” 2002; “Book of Discipline,” 2000; & Steel, 1974).

The institution continued to experience growth in the 1940s and necessitated the construction of permanent campus facilities in Charleston’s Kanawha City area in 1947. The most recent institutional change occurred in 1979 when Morris Harvey College became a university and was re-identified as The University of Charleston (“About The University of Charleston”).

### ***Wheeling Jesuit University (WJU)***

Organized by members of the Society of Jesus’ Maryland province, Wheeling College opened its doors to 90 students on September 26, 1955 (“Wheeling Jesuit – 1950s,” n.d.). In 1987, the college reaffirmed its religious heritage as a Roman Catholic institution of the Jesuit tradition with the inclusion of Jesuit in its title (“Wheeling Jesuit – 1980s,” n.d.). Kelly (2004) identified Jesuit branded institutions as providing “a passion for quality; a study of the humanities and sciences regardless of specialization; a concern for questions of ethics and values for both the personal and professional lives of the student; [and] the importance of religious experience and care for the individual” (pp. 181-182). Further changes occurred with the addition of new master’s degree programs

and the institution's elevation to university status; Wheeling Jesuit College became Wheeling Jesuit University in 1996 ("Wheeling Jesuit – 1990s," n.d.).

### **Institutional Changes at West Virginia Proprietary Institutions**

#### ***American Public University System (APUS)***

American Public University System is a private, proprietary institution located in Charles Town, WV that offers undergraduate and graduate certificates and degrees at a distance. The school was founded in 1991 as American Military University to serve the education needs of military personnel. In 2002, the institution added the American Public University to offer degrees to individuals interested in service related careers. American Military University and American Public University were consolidated under their parent organization created in 2002: the American Public University System ("Overview and Fast Facts," 2006). Operating with national accreditation from The Distance Education and Training Council since 1995, APUS achieved higher status regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools on May 22, 2006 ("Degree Granting Institutions," n.d.; "APUS Earns Regional Accreditation," 2006; Statement of Affiliation – APUS, 2006).

#### ***Huntington Junior College (HJC)***

In 1936, Chester A. Riley, Jr. founded Huntington College of Business, Inc. in downtown Huntington. Later known as Huntington Junior Business College, this proprietary school has continuously retained its local ownership and currently offers associate degrees and non-degreed diplomas. In 1997, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association approved the institution for accreditation at the associate

degree level (“College History,” 2001). Huntington Junior Business College changed its name to Huntington Junior College in 2001 (Rodenhouse, 2002).

### ***Salem International University (SIU)***

Established originally by the Seventh Day Baptist Church in 1888 as Salem Academy, Salem College operated as an independent, private institution for 100 years. To underscore its educational mission, the school’s stockholders voted to replace the word “academy” with “college” during the second year of operation. (Randolph, 1905). The institution merged with Japan’s Teikyo University to form Salem-Teikyo University in 1989. This partnership continued until 2000 when the school was renamed Salem International University. During 2001, SIU forged a new partnership with Informatics Holdings Ltd., a Singapore based, for-profit, private institution (“The History of SIU,” n.d.).

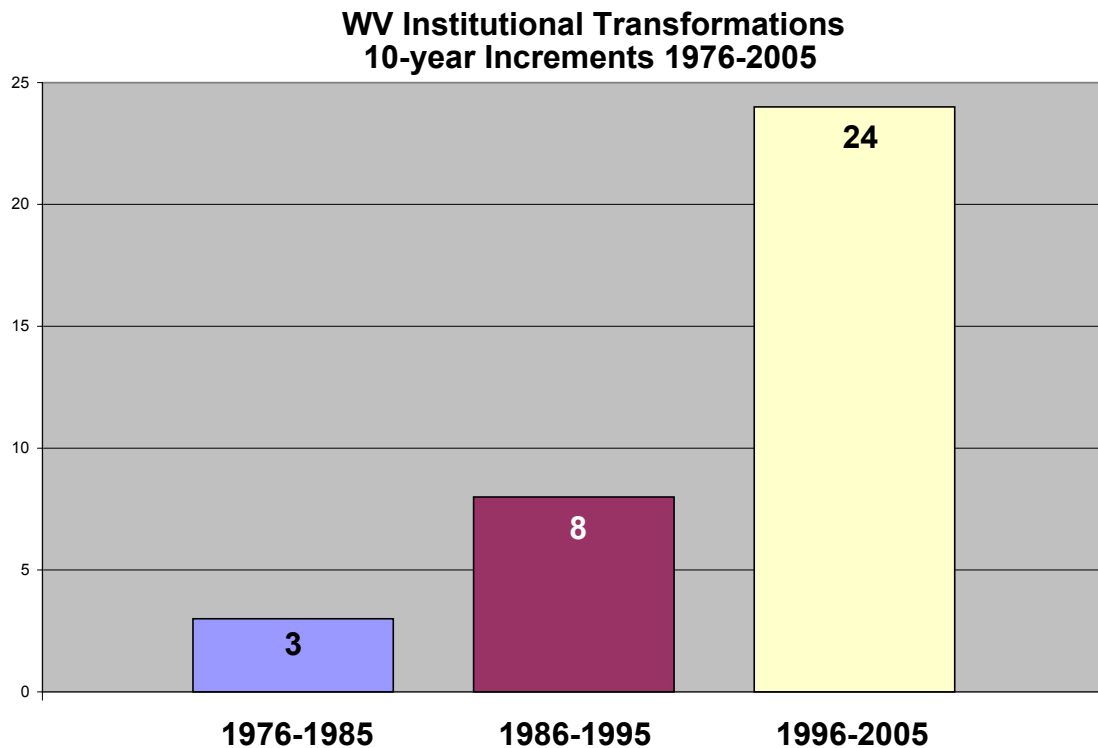
Due to continued financial difficulties, Salem International University entered into its third ownership agreement since 1989. On June 8, 2005, Salem Education, LLC of Philadelphia, PA acquired ownership of Salem under the wholly owned corporate name of Salem International University, LLC, incorporated in the state of Delaware. The Palmer Group of Philadelphia owns 100% of the equity of Salem while TL Ventures of Wayne, PA has invested 60% of the capital of Salem Education, LLC. With the change in ownership, Salem ceased being a not-for-profit institution of education with 501(c)3 tax status to that of a private, for profit institution of higher education (“Salem International,” 2005).



## West Virginia and the Amount of Institutional Rebranding

On the surface, there appear to be a large number of institutional changes occurring at both public and private West Virginia colleges and universities since 1976. By enumerating all of the name and status changes that have occurred in the identified 27 current and former institutions, the majority of rebranding tactics occurred during the years 1996-2005. Figure 1.1 illustrates this phenomenon while also accounting for multiple changes experienced by certain institutions. From 1996 to 2005, 24 rebranding strategies occurred at 21 WV institutions.

Figure 1.1  
*All West Virginia Institutional Transformations 1976-2005*



With so many changes occurring at West Virginia higher educational institutions, how does West Virginia's experience compare to that of other U.S. states and territories?

Only one other study provided a comparison. Spencer (2005) researched institutions that completely changed identity during 1992-2001, identifying 785 rebranded institutions in the United States. Of this group, nine complete name modifications occurred in West Virginia. According to Spencer (personal communication, May 11, 2006), the following were included in this listing:

Beckley College to The College of West Virginia

University of WV College of Graduate Studies to WV Graduate College

National Education Center to Corinthian Schools

Southern WV Community College to Southern WV CTC

West Virginia Institute of Technology to WVU Institute of Technology

Wheeling Jesuit College to Wheeling Jesuit University

WV Career College to WV Junior College (Charleston)

WV Career College to WV Junior College (Morgantown)

State College System of WV to WV Higher Education Policy Commission.

With these data, Spencer (2005) ranked West Virginia at 34 out of 53 U.S. jurisdictions. While a rank of 34 may appear insignificant, an investigation of his method reveals the following: (a) all institutional changes in the HEP (Higher Education Publications) Higher Education Directory were included in the master listing, regardless of the institution's type of accreditation; (b) branch campuses without individual institutional accreditation were included separately and not tabulated with the parent institution; (c) name changes of schools within a university (sub schools) were included; (d) system/governing board name changes were included; (e) not all U.S. associated jurisdictions were included in the tabulation; and (f) ranking was based upon the sheer

number of changes. Ranking, therefore, could favor jurisdictions with a greater number of institutions and for which name changes could occur on a larger scale (Spencer, 2005; personal communication May 11, 2006). While included as a basis of his ranking, Spencer (2005) eliminated the majority of these schools as unsuitable for his study's population of 134 institutions that completely altered identity. Additionally, Spencer counted institutions that experienced multiple rebrandings only once (Spencer, personal communication, May 11, 2006). Unfortunately, his study is the only one that included any data concerning West Virginia higher education rebranding.

Spencer (2005) used the criterion of inclusion in the 1993-2002 *HEP Higher Education Directories* as the constant; because of this, his numbers may have skewed toward institutions with lower status accreditation. Revisiting his technique, but counting only schools individually accredited by the six regional accrediting bodies (see Appendix D), this researcher eliminated certain business schools, religious schools, and specialty schools from the master institutional list. In addition, this researcher's focus on individual campus regional accreditation allowed for the omission of branch campuses operating under the accreditation of a parent institution and high status medical or legal schools accredited in field but lacking regional accreditation. Similar to Spencer (personal communication, May 11, 2006), an institution with multiple name modifications was included only once in the tally and not for every modification.

To compile a list of rebranded institutions, a master list of the 3,036 qualifying institutions needed generated. Membership lists for all six regional accrediting bodies for 2005 provided the basic inventory of institutions in all 50 states, six U.S. territories, and three former trust territories that remained administratively linked to the U.S. The total

number also included 73 former regionally accredited institutions that merged into other regionally accredited schools. Colleges that evolved from existing institutions to become individually accredited were also enumerated. Not included in each state's or territory's total were the following: (a) branch campuses that do not have individual institutional accreditation; (b) schools that lost accreditation; (c) schools that closed; (d) schools applying for accreditation; and (e) schools with accreditation candidacy status. Schools experiencing sanctions were included as having accreditation status. The accreditation, although hampered, remained intact. Of the total, 532 regionally accredited institutions experienced at least one rebrand between 1996 and 2005.

Table 1.2

*Top 10 Institutional Rebranded States 1996-2005 Ranked by Number*

Rank	State	Number Rebranded	2000 Population
1	California	37	33,871,648
2	New York	34	18,976,457
3	Georgia	33	8,186,453
4	Minnesota	33	4,919,479
5	Kentucky	29	4,041,769
6	Pennsylvania	24	12,281,054
7	Texas	23	20,851,820
8	Missouri	22	5,595,211
<b>9</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>
10	Illinois	16	12,419,293

By using these parameters, West Virginia had a combined number of 32 regionally accredited institutions during this period; 18 experienced a rebranding. Schools such as Bluefield State CTC, Glenville CTC, and Eastern CTC that operated under the accreditation of other institutions are not included in West Virginia's total. WVSOM was eliminated, as it has specialized rather than regional accreditation. Schools without regional accreditation (Corinthian Schools and WV Junior College) and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission, included in Spencer's master list, were also

eliminated (personal communication, May 11, 2006). Table 1.2 compares the top 10 geographic areas based on the specific number of rebranded institutions; as noted, West Virginia ranks ninth.

While ranking ninth may itself indicate some significance, the percentage of rebranded institutions signifies the relative influence the phenomenon exerts within a state or territory. As reported in Table 1.3, West Virginia ranked first nationally with 56.25% of all its regionally accredited institutions experiencing a transformation.

Table 1.3  
*Top 10 Institutional Rebranded States 1996-2005 Ranked by Percentage*

Rank	State	Percentage Rebranded	2000 Population
1	West Virginia	56.25%	1,808,344
2	Kentucky	49.15%	4,041,769
3	Georgia	42.86%	8,186,453
4	Minnesota	39.29%	4,919,479
5	New Hampshire	32.00%	1,235,786
6	Connecticut	31.71%	3,405,565
7	Montana	28.57%	902,195
8	Missouri	28.21%	5,595,211
9	Oregon	25.58%	3,421,399
10	Maryland	25.45%	5,296,486

Proportionately, WV experienced more institutional rebranding than any other U.S. state or territory. These rebrandings, as occurred elsewhere, had a number of variations. Nonetheless, one type of modification emerged as the most common – the rebranding of a college to a university.

Koku (1997) identified 300 institutions that changed names during the years 1979 to 1988. To narrow his focus to institutions that had strategic name changes, Koku eliminated two-year schools, medical and pharmacy schools, merged institutions, and institutions that changed names in order to honor individuals. Of the 140 remaining

institutions, he compared enrollment data five years prior to the name change and five years after the name change. Unfortunately, Koku only provided a partial list of the schools within his study. While Koku looked at all types of strategic name changes, a significant number (32) of the 45 colleges and schools identified as institutes became universities. Additionally, Koku acknowledged two universities that dropped that designation in favor the name “college.”

From 1990 to 1997, Morphew (2000) identified over 120 colleges that became universities. In 2001, Morphew, Toma and Hedstrom estimated 125 college-to-university transformations for the decade of the 1990s. In Spencer’s (2005) study of institutional name changes from 1992-2001, he included 85 institutions that simply replaced the name “college” with “university” as part of a larger group of 130 schools categorized as experiencing superficial changes. He omitted this category from his overall population of schools; focusing instead upon institutions that completely changed their identities. Of the 134 institutions identified as such, several added “university” as part of the name change implementation. Spencer’s sample of 48 schools included 23 former colleges that became universities in the process.

In reviewing data from the *HEP Higher Education Directories* for 1996 through 2005, 151 institutions transitioned to university status. Eight West Virginia schools experienced this type of rebranding during the 10-year period. Concord College, Fairmont State College, Ohio Valley College, Shepherd College, West Virginia State College, and Wheeling Jesuit College all replaced “college” with “university” in their institutional names. In addition, West Virginia Institute of Technology became a regional campus of West Virginia University and added the WVU brand (and hence the word

“university”) as part its designation in 1996. WVUIT changed mission in 1997 to reflect its status in the University of West Virginia system. When The College of West Virginia completely rebranded in 2001, it did so as Mountain State University. By 2005, 12 four-year schools in the state had “university” in their names; three additional two-year schools included the WVU name as regional campuses of the flagship university. With the addition of eight new university named schools during 1996-2005, West Virginia numerically ranked fourth in the U.S. with colleges transitioning to university identification as depicted in Table 1.4.

Table 1.4

*Top 10 University Rebranded States 1996-2005 Ranked by Number*

Rank	State	Number of University Rebranded Schools	Total Number of Regionally Accredited Schools	2000 Population
1	Georgia	16	77	8,186,453
2	Missouri	13	78	5,595,211
3	California	12	280	33,871,648
<b>4</b>	<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1,808,344</b>
5	Ohio	8	109	11,353,140
6	Michigan	7	84	9,938,444
7	Kentucky	6	59	4,041,769
8	Pennsylvania	6	134	12,281,054
9	Illinois	6	153	12,419,293
10	Oklahoma	5	39	3,450,654

Of the states experiencing high numbers of college-to-university rebranding, Georgia, with the largest number at 16, experienced a majority of these changes simultaneously. The largest number of these occurred with a single decision by the state governance board. At its July 1996 meeting, the Georgia Board of Regents reaffirmed name changes approved for several institutions during the previous month and redefined terminology by adopting the following: “All institutions with both a baccalaureate and a master's degree mission will be called ‘state universities.’” This single act approved 13

institutions to become universities; however, additional funding was not commensurate with the change in status. Furthermore, the Regents were explicit that the change in nomenclature did not signal alterations in institution missions nor was it tacit approval of the addition of academic programs. The Regents also limited the establishment of PhD programs to the state's research universities (Georgia Board of Regents, 1996).

While Georgia's legislation was exclusive to state operated institutions, other states such as New Jersey required both public and private institutions to follow strict guidelines to qualify to wear the name university. With a policy enacted in 1993, The New Jersey Commission on Higher Education required that an "institution must meet national standards for inclusion as a master's level college or university" in the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education "and demonstrate that it has met New Jersey's eligibility criteria for at least five years" (Hammond-Paludan, 1998, ¶ 6). These criteria included the following:

1. a broad range of baccalaureate degree programs as well as graduate studies leading to masters' degrees in at least three areas;
2. graduate students who demonstrated superior achievement at the undergraduate level;
3. faculty whose competence is known beyond the institution; and
4. resources to support graduate education, including laboratory facilities, library support, and financial support for graduate student and faculty research (Hammond-Paludan, 1998, ¶ 7).

Likewise, West Virginia enacted policy changes providing colleges the opportunity to rebrand as universities. Resembling a compromise of the requirements outlined by Georgia and New Jersey, the HEPC would allow West Virginia state colleges



to apply for university status – a designation previously limited to two institutions, WVU and Marshall, and their related campus locations.

For nearly 100 years, West Virginia University (WVU) was the only institution in the state with a university designation. Formed in 1867 as the Agricultural College of West Virginia, the legislature approved the WVU name in 1868 (Howe, 1999). Although predating WVU's founding by three decades, Marshall College in Huntington did not offer graduate degrees until 1938; the university name would come later. According to Casto (2005, p. 8), "Marshall gained university status in 1961, ushering in a period of undreamed expansion."

With advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, other WV state college administrators also dreamed of expansion as universities and petitioned for the opportunity to change status. At its regular meeting on February 15, 2002, the WV Higher Education Policy Commission expanded the opportunity for state colleges to become universities by approving the "Criteria for Designation of University Status." While the criteria appear lax by New Jersey's standards, the rules require institutions to meet certain conditions beyond just the offering of a graduate program. These criteria, which apply only to state controlled institutions, are as follows:

1. offer at least one master's level program;
2. have an approved mission statement which provides for the offering of graduate programs;
3. obtain approval of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association to offer any master's degree program;
4. have faculty, excluding community and technical college faculty, in which at least two-thirds of tenured and tenured track faculty hold the terminal degree, typically the doctorate.

The WV Legislature passed Senate Bill 448 on March 13, 2004. This bill authorized Concord, Fairmont State, Shepherd, and West Virginia State to become universities. Although SB 448 had passed both legislative houses, it was not yet enacted into law. On March 15, HEPC Chancellor J. Michael Mullen recommended to the four colleges' presidents to be patient concerning the legislation. He advised, "An institution's name will not determine status as a university . . . Institutional name changes require legislative approval and are a prerogative of the legislature." Furthermore, Mullen recommended that an institution not use the university nomenclature until "it attains university status."

Governor Bob Wise signed SB 448 (2004) into law on March 21 and the subsequent changes to the West Virginia State Code occurred April 12, 2004. The institutional changes nearly doubled the number of colleges that became universities since 1996 and, as indicated by Table 1.5, West Virginia ranks first in the percentage of college-to-university transformations during the period.

Table 1.5  
*Top 10 University Rebranded States 1996-2005 Ranked by Percentage*

Rank	State	Percentage of University Rebranded Schools	2000 Population
1	West Virginia	25.00%	1,808,344
2	Georgia	20.78%	8,186,453
3	Idaho	20.00%	1,293,953
4	Missouri	16.67%	5,595,211
5	Oklahoma	12.82%	3,450,654
6	New Jersey	10.64%	8,414,350
7	Kentucky	10.17%	4,041,769
8	Oregon	9.30%	3,421,399
9	New Hampshire	8.00%	1,235,786
10	Ohio	7.34%	11,353,140

## Statement of the Problem

From 1996 through 2005, West Virginia experienced the highest percentage of institutional rebranding in the 59 states and territories identified by the *HEP Higher Education Directory* as comprising or administratively tied to the United States. During this 10-year period, 56.25% of West Virginia's regionally accredited institutions experienced at least one identity change. West Virginia far exceeded the national average of 17.46% for similar institutional changes. In addition to the overall rebranding percentage, West Virginia ranked first nationally with the highest percentage of college-to-university conversions. One quarter of West Virginia's regionally accredited schools adopted the university name. The national average of similar conversions is 4.87% for 1996-2005.

In addition to ranking first with the proportion of rebrandings, West Virginia also ranked within the top 10 numerically of those states and territories experiencing name changes. Additionally, West Virginia had the fourth largest number of college-to-university conversions. With the greatest proportion and a large number of institutional rebranding in general and the greatest proportion and a large number of college-to-university transformations specifically, this phenomenon warrants further study.

## **Background and Literature Review**

Rebranding strategies are not isolated to West Virginia. Koku (1997), Morpew (2000), and Spencer (2005) suggested that such institutional changes are, in fact, representative of trends generally occurring in the field of higher education. Morpew's (2000) analysis of 105 colleges that became universities suggested that less selective institutions were more likely to change names. In addition, institutional resources acted as a negative predictor if an institution were to change name and/or status. It is perceived that by changing one's name, and hence one's status, there are positive comparisons with successful larger research institutions; therefore, the institution in question becomes more attractive to prospective students and will gain additional resources in the process (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983).

Koku (1997), however, saw no significant changes in enrollment five years after a strategic name implementation. Furthermore, he cautioned administrators when planning such changes as these did not always prove successful. Such was case when Ohio's Jefferson Technical College transformed into Jefferson Community College. Although Taccone (1999) reported higher graduation rates following the change in mission and name, Jefferson Community College experienced a consistent decrease in overall student enrollment.

### ***Reasons for Rebranding***

Institutional name changes occur for a variety of reasons. Spencer (2005) identified six categories of rebranding: (a) to honor benefactors; (b) to remove inappropriate words; (c) to increase enrollment; (d) to increase prestige; (e) to accurately

describe purpose; and (f) to achieve independence. Similar to Spencer, Koku (1997) noted the following rebranding motives: (a) widening the school's appeal; (b) counteracting spiraling enrollments; (c) honoring a philanthropist; (d) indicating a merger of institutions; and (e) eliminating categorization as a regional institution. Morphew (2000) hypothesized the following as reasons for rebranding: (a) to adapt to new higher education markets; (b) to become more like mainstream institutions; (c) to match its current or proposed institutional mission; (d) to send a message of legitimacy; (e) to increase prestige; (f) to increase tangible resources; and (g) to reflect that organizational changes have occurred or are forthcoming.

While many of the categories listed by Spencer (2005), Koku (1997), and Morphew (2001) overlap, it is difficult to identify a single purpose for individual institutional name changes because more than one reason for the change may exist; therefore, a single identifiable rationale may be difficult to ascertain. Perry (2003) listed several factors influencing Trenton State University's decision to rebrand. The reasons included the following: the college was not located in Trenton; the City of Trenton had a negative image; it shared a common name with two undesirable entities – Trenton State Prison and Trenton State Psychiatric Hospital; and the limiting moniker “state college.” Multifaceted criteria can be further illustrated by the phenomenon of double-directionally named institutions (southwest, northeast, etc.) seeking to drop this identifier to relinquish the perception of a regionally limiting identity. This is similar or identical to Spencer's (2005) category of the elimination of a regional perception; however, this may have been only one of the stated reasons.

The underlying reasons for the double-directional name changes indicate that motivations are often complex and difficult to pigeonhole into one distinct category. The University of Southwestern Louisiana and Northeast Missouri State University changed identities to the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and Truman State University respectively to avoid confusion with other institutions. An association with lower status community colleges, which utilize this naming convention in greater numbers, often stigmatize double-directionally named four-year schools. The double-directional name also geographically stereotyped institutions as capable of serving only a regional population; the name created the perception that the university was less than adequate and was unable to serve an entire state unlike a flagship institution (Morphew, Toma, & Hedstrom, 2001; Tisdell, 2003).

Similar name changes occurred at other institutions. Northeast Louisiana University evolved to become the University of Louisiana at Monroe and shed the regional descriptor (Tisdell, 2003). Southwest Missouri State University petitioned the Missouri legislature six times to become Missouri State University because, as President John Keiser stated, the name “describes what we are now, not what we want to be” (“About Missouri State,” 2006; Kumar, 2005). The motivation for Southwest Texas State University’s change to Texas State University-San Marcos is varied and complicated. According to Texas Senator Jeff Wentworth, the Southwest Texas State name change was necessary because of the following reasons: the “name implies a regionalism that is detrimental,” “11 colleges in Texas had ‘southwest’ in their names,” and the university “is not even located in southwest Texas” (Stutz, 2003; “Texas State,” n.d.).

Double-directional rebranding is not limited to public institutions. Southwestern at Memphis, a Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. school, rebranded to improve its national reputation. According to Morrison (2000) and Carter (Karpovich, 2002), the “Rhodes” brand has a distinctive sound, and it suggests a connection to Cecil Rhodes and his prestigious scholarship program. Despite this perception, the institution selected the name “Rhodes” to honor its former president Peyton Nalle Rhodes. A Southwestern employee for 58 years, Peyton N. Rhodes joined the physics faculty in 1926, governed as president from 1949 to 1965, and continued to serve the institution until his death in 1984 – the year of the name change (“Rhodes College Catalog,” 2002). While no legitimate connection existed between the Memphis institution and the Oxford scholarship program, seven Southwestern at Memphis/Rhodes College alumni have been honored as Rhodes Scholars (“Rhodes Student,” 2003).

In 2000, the Rhodes brand was compromised when Corinthian Colleges changed names of three for-profit institutions in Arizona, California, and Missouri to Rhodes College. To protect its identity, Rhodes College (of Memphis) filed a trademark infringement suit against Corinthian because it “caused actual confusion among the public as to the affiliation, connection or association . . . of defendants’ services with plaintiff’s” (Dries, 2001). In an apparent agreement, Corinthian retained the name Rhodes College, Inc. (RCI) for its wholly owned subsidiary established in 1996, however, RCI renamed the individual campus locations as branches of Everest College (Corinthian Colleges, 2006; Dries, 2001). Ironically, the same month Corinthian Colleges named the first of its campuses as Rhodes College, the State of Tennessee adopted a brand similar to

Southwestern for a newly created community college in Memphis – Southwest Tennessee Community College (2000).

In each double-directional example, a complete institutional transformation resolved institutional identity problems. Such measures have become typical since 1980. Gumport et al. (1997b) signaled that institutions adapted to the change in the higher education landscape after 1980 as a coping mechanism. Gumport et al. identified three educational eras in the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: massification – 1945 to 1974, a period of expansive growth in institutions and enrollment; maturation – 1975 to 1988, a period of continued but slower growth; and post-massification – 1989 to the present, a period of great change. They identify the specific trends of the post-massification era as the following: (a) the student's view a college education as a right rather than as a rite of passage; (b) the flattening of student enrollments; (c) the increase of non-traditionally aged students; (d) the increase of tuition; (e) competitive institutional discounting; (f) the "for profit" invasion into the higher education sector; (g) increased distance educational offerings; (h) a switch to a more vocationally based educational model; and (i) the diminishing of governmental support (Gumport et al., 1997b, pp. 24-33). Any of these trends might lead an institution to consider a name change and all of the trends began occurring more frequently during the 1980s. Appendix E provides a graphical representation of the enrollment trends of the primary institutions in this study.

One area of concern for traditional institutions of higher learning is the expansion of proprietary or for profit colleges and universities. Northern Virginia Community College commissioned a study in 2005 to determine the factors that attributed to their stagnating enrollment numbers despite an increase in overall local population and an



increase in the number of local high school graduates. Gabriel et al. (2005) surmised that much of their institution's flattening of enrollment was the result of the growth of local proprietary schools. Three nearby proprietary campuses (Strayer University, University of Phoenix, and ITT Technical Institute) experienced an average 92.3% growth in enrollment from 1999 to 2003. Northern Virginia Community College had a 1.1% enrollment increase during the same period.

Gabriel, Chang, Dennett, Henderson, and Resch (2005) attributed proprietary institutional success as based on the schools' providing the following: (a) accelerated degree programs; (b) career centered programs; (c) individualized student attention; (d) scheduling and location convenience; (e) flexible admission standards; (f) counseling and job placement; (g) high job placement rates; (h) an appeal to minority students; and (j) high degree attainment success (pp. 13-15). In addition to the local proprietary campuses that were analyzed, additional students may be enrolled in accredited, online programs based outside the area or state. Having reviewed the marketing strategies of their competition, Gabriel et al. (2005) concluded that innovative techniques used by proprietary institutions have been successful in attracting students. These schools employed extensive Internet advertising, offered free online classes, and concentrated on their branding.

In addition to a growth in proprietary institutions in the post-massification era there has been an increase in the number of institutions that have folded. From 1997 to 2002, Zhao (2002) reported that 27 of the nation's 1600 private institutions have suspended operations, an increase of 35% from the previous five-year period. Increased competition for students has prompted institutions to be more innovative in their quest to

remain viable. Toma and Morphew (2001) add, “What has evolved . . . is a newer kind of higher education environment where traditional student numbers are down, and institutions are engaged in a constant search of ways to attract students to their campuses and degree programs” (p. 6).

### ***Colleges to Universities***

One such change during the post-massification period, as noted by Koku (1997), Morphew (2000), and Spencer (2005), is the rebranding of colleges as universities. Toma and Morphew (2001) recognized that the term “university” has a greater appeal to international students. In addition, two-year schools have discontinued words such as “community” or “junior” in order to minimize their limitation of scope. Unaccredited institutions also utilize the word “college.” Judson College in Illinois has considered the transformation to a university. In regard to a potential name change Provost Dale H. Simmons (2006, ¶ 1-3) explained Judson’s reasoning:

In our area, the community colleges are changing or have changed their names by dropping the word "Community" from their name. Thus, we have Harper College and College of DuPage. Our local Community College has also launched what it is calling the Fox Valley University and Business Center with more emphasis on the first three words than the last three in that title. To add to the confusion, an unaccredited Bible College with extremely narrow theology and course offerings has established itself in an old hotel on the edge of our campus . . . . Add to this the fact that we have a very strong Adult program, which tends to be advertised much more aggressively and differently than the traditional programs, and you can

understand why we are fighting on several fronts to make our identity clearer. Simply stressing that we are a College does little to nothing to help to distinguish our scope and mission from a Bible College, or two-year college, or even a degree completion program. Thus, moving to the University label seems to make more sense in our specific case.

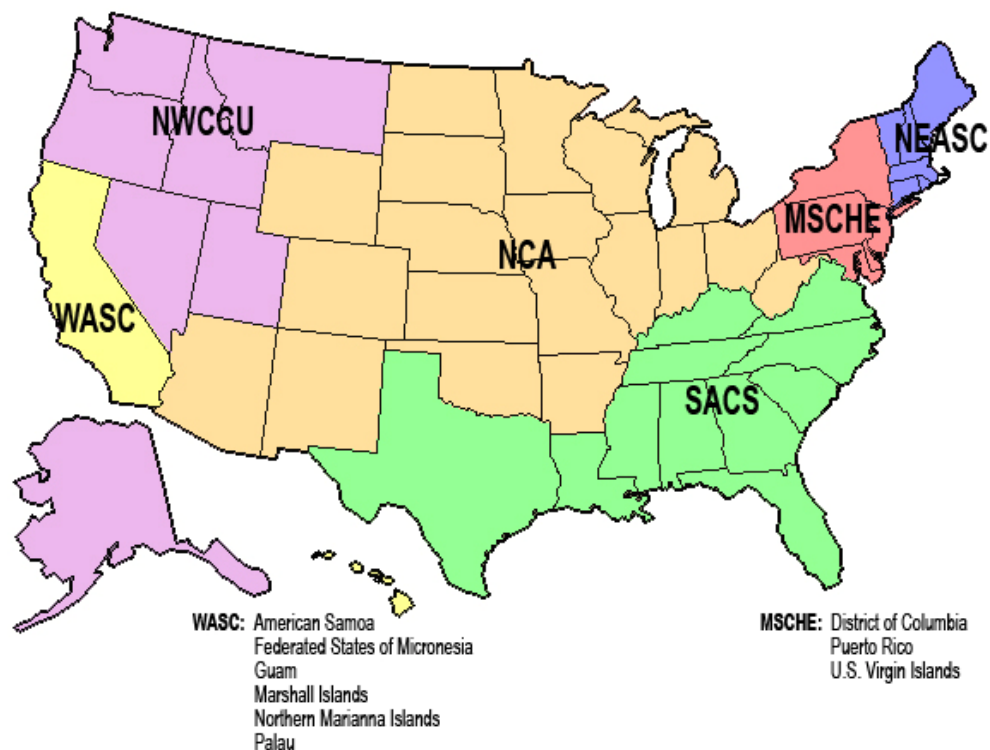
In addition to being confused with two-year and unaccredited institutions, the term “college” overseas may be synonymous to “high school” (Koku, 1997). The distinction of the name “university” has aided Bethel University both at home and abroad. While enrollment has increased at the Minnesota based institution, Barnes (2006) credited the change as greatly influencing the school’s international programs. Marian College’s Sheryl K. Ayala (2006b, ¶ 1) added, “Our biggest competition is colleges like ours in the state that are becomming [sic] universities and are garnering the international market, and institutions with graduate programs similar to ours that are universities and, therefore, have a perceived credibility factor.”

While a certain amount of prestige is associated with the term “university,” defining the word may prove difficult. Fincher (1999) provided an explanation of the characteristics of university education: “a distinctive pattern of instruction, research, and public service through general, graduate, and professional programs” (p. 2). Larie (2004) traced the current university model, a postmodern university, as evolving from the historic medieval university and consisting of “academicism, information and knowledge acquisition, production, and dissemination” (p. 47).

Although many colleges seek to become universities, some states have no official definition of the term “university.” In most cases, colleges do not have any distinct

guidelines to meet in order to become universities; however, there is a consensus that universities usually offer graduate and/or professional degree programs (Fincher, 1999; Koku, 1997; Morpew, 2000). Of the six regional accrediting bodies (see Figure 1.2), only two offer official definitions. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), which accredits institutions in California, Hawaii, and the Pacific Ocean territories, specifies that a university is “An institution with numerous graduate degree programs and adequate resources to support them . . .” (WASC, 2001, p. 123). While WASC provides a definition of “university,” assistant director for research and substantive change, Christie Jones, stated, “WASC does not have a requirement for changing the name of an institution from a college to a university” (personal communication, April 7, 2006).

Figure 1.2  
*Regional Accrediting Bodies*



The Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU, 2003) more specifically defines “university” as “A large, multi-purpose institution with extensive graduate degree offerings, library, and other resources, and/or several schools with graduate offerings” (p. 174). Dr. Albert E. Johnson, Jr.; NWCCU vice president, stated that “changing institutional names is an area largely ungoverned by regional accreditation; while there is a working definition for the word ‘university,’ the NWCCU does not intrude into the workings of a college.” Johnson explained, “We are interested in an institution’s mission and its goals. If a less than qualified institution calls itself a university, we may question it; however, if a school does not meet its own standard, a day of reckoning will eventually come” (personal communication, April 7, 2006).

Other accrediting bodies have similar policies to the NWCCU. Dr. Barbara Brittingham, director of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), explained “Our commission reviews substantive changes, but a simple name change would not trigger that; the exception being if the name change appeared to be deeply misleading” (personal communication, April 7, 2006). The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools’ (SACS) Resource Manual for the Principles of Accreditation advised, “Integrity, essential to the purpose of higher education, functions as the basic contract defining the relationship between the Commission and each of its member institutions. It is a relationship in which all parties agree to deal honestly and openly with their constituencies and one another” (2005, p. 1). Dr. Ralph Russell, SACS’ director of institutional support, added, “If a name were suggested by an institution that was misleading or obviously inaccurate, we would ask for additional information/justification

to be reassured that the institution is dealing ‘honestly and openly with their constituencies’” (personal communication, April 11, 2006). SACS has no “definition of the term ‘university’” and “There are no requirements to be met by an institution desiring to begin using the name ‘university’” (Ralph Russell, personal communication, April 11, 2006).

Similar to SACS, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) is not involved in the approval process for name changes. According to Margaret Robbins, MSCHE’s executive assistant to the executive director, “Middle States does not have any requirements for an institution to change its name [including from a college to a university], as long as the name is just that, a name change, not a change of ownership or sponsorship” (personal communication, April 10, 2006). Likewise, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) requires colleges becoming universities only to supply a letter with an effective date of the name change. According to NCA information management coordinator Lil Nakutis, “An internal name change does not need approval; a change in mission, however, requires a focused site visit . . . Normally, a change in name accompanies a change in mission and the mission change would require NCA approval.” Ms. Nakutis added that one NCA School, “Vincennes University in Indiana, although currently offering bachelor’s degrees, operated for many years as a two-year institution using the university name” (personal communication, April 7, 2006).

In some cases, a state may have stricter guidelines and is the agency that grants permission to change names to a university. Brittingham explains that the NEASC does not have “any particular requirements for an institution to call itself a university, though

some states in New England do” (personal communication, April 7, 2006). As stated previously, Georgia’s Board of Regents (1996) exerts influence over only public institutions and has specific guidelines for university status for state institutions. Likewise, California reserves public institutional usage of the terminology “university” only for the campuses of the California State University system, campuses of the University of California system, and the Hastings College of Law (California State Education Code §94110, n.d.). Joni Finney of the former state-operated California Higher Education Policy Center argued, “the name ‘university’ implies a certain level of research activity and scholarship” (Lively, 1997, p. A33). In addition, the state of California does not “regulate, subsidize, or intrude upon private education” (California State Education Code §66010, n.d.).

Other states; however, do “intrude” upon private education. As stated previously, New Jersey has strict guidelines for universities and enforces these for both public and private institutions (Hammond-Paludan, 1998). Likewise, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania requires public and private schools to comply with state code. Pennsylvania defines “university” as “A multiunit institution with a complex structure and diverse educational functions, including instruction, promotion of scholarship, preservation and discovery of knowledge, research and service. A university meets the following criteria:

- I. Consists of a minimum of three units.
  - A. The first unit provides for study of the arts and sciences at the undergraduate level.
  - B. The second unit provides advanced degree programs through the doctorate in the arts and sciences, with an adequate number of majors in the various disciplines.
  - C. The third unit provides a minimum of five professional programs at the graduate level.

- II. Has a broad cultural basis from which undergraduate and graduate units draw upon the arts and sciences for basic course whether or not these are an integral part of the programs provided in the unit.
- III. Provides access to cultural facilities and opportunities to the community and utilizes similar assets of the community.”  
 (“Definitions,” 1992, “University” section, ¶ 1).

Rosenthal (2003) noted that the Pennsylvania Department of Education estimated the entire application process for the private Philadelphia College of Pharmacy and Sciences to become the University of Sciences in Philadelphia would take less than a year. In reality, the process was a two-year ordeal.

West Virginia, while having criteria for state colleges desiring university status, does not exercise similar control over private institutions (HEPC, 2002). The NCA, the regional accrediting body for West Virginia institutions, has no compliance rules regarding a name change to university. For a private institution to change its name in West Virginia, it needs only to meet the following provisions in order to reserve and register a new name with the Secretary of State: (a) the name must be available, (b) it must not conflict with existing names, and (c) it must not violate any naming restrictions (“Business Organizations,” 2006). The process, at least for a private institution in West Virginia, is not intrusive; thus, making the transition to a university brand easier in West Virginia for private colleges than for private colleges in certain other states. Additionally, the lack of state imposed regulations provides West Virginia private colleges more freedom in becoming universities.



### ***Rebranding and Strategic Planning***

As noted, institutional metamorphoses occur for a variety of reasons. Effective institutional change, however, begins with planning and includes clear purpose statements, dialogue, faculty leadership, resource allocation, and incremental steps (Lozier & Covert, 1982). The optimum situation for brand modification, as Martorana and Kuhns (1975) have suggested, is for the institution to initiate the change and to include support from the administration, faculty, and students. This gathering of support takes time to acquire. Spencer's (2005) research indicated that name change strategic planning occurred over periods of not more than three years.

Other research, however, suggested that planning takes longer. Hauck (1998) researched the underlying factors involved in changing Grand Rapids Bible College to Cornerstone College and determined that the entire process extended across 15 years. Although an unusual example due to litigation, Tisdell (2003) indicated that the University of Louisiana at Lafayette took 16 years or more to implement a name change. Rosenthal (2003) tracked the University of the Sciences at Philadelphia's name change as being planned over a period of 20 years. The College of New Jersey's rebranding process was the result of 21 years of institutional realignment that eventually culminated in a new institutional identity (Perry, 2003). With the exception of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, external forces exerted only minimal influences on these institutions. On the other hand, changes deriving from legislative driven public policy allow the institution little control or input into a proposed transformation (Morphew, 2000; Newcombe & Conrad, 1981). Such externally directed change may still be effective; however, it may

only occur because of the motivation produced by the mandated initiative (Borland, 1980; Newcombe & Conrad, 1981).

***The nature of the name.*** Educational administrators often fail to address fully the core marketing issue of creating an institutional brand (Venable, 2001). Branding can be achieved without a complete metamorphosis, and may be developed via recruitment efforts, a competitive pricing structure, and an emphasis on programmatic quality (Lawlor, 1998; Rosen, Curren, & Greenlee, 1998; Venable, 2001). Perceiving a need to reinvent an institution, administrators enter into transformational activities with the impression that the change will reap the positive results of attracting and retaining students. Since administrators view students as precious commodities, the transformation produces the result of increased competition in the higher educational arena (Dill, 1997; Gumpert, 1997a).

In the case of rebranding, not all institutional change can be viewed as being equal, as branding alterations can be classified as either minor or major. Since little research is available regarding higher education institutional change, it is helpful to examine similar strategies in realm of business and industry. Rau, Patel, Osobov, Khorana, and Cooper (2003) examined businesses that altered their names following the Internet crash of 2000 and subsequent stock prices of these firms. They broadly termed the name changes in two categories: major and minor. According to this definition, West Virginia has experienced both types of modification.

Rau et al. (2003) viewed a minor change as either the addition or deletion of .com to a business name – slightly altering an existing brand. A minor change is comparable to Spencer's (2005) categorization of a superficial higher education name change. A major

change constituted a completely new name unrelated to the former. Major changes would encompass a complete rebranding (e.g., The College of West Virginia to Mountain State University). A minor change in higher education may be simply the replacing of “college” with “university,” as in the case of Concord College transition to Concord University, an adjustment of the previous brand name. Minor changes do not always require major retooling of the institution’s identity.

In the case of the four colleges that became universities under SB 448 (2004), it was necessary for two of the institutions to adjust their Internet domain names (Fairmont changed from fscwv.edu to fairmontstate.edu and West Virginia State moved from wvsc.edu to wvstateu.edu). The Web presence of both Concord (concord.edu) and Shepherd (shepherd.edu) were generic enough not to be affected by the change from a college to a university (Burke, 2003; 2004; 2005). Rau et al. (2003) demonstrated financial gains from businesses experiencing even minor name modifications; however, businesses initiating major changes exhibited significantly greater returns on investment. These findings were consistent with Horsky and Swyngedouw’s (1987) conclusions that a business’ rebranding strategies positively affect a firm’s stock prices. The positive financial outcomes resulted because the changes created a perception that the new identities are associated with increased profit and improved business performance.

Robert A. Sevier (1994) senior vice president of Stamats, a higher educational consulting firm, suggests that a strong institutional image will result in an increase in student enrollment. While Brooks’ (1978) study of factors that influenced high achieving high school graduates’ selection of a specific institution did not specifically address institutional branding, he considered an institution’s image an important variable that

influence students in their decision. Therefore, students have become consumers. Even Ivy League Yale University now refers to its student body as its customers (Budiansky, 2006).

During the post-massification era, colleges and universities have utilized traditional business strategies and have hired consultants to aid in their specific institutional market position. Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley reported that “Like businesses, colleges and universities must work hard and smart to build themselves as brands. They must associate who they are and what they do with what people perceive to be positive and thus are interested in supporting” (2005, pp. 27-28). Koku added, “Similar to the steps taken by business organizations, colleges and universities attempt to convince their stakeholders that viable steps have been taken to address their concerns, meet the changing needs as well as the new challenges in the environment by sending credible and observable signals as changing their name or logo” (1996, pp. 55-56). Sevier (2002a) equated building a strong institutional brand to similar strategic planning and its results as found in the private business sector. Much of the recent higher education marketing and branding studies have referenced Sevier’s books and articles.

In addition to Sevier’s works, nearly all of the studies that focused on institutional rebranding have utilized marketing literature geared for business organizations. Of these references, two authors were cited frequently: Dr. Phillip Kotler, professor of marketing at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Management; and Dr. David A. Aaker, professor of marketing from the University of California at Berkley’s Haas School of Business. In addition to their faculty assignments, both Aaker and Kotler operate marketing consultancy firms. While both have contributed scores of books and articles,

Kotler (1982 & 1984) has addressed numerous core-marketing principles including branding, while Aaker's (1996 & 1999) writings have focused primarily on creating and managing brands.

In *Strategic Marketing for Educational Institutions*, Kotler and Fox (1985) defined branding as "The products and services of an educational institution can be branded—that is, given a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or some combination, that identifies them with institution and differentiates them from competitor's offerings" (p. 225). In addition, Kotler (1982) advised, "The power of a brand name should never be underestimated" (p. 295). A brand in itself cannot be successful, as Aaker (1996) surmised, without the creation of "brand equity."

Aaker (1996) described "brand equity" as "a set of assets (or liabilities) linked to a brand's name and symbol that adds to (or subtracts from) the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or that firm's customers" (pp. 7 & 8). He added that the "brand equity" asset set includes: "1. Brand name awareness; 2. Brand loyalty; 3. Perceived quality; [and] 4. Brand associations" (1996, p. 8).

According to Aaker (1996), brand awareness is how a consumer views and reacts to a specific brand. These reactions include familiarity, liking, and name recognition. Toma, Dubrow, and Hartey (2005) added that a school with a known brand has more success in recruiting students.

Brand loyalty is an important asset as it creates a perception of the value of a particular brand by consumers (Aaker, 1996). Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) declared that strong brand loyalty aids institutions in that it reduces overall marketing costs and builds a basis for fundraising among alumni.

In regard to perceived quality, Aaker (1996) emphasized its importance because “only perceived quality has been shown to drive financial performance” (p. 17). Many times, as Toma, Dubrow, and Hartely (2005) illustrated with Notre Dame, the school’s successful football program extended to the perceptions of academic quality even when the academic programs were not superior. When quality is present in established programs, colleges and universities have greater success when recruiting students into newer curricular areas.

Brand associations are any attributes based upon the individual brand’s identity and are “what the organization wants the brand to stand for in the customer’s mind” (Aaker, 1996, p. 25). Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) explained that “These associations give consumers a reason to purchase the product, create positive attitudes and feelings, and facilitate the extension of the brand into other areas” (p. 33).

By using signaling theory and cross-sectional analysis from the discipline of finance, Horsky and Swingedouw (1987) studied 58 businesses that changed names and concluded that there is an association between changing a firm’s name to positive financial performance. Rau et al. demonstrated similar results in 2003 regarding Internet based businesses. With the evident success in the business model for rebranding and the trend for colleges and universities to use business marketing models, the institution’s brand becomes one of its most important intangible assets and “its reputation is . . . conveyed by its name” (Tadelis, 1997, p. 2). Hence, an institution as Tadelis associated with business firms, “will be recognized by its name, which is uniquely associated with its characteristics and past performance” (p. 2). Therefore, the choice of the best possible

brand is important. As previously noted, Koku (1997), Morpew (2002), and Spencer (2005) listed a variety reasons that inaugurated changing an institution's identity.

***Influences of name choice and adoption.*** Who chooses what name and when should the change be implemented? At the College of New Jersey, the board of trustees emerged as the change agent (Perry, 2003). In some cases, as Rosenthal (2003) observed, senior administration controlled the implementation in its entirety. At the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, one president initiated the name change process by introducing new programs, reorganizing the institution, and applying for university status through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Board of Education. Building upon this foundation, his successor implemented the change of name. Morpew (2000) and Spencer (2005) noted that state legislators were often the change agent for institutional name change. Hartford (1976) observed, "State legislatures may have the power to create or eliminate state institutions of higher education or to create, modify, or disband governing boards for public higher education. In fact . . . the state legislature has the power to control virtually any facet of public higher education" (p. 2).

Besides the legislature, other bodies may have an impact upon the change. At the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, state agencies competed for the right to decide on the institution's name (Tisdell, 2003). While the Board of Trustees for State Colleges approved a name change from University of Southwest Louisiana to University of Louisiana (UL) in 1984, the state legislature and Louisiana State University, the flagship institution, fought the implementation. Although in operation under the UL moniker for one month, a Louisiana district court reversed permission for the name change; the appellate court upheld the lower court's ruling (Tisdell, 2003). While litigation was

pending, the institution issued each graduate two diplomas: one bearing the name and seal of University of Southwest Louisiana and another with the name and seal of University of Louisiana (Simoneaux, 1984). Sixteen years later, the legislature permitted the institutional change with the caveat of the addition of its location (Tisdell, 2003).

As with the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, other examples of litigation prompted by institutions exist. In 1996, Trenton State College changed its name to the College of New Jersey. Princeton University challenged the name in court because the College of New Jersey was the Ivy League school's original name, used until 1896. Settled without litigation, both schools agreed that references to the name "College of New Jersey" were not to cause confusion between the separate histories of both institutions (Perry, 2003; "Princeton Settles," 1996).

Disagreements between institutions about the same or similar names do not always end in litigation. Two Philadelphia institutions that selected the same brand nearly simultaneously illustrate that brand conflicts can be solved simply and amicably. After over a year in narrowing down a choice in names, the president the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy announced to the campus community the consultant's choice for the proposed new name. The president promised to recommend the name Philadelphia University to the board of trustees for final approval, seek permission from the State Board of Education, and begin rebranding efforts within the year (Rosenthal, 2003). Rosenthal also reported that president Gerbino also mentioned that the name was copyrighted. Unfortunately, the U.S. Copyright Office (2001) does not extend copyrights to names, titles, slogans, or short phrases. It is possible that new name appeared in a document, which was copyrighted, but the name itself could not be protected by



copyright. As word spread of the new name choice, an officer of the Philadelphia College of Textiles notified the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy that his school had already selected the name Philadelphia University and had received the requisite permission from the State Board of Education for its usage. Within six months, Philadelphia College of Pharmacy selected the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia as its name choice. Once the State Board of Education granted permission for the name, the institution properly protected their brand with a trademark (Rosenthal, 2003; U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, 2004).

***Implementation of the change.*** The success of rebranding efforts does not always relate to the purpose of the change or whether if the locus of the change agent is internal or external to the organization. Optimum success results when adequate planning occurs and the institution researches all considered names (Blake & Blake, 1991; Borland, 1980). Kaikati and Kaikati (2003) identified six rebranding strategies that businesses have employed individually or in tandem when planning such changes. These included the following: “(a) phase-in/phase-out strategy; (b) combined branding strategy via one umbrella brand; (c) translucent warning strategy; (d) sudden eradication strategy; (e) counter-takeover strategy; and (f) retrobranding strategy” (p. 20).

Phase-in/phase-out: according to Kaikati and Kaikati (2003), the phase-in/phase-out strategy has “the new brand tied in some way to the existing brand for a specific introductory period. After the transition period, the old brand is gradually phased out.” Northeast Missouri State University began its rebranding process with a 1985 legislative mandate for a change in mission. Within seven years, Northeast had succeeded in

becoming Missouri's most selective state institution in regard to enrollments (Franey, 1997; Morphew, Toma, & Hedstrom, 2001).

While enrollment numbers decreased from 6000 to 5500 students, the university attracted top ranked students and a total student population from regions other than the northeast quadrant of Missouri. One quarter of the institution's undergraduate population were from outside Missouri. With these enrollment changes, Northeast moved from its previously defined regional status (Cheney, 1996; Morphew, Toma, & Hedstrom, 2001).

In addition, the institution focused its programmatic offerings that negatively influenced the quantity of students while increasing the quality of student applicants. Northeast eliminated 94 undergraduate and 29 graduate programs to focus upon high quality programs in science and the liberal arts (Morphew, Toma, & Hedstrom, 2001). Beginning in 1993, Northeast Missouri State began the process of choosing a new name. This process included the formation of a committee that pursued the idea of an identity change. In addition, the school hired a consultant, conducted focus group meetings across Missouri, and surveyed 20 thousand stakeholders regarding a name choice (Thomson, 1996).

In 1995, Missouri Governor Mel Carnahan signed the legislation approving the name change to Truman State University that occurred on July 1, 1996. President W. Jackson Magruder explained, "the law put off the effective date for a year, giving the university a chance to get accustomed and to accustom others to the change" (Thomson, 1996, p. 1A). For the year prior to the official change, Northeast Missouri State marketed the institution as "soon to be Truman State University" and Truman State positioned itself

as “formerly Northeast Missouri State University” for one year following the name change (Thomson, 1996, p. 1A).

Even prior to the name change, the institution had strengthened its focus and subsequently increased the school’s visibility on a national level. *Money* magazine consistently ranked the institution high in its “Best College Buys.” In 1992, Northeast Missouri State entered *Money*’s rankings at 16. During the next several years, the school advanced to the top ten: 1993 – eighth; 1994 – fifth; 1995 – third; 1996 – fourth; and 1997 – eighth (Cheney, 1996; Hiscocks, 1996; Thomson, 1995a & 1996; Topolnicki, 1997). In 1999, *U.S. News & World Reports* named Truman State as the number one regional university in the Midwest (“The Top Regional Public Schools,” 1999). According to *Money* magazine, Truman State’s advantage is its size because “faculty members . . . are more apt to reach out to students than are professors at huge state universities” (Topolnicki, 1997, p. 100). Thomson (1995a) also identified schools in 11 states that have modeled the university’s highly selective criteria. In addition to rebranding the name, Truman State University reinvented itself and reaped the benefits.

Combined branding: the combined branding strategy “combines existing brands in some manner” and may include “umbrella branding” (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2003, p. 21). Numerous examples of combined branded institutions exist due to mergers. When Western Reserve University merged with Case Institute of Technology in 1967, the federation of these two geographically adjacent schools produced the combined brand of Case Western Reserve University (“Visiting Case,” 2004). While the official institutional name had not changed, the school branded itself solely as Case because its image “consultant concluded all great universities have single-word names” (Budiansky, 2006,

p. A19). Umbrella branding is illustrated in the numerous statewide higher educational systems created since the 1950s. Some of the more notable umbrella brands include the State University of New York (SUNY), the University of California, and the California State University systems of institutions (Brenner, 2003).

Translucent warning: the translucent warning strategy “relies on alerting customers before and after the actual brand name change . . . [and] is usually accomplished through intensive promotion” (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2003, p. 21). Due to increasing problems surrounding the name Beaver College, the suburban Philadelphia institution surveyed 6,638 stakeholders regarding a change of its name – most believed that a change was necessary. According to president Bette Landman, “The word ‘beaver’ too often elicits ridicule in the form of derogatory remarks pertaining to the rodent, the TV show *Leave it to Beaver*, and the vulgar reference to the female anatomy” (Romano, 2000, p. B9). In addition, Internet filtering software blocked access to the institutional website and had the potential to endanger student enrollment numbers (O’Neill, 2002). While the name Arcadia University was one of six contenders presented to focus groups, the school’s trustees voted 23 to 1 in favor of new name in November 2000. Following the late night session, President Landman rounded up students at midnight to announce the new name, which would be effected in July 2001 (Todt, 2000). While often maligned by late night talk host and shock radio jocks, Beaver/Arcadia capitalized on the additional publicity it garnered during the process. According to Landman, “Inadvertently, the fact that our own name was the butt of many jokes meant that people across the country and outside the country heard the fact that we were changing our name” (Kirp, 2003, p. 14).

Arcadia's 22 month media blitz before, during, and after the name change influenced the largest freshman enrollment in the school's history (O'Neill, 2002).

Sudden eradication: the sudden eradication strategy "involves dropping the old brand name almost overnight and immediately replacing it with the new name, with no transition period" (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2003, p. 21). According to Mountain State University executive vice president James G. Silosky (2003), Beckley College utilized this strategy when rebranding as The College of West Virginia.

Following the accreditation visit, Dr. Polk called us together and said that with the trustees' permission, he was going to change the name of Beckley College and we had been Beckley College since 1933. We went through some strategy sessions, and he went to the board and told them he wanted a particular name and he wanted to change it overnight. I remember some of the nervousness of the staff at such a sudden change, but on a Sunday afternoon in September 1991, he directed us to replace the signs, mentioning that we would deal with the change shock the next day. Students and faculty arrived to find that they were [attending and] working for a new institution. Dr. Polk simply noted that everyone would get used to it and that we were not going to have dialogue about it and that would make it harder than it really was (Silosky, 2003).

Counter-takeover: Kaikati and Kaikati (2003) defined counter-takeover rebranding as when an acquired brand is preferred over the existing brand. The University of Maryland, College Park was an example of this strategy that fused the Maryland State College of Agriculture located in College Park with the University of

Maryland under the University of Maryland name. According to Brenner (2003), “The original University of Maryland was in Baltimore and housed the medical and technical departments. After the merger, the various departments became schools within the new institution at College Park” (p. 145). Nine years following the creation of the University System of Maryland in 1988, the school officially became University of Maryland, College Park (Brenner, 2003; University System of Maryland, 2005).

Retrobranding: Retrobranding occurs when an abandoned brand is reinstated (Kaikati and Kaikati, 2003). Like the University of Maryland, Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky experienced a counter-takeover branding strategy. In 1865, Transylvania University, the oldest institution west of the Allegheny Mountains, merged with Kentucky University in Harrodsburg. While the institutions consolidated in Lexington on Transylvania’s campus, the school retained the younger school’s brand of Kentucky University. That same year, Kentucky University (KU) added two colleges to the institution: the College of the Bible and the land-grant Agricultural and Mechanical College. With conflicts over a religious controlled school receiving governmental funding, the Commonwealth of Kentucky separated the Agricultural and Mechanical College from its parent in 1878. After a series of name changes, the new school (now the University of Kentucky) became the State University of Kentucky in 1908. With confusion created by the similar names, KU reverted to the Transylvania brand that it abandoned 43 years earlier (Owston, 1998).

As noted by Koku (1997), rebranding implementation strategies are not enough to ensure success as other factors must be present. Lewin (1947, 1957), a pioneer in organizational change theory, based successful transformations on the inclusion of three

steps: (a) a disruption of existing norms; (b) the strengthening of supportive factors and the weakening of opposing factors; and (c) a stabilization of institutional norms following the implementation of the purposed change. Blake and Blake (1991) emphasized that the institution both promote and protect the new brand following the selection process.

### ***Stakeholder Reactions to Institutional Rebranding***

***Existing and potential students.*** Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001), Cobb (2001), and Sevier (2002a) indicated that successful brands not only attract potential students, but they also serve to aid in retention. A successful brand will build enrollment and slow attrition. Toma, Dubrow, and Hartley (2005) explained that a strong brand is an integral part of a building an institutional culture that is attractive to students and donors. Administrators may view institutional name changes as a panacea to provide a more positive image for colleges and universities. Unfortunately, these changes may be neither warranted nor successful.

There is no guarantee that branding changes will provide the necessary student growth for an institution to remain solvent. The publicized financial difficulties plaguing two West Virginia institutions (WVUIT and SIU) indicate that rebranding alone was not significant enough to attract students (Keenan, 2006a; Salem, 2005). While administrators may perceive that rebranding activities are catalysts in gaining a larger student population, Koku (1997) concluded that, while some institutions experienced growth, such strategies had little or no effect upon enrollment at most institutions. Simply changing the name without a strategic plan may be an exercise in futility.

Pennsylvania's Seton Hill College became a "university" in 2002 and, while an enrollment increase occurred, the name change was not the only factor. According to Vice President for Academic Affairs, Mary Ann Gawelek (2006, ¶ 1), "the changes are related but not a direct correlation. We instituted a range of strategies at the same time." According to the institutional website, "The transition from college-to-university status is the culmination of more than a decade of embracing change, expansion, and growth. The change to university status reflects the continuous improvement in the quality, breadth, and depth of Seton Hill's academic program, expanded undergraduate programs of the highest quality, distinctive graduate and professional programs, and a commitment to national and international outreach" ("About SHU," "When and Why" section, ¶ 1).

Having upgraded from a college to a university in 2001, Michigan's Spring Arbor University made the change for "prestige, [its] growing graduate programs, [and to] have a leg up on competitors who still identify themselves as 'college'" (Overton-Adkins, 2006, ¶ 1). Betty J. Overton-Adkins, Vice President for Academic Affairs, added:

In the five years since the name change, enrollment has grown about 25%. However, I am not ready to associate this entirely with the change. I think it did benefit us in some ways. At least during the re-naming roll-out, there was lots of publicity and I got questions over and over again about the distinctions between a college and a university. People did notice. But[,] along with the name change, we have also been more aggressive in our marketing, new program development, and our tuition discounting.



We are intentionally growing, and I think the reasons for our growth are multifaceted (2006, ¶ 2).

**Faculty.** Lewis (1994) identified problems among faculty who were loyal to a former brand and had exhibited negative behavior and institutional distrust following the implementation of a new college name. Rosenthal's (2003) study of the rebranding of the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy to the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia suggested that faculty did not believe that administration involved faculty in a significant role in the overall transition process. While faculty generally approved of the new name, Rosenthal indicated that they doubted the institution had truly become a university.

In contrast, Trenton State College began changing its culture 20 years prior to rebranding as the College of New Jersey. Cultural changes included limiting enrollments, becoming more selective in admissions, revitalizing campus facilities, and hiring more qualified faculty. Although stakeholders generally disapproved of a rebranding to any name, the cultural changes permitted a smooth transition to a new brand identity (Perry, 2003). If rebranding occurs without a corresponding alteration of institutional culture, the changes are perceptually ineffective (Hall, 1997; Lewis, 1994; Sackmann, 1991).

**Alumni.** In addition to potential negative faculty reactions, Grant (1994) warned that name changes and mergers could have a disastrous effect upon alumni loyalty and financial support. Tisdell (2003) researched University of Southwest Louisiana alumni regarding the institution's rebranding as the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Alumni responses to the name change were strongly polarized with nearly equal numbers supporting the new name as those who disapproved of the change. Consequently, alumni contributors and contributions decreased the very year of the name change.

***The public at large.*** In addition to alumni dissatisfaction, Gumpert et al. (1997b) stated that a shift to graduate status might even be detrimental to the mission of small local colleges by contributing to a loss of focus and dissolution of an institution's overall mission. This is a concern for faculty and staff at Wisconsin's Marian College in its consideration of becoming a "university." Sheryl K. Ayala (2006a, ¶ 1), Vice President for Academic Affairs, reported, "our admissions people are concerned that their numbers will decline in the traditional undergraduate areas due to the fact that our reputation has been as a small caring college. They are afraid that the university status might scare people away who seek that small, close, caring environment." Administrators must weigh any change in affiliation, name, or status against a lack of positive outcomes.

These changes, as identified by Koku (1997), include the merging of institutions as an institutional rebranding tactic. Reed (1978) identified some negative results from merger of the private New College into the public University of South Florida (USF) system in July 1975. New College, known for its quality liberal arts programs, experienced increased bureaucracy that impeded new programmatic additions and prevented the specific marketing of its own programmatic mix. With its unique undergraduate mission hampered, the legislature allowed New College to separate from USF in 2001 to become an independent public institution (Selingo, 2001).

On the contrary, Misite (1994) analyzed the merger of two small private New England colleges. She concluded, with all of the inherent problems regarding the union of two schools, the merger-acquisition was successful in producing a much stronger institution in terms of student enrollment and income. While a number of West Virginia's smaller colleges have affiliated or merged with larger institutions, the public appears to

perceive the rebranding or merger activities as a benefit or a liability to the smaller institution on an individual basis.

When Southern West Virginia Community College emerged from the Logan and Williamson branch campuses of Marshall University in 1971, the local public perceived an opportunity for the institution to serve its constituent population more effectively (Burgraff, 1995). The 2006 fate of West Virginia University Institute of Technology, however, created widely polarized opinions ranging from support to hostile animosity from various stakeholder populations (Keenan, 2006a & 2006b; Porterfield, 2006).

### ***Implications Regarding West Virginia***

With the research suggesting that positive outcomes do not always result from an institutional change, a question arises as to why so much rebranding has occurred within West Virginia higher education during the last 30 years. Certain external factors may have warranted the amount of rebranding. Several dynamics that possibly influenced institutional change are demographic realignment, enrollment trends, over-saturation of higher educational institutions, regional poverty, and student persistence issues.

***Demographic realignment.*** While an association may or may not exist, West Virginia public and private higher education transformations also occurred during a period of demographic realignment in the state. According to the 1990 United States census, West Virginia suffered a significant population loss requiring elimination of a House of Representatives' seat and subsequent congressional redistricting. Although the 2000 census reported a slight (.08%) population gain, the demographic profile indicated that West Virginia has shifted to an older population base, with the median age having increased from 35.3 to 38.9.

In addition, the next generation of traditional age college students in the state has declined. From 1990 to 2000, the census reported an 11.49% loss in primary and secondary school students in West Virginia. It seems reasonable to suggest that a loss of constituent population may have been a factor in the amount and proportion of institutional change within West Virginia. The emerging trend of diminishing numbers of college bound students may have created the perception of having a negative impact upon budgets and income.

***Enrollment trends.*** During the massification period following World War II, Gumport et al. (1997b) explained the growth trends in higher education enrollment and an increase in campus facilities, faculty, and the number of institutions. The growth in higher education was attributed to a number of factors: the establishment of the G.I. Bill, the growth in family size (the “baby boom”), social and political changes in the U.S., and the expansion of federal financial aid. According to Brooks (1978), West Virginia’s public higher education experienced unprecedented growth from 1950 to 1970 and “every [state] institution in 1970 was drawing students from greater distances than in 1950” (p. 140). Brooks additionally credits the expansion of new highway systems in West Virginia as one of the many factors that contributed to enrollment growth. Institutional growth, however, did not occur at every school. Three West Virginia institutions closed during the massification period: Storer College, Greenbrier Military School, and Greenbrier College.

Storer College was rooted in the 1865 establishment of a Free Will Baptist mission school at Harper’s Ferry that provided education to African-Americans. In 1867, the West Virginia Legislature chartered the private school as Storer College, “an institution of

learning for the education of youth, without distinction of race or color” (Burke, 2004, p. 8). Ironically, the state’s first historically black college was forced to close due to advancements in the area civil rights. According to Burke (2004), the very legislation that created opportunities for African-Americans was responsible for the closing of Storer. Up until the enactment of *Brown vs. the Board of Education* (1954), Storer received special funding from the state of West Virginia for the education of its black citizenry (Burke, 2004). With civil rights’ advancements, the legislature ceased funding Storer because it was a private institution and, with the potential for African-Americans to enroll in any state institution, separate but equal facilities were no longer necessary.

Likewise, the civil rights movement also influenced the solvency of two Lewisburg institutions: Greenbrier Military School (GMS) and Greenbrier College. At the time of their demise in 1972, the schools shared the distinction of being the oldest educational institutions in the state having both descended from the Lewisburg Academy that was founded in 1812. Although in its final years it was only a preparatory school, GMS offered associate’s degrees under its junior college department from 1934 through 1966. In 1965, both GMS and Greenbrier College for Women refused to sign a statement of compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and therefore forfeited any further rights to federal funding (“Two Private Schools,” 1965).

Because of this, GMS ceased operations of its Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC). Upon August 1965 announcement, the school denied any connection with the compliance issue and the elimination of the ROTC program. GMS charged that the Army’s program had lost its value to students (“GMS Denies,” 1966; “GMS Official Denies,” 1965). Two months previous, however, the Army cited GMS’ unit as an Honor

Military ROTC Unit because it had attained “high standards of training and discipline during the [1964-65] school year” (“GMS Again Selected,” 1965, p. 8). Around the same time, GMS ceased operation as a junior college and only admitted high school and junior high school students (Rawl, 1972).

By May 1972, GMS closed and immediately transferred its property to the Greenbrier School of Osteopathic Medicine (“GMS to Become,” 1972). While officials denied that a lack of compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 contributed to the school’s demise, they also noted that eventually GMS acquiesced and integrated. The lack of funding and a diminished interest in military education at the time of the Vietnam War was cited as the primary cause for its closure (Rawl, 1972).

Figure 1.3

*The former Greenbrier Military School now WV School of Osteopathic Medicine*





Likewise, another school that ceased to exist during the massification period was Lewisburg's Greenbrier College, formerly known as the Greenbrier College for Women. As the case with its companion institution several blocks away, the school refused to comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and became ineligible for federal funding ("Two Private Schools," 1965). While a four-year institute, the Greenbrier College provided two years of college preparatory study and two years of college curricula. This continued until 1971 when Greenbrier College dropped its high school programs ("Greenbrier College Begins," 1971' "Greenbrier College for Women," n.d.).

Figure 1.4

*The former Greenbrier College now Greenbrier Valley Center of New River CTC.*



As with GMS, Greenbrier College traced its lineage to the coeducational Lewisburg Academy's founding in 1812. A separate school for young ladies was established as the Lewisburg Female Institute by the Virginia General Assembly in 1858

“for the purpose of educating young women”; however, it is uncertain if this iteration was operational prior to the Civil War. If so, the war forced its closure (“Greenbrier College for Women,” 2005). Through the efforts of concerned citizens, Lewisburg Female Institute was reestablished in 1875. Upon adding a college component, the school renamed as Lewisburg Seminary in 1908 and became Greenbrier College for Women in 1923 (“Greenbrier College Begins,” 1971)

In an effort to boost enrollment, the school became coeducational during fall 1971 and the name was shortened to Greenbrier College. Only four men, however, lived on campus (“Greenbrier College Begins,” 1971; “Greenbrier College Board,” 1972) during its only coeducational year. According to Brenner and Schneider (2004b), the school closed in June 1972 after a campus fire and never reopened; however, there is nothing to substantiate this claim. Within days of Greenbrier Military School’s announcement of closure, Greenbrier College followed suit citing low enrollments and hoped that another entity would assume its facilities. It does not appear that the school had ever integrated (“Greenbrier College Board,” 1972; Steele, 1972). Despite the closings of Greenbrier College, Greenbrier Military School, and Storer College, the massification period was a period of growth both in enrollment and in the number of institutions in West Virginia.

During the post-massification period (1989 – present), however, West Virginia institutions did not fare as well. An analysis of enrollment from 1996 to 2000 shows an aggregate growth of only 1,367 students for all regionally accredited institutions in West Virginia combined (see Appendix F). This minimal growth represents only a 1.60% gain in enrollment. Of the 25 regionally accredited institutions in 2000, only 11 experienced growth from their 1996 numbers. Those experiencing the largest enrollment growth were



Shepherd College (995), WVU (798), and Marshall (434). The schools with the largest proportional growth from 1996 to 2000 were Ohio Valley (28.03%), Shepherd (27.62%), and Appalachian Bible College (21.69%). The institutions experiencing the greatest losses were Southern West Virginia CTC (-633), Wheeling Jesuit University (-230), and Glenville State (-182). Proportionally, the greatest losses were recorded by SWVCTC (-20.44%), Salem-Teikyo University (-19.65%), and Davis and Elkins (-17.79%).

Fortunately, the trend reversed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; West Virginia experienced an aggregate gain of 14,713 students and a proportional growth of 16.79% from 2000 to 2005 (see Appendix G). Of the 32 tracked institutions, all but seven experienced growth. Since the former CTC component institutions were not reported as being institutionally distinct until 2005, a comparison of enrollment between 2001 and 2005 necessitated the consolidation of the CTC's enrollment numbers with its former parent. With this inclusion, the greatest gains in enrollment were at Fairmont (4,065), WVU (2,940), and Bluefield State (2,417). By proportion, Mountain State University (113.84%), Bluefield State (101.20%), and Fairmont State (61.78%) had the greatest percentage of growth. All three schools with the greatest losses also had the greatest proportion of loss; these were Glenville State (-481 / -21.28%), The University of Charleston (-233 / -19.19%), and WVU Institute of Technology (-229 / -8.83%).

Since a proportionate growth in population has not occurred, the reasons for the aggregate growth in enrollment are unknown (U.S. Census, 2005). Some possible explanations, however, could be emerging distance learning markets outside of West Virginia, an influx of out of state students, increased marketing efforts, the emergence of distinct community and technical colleges, rebranding activities, the PROMISE Scholarship

program influencing students to attend a WV school, or a combination of these factors or others.

A factor to consider is the competitive pricing structure of state supported institutions within West Virginia. In difficult economic times, a student may choose to remain in West Virginia rather than pay higher tuition elsewhere or decide to attend a West Virginia institution than paying higher residential rates in his or her home state. In factoring the national tuition averages, Sayre (2006) computed West Virginia's in-state four-year tuition rate as averaging \$4,152 – ranking the tenth lowest in the nation (see Appendix H).

Removing special program rates, West Virginia's average tuition cost at four-year institutions averages at \$3,057 which is the lower than Sayre's (2006) computed figures for the lowest tuition rates in the nation, (the District of Columbia) which averages at \$3,210 ("Student Fees," 2006). West Virginia's average two-year rate is even lower at \$2,481 ("Student Fees," 2006). Non resident tuition at West Virginia's four-year public institutions averages at \$8,007 and less expensive than the resident rates for the states of Illinois, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, and Vermont. In addition, the average two-year non resident rate for West Virginia schools is \$7,500, which is additionally lower than resident rates for four-year institutions in Massachusetts, Michigan, and South Carolina (see Appendix I) (Sayre, 2006; "Student Fees," 2006).

***Higher education over-saturation.*** When compared to surrounding states, West Virginia has more regionally accredited institutions per capita than its surrounding states. Table 1.6 compares the number of institutions to the general population and to traditional college aged students (18-24 years of age). The column identified as "accredited schools

2005” represents only regionally accredited colleges and universities listed for each of the six states as of 2005. It does not include institutions formerly having individual regional accreditation prior to 2005, institutions with only specialized accreditation, or institutions operating as foreign corporations with primary locations (and accreditation status identification) in another state (i.e., Argosy University, Corinthian Colleges, DeVry University, and University of Phoenix).

Table 1.6  
*Saturation of Higher Educational Institutions*

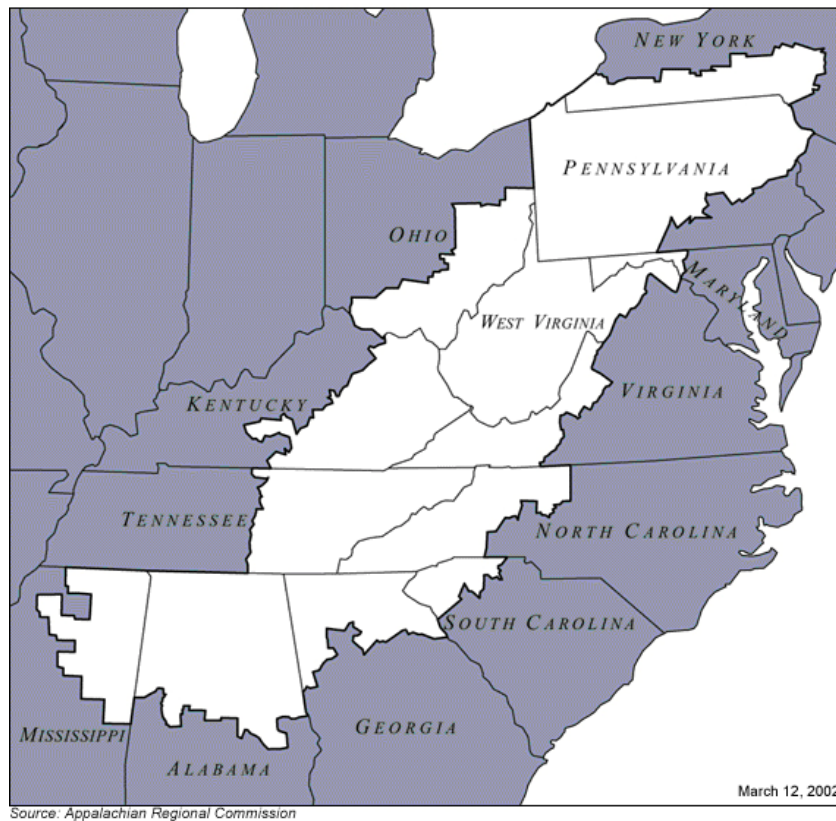
SATURATION OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS West Virginia compared to surrounding states				
STATE	ACCREDITING BODY	REGIONALLY ACCREDITED SCHOOLS 2005	RATIO OF POPULATION TO 1 SCHOOL	RATIO OF 18-24 AGES TO 1 SCHOOL
Maryland	MSCHE	55	109,800 : 1	8,840 : 1
Virginia	SACS	71	106,600 : 1	9,570 : 1
Ohio	NCA	109	105,200 : 1	9,690 : 1
Pennsylvania	MSCHE	134	93,500 : 1	8,230 : 1
Kentucky	SACS	59	85,200 : 1	8,200 : 1
<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>NCA</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60,600 : 1</b>	<b>5,750 : 1</b>

Even though West Virginia has an overall lower number of regionally accredited institutions than its neighboring states, it has more institutions in relation to its population. By dividing the population category by the number of accredited institutions, a ratio can be determined. The general population represents U.S. Census Bureau estimates for 2005 and the 18-24 category represents actual 2000 census data. In West Virginia, a greater level of competition among schools for students and resources may be inferred. The greater density of institutions and a shrinking population base could be factors leading to the implementation of redefined and new institutional brands.

***Regional poverty.*** According to the Appalachian Regional Commission’s (2002) definition of Appalachia, West Virginia is unique being the only state that lies completely

within the region (see Figure 1.5). Long associated with poverty, Appalachia is traditionally characterized by high unemployment, a higher poverty rate, and a lower per capita income than the national average (“About ARC,” n.d.).

Figure 1.5  
*The Appalachian Region*



While conditions have improved overall, West Virginia continues to lag behind the United States and the majority of Appalachia in most economic indicators. While Kentucky and Mississippi have the worst economic records for the region, West Virginia hovers between the rank of third and fourth worst Appalachian state in all categories (“County Economic Status in Appalachia,” 2006). See Table 1.7 for an economic comparison between West Virginia and the other states’ Appalachian counties. Poor

economic conditions may influence an institution's ability to raise philanthropic support, attract the best students, and compete with other regions for qualified faculty members.

Table 1.7

*Economic comparisons: Appalachian Region*

Region	Appalachian Counties	Unemployment Rate 2001-2003	Per Capita Income 2002	Poverty Rate 2000	Economic Status*
United States	410	5.5	26,420	12.4	N/A
Appalachian Region	410	5.6	20,422	13.6	2.5
Appalachian Alabama	37	5.4	22,022	14.4	2.5
Appalachian Georgia	37	4.0	23,037	9.2	3.3
Appalachian Kentucky	51	7.0	13,668	24.4	1.5
Appalachian Maryland	3	5.3	20,048	11.7	3.3
Appalachian Mississippi	24	7.9	16,091	19.4	1.7
Appalachian New York	14	5.7	18,780	13.6	3.0
Appalachian North Carolina	29	6.0	21,168	11.7	2.9
Appalachian Ohio	29	6.3	18,037	13.6	2.5
Appalachian Pennsylvania	52	5.8	22,206	11.4	3.0
Appalachian South Carolina	6	5.6	21,982	11.7	3.0
Appalachian Tennessee	50	4.9	19,936	14.2	2.6
Appalachian Virginia	23	5.7	16,901	15.7	2.7
<b>West Virginia</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>17,856</b>	<b>17.9</b>	<b>2.2</b>
*Economic status (ranked from 1 – 5):	1 Distressed	2 At Risk	3 Transitional	4 Competitive	5 Attainment

Source: County economic status in Appalachia, fiscal year 2006. Appalachian Regional Commission

***Student persistence issues.*** While population shifts, increased competition, and issues surrounding poverty limit the available pool of college applicants, other factors may influence an institution's student retention efforts. While West Virginia has steadily improved in college student persistence since 1980, the most recent figures fall below the national average (Appalachian Regional Commission, 1980; 1990; & 2000).

In Oliver's (2003) study of private institutions in West Virginia and surrounding states, she identified a number of factors that could negatively influence a student's overall success as a college student. These include the educational attainment of the parents of the student (who do not view education as important), absence of a home support structure conducive to success, a lack of success during the first year of college, the availability of low-level employment that does not require a degree, and an inability to

pay for education. These predictors of poor retention further shrink the number of potential students and require institutions to implement aggressive strategies to address these issues and/or to introduce increased competitive marketing strategies.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

A study of this nature must analyze the phenomena without preconceived notions from scientific constructs that relegate and regulate thought. This researcher has chosen to approach this study through a postmodern perspective. Lyotard (1984) explained that postmodern thought challenges preconceived notions and allows for new explanations of phenomena. Sandikci (1999) added, “Postmodernism rejects the realist and modernist ideas of reality, meaning, and representation” introducing “multiplicity, indeterminacy, and free play of signifiers” (p. 8). In understanding how institutions operated during the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> and first part of 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, a postmodern approach rejects old, tried and true, scientific reasoning for explanations that emerge via the research process. The explanations, however, may serve only to define the phenomenon as it related to the specific instances studied.

Larje (2004) considered that during post-massification era – the period analyzed in this study – universities developed from postmodern models. According to Rosenau (1992), postmodernism is based upon the idea the “reality has collapsed, and today it is exclusively image, illusions, or simulation” (p. xi). Since brand re-identification is often based upon audience perception, these changes may reflect a selective view of reality as Sandikci (1999) observed the “postmodern aesthetic is associated with an emphasis on spectacle and surface” (p. 70).

Much of the postmodern view of reality, as Dixon (2002) suggested, is a process of the technological revolution. The rise in the adoption of technologies, as Conostas (1998) observed, “continually redefine[s] the nature of social relations and alter[s] the conventions of material production in the manner that renders many aspects of everyday life ephemeral, if not completely unpredictable” (p. 26). Therefore, the increased reliance on technology and the postmodern effect upon the nature of how businesses and institutions operate introduced new models and innovative practices toward reaching the bottom line. Gumport et al. (1997b) suggested that increased competition, due to innovative practices in the post-massification era, has challenged colleges and universities to become innovators in order to compete in the educational arena. Rebranding is one of these innovative practices.

In addition to innovation, Horn (1998) explained that postmodernism rejects “expert only” opinions, allowing for the inclusion of stakeholders in the decision making process. The success of an institution’s rebranding effort is often linked to stakeholder reactions. When The University of the South, often nicknamed “Sewanee,” changed its official name to “Sewanee: the University of the South” in 2004, alumni felt disenfranchised and claimed the school was disassociating itself from 147 years of southern heritage (Strout, 2004). In 2003, Mary Washington College’s board of visitors considered a name change to Washington and Monroe University; however, students, faculty, and alumni protested the proposed change. Acquiescing to stakeholder pressure, the Virginia institution became the University of Mary Washington (“New Name,” 2003). Texas State University at San Marcos experienced a schism in the student body over the change from Southwest Texas State University. One student complained of the lack of

stakeholder involvement in the decision claiming, “there was never a vote of all students, faculty, and alumni” regarding the change (Rooney, 2003, p. A8). A postmodern approach to institutional name changes would seek a more inclusive method of change.

Along with stakeholder perceptions, a postmodern view of reality permits some subjectivity during the synthesis of information. Kidd (2002) suggested that viewing phenomena through a qualitative, postmodern/postpositivist lens, while attempting to be objective, allows for some necessary subjective observations with the formulation of conclusions. Some bias occurred when interviewees provided information about their specific institutions and the overall success of their rebranding efforts.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study’s purpose is three-fold: (a) to determine whether a relationship exists between the demographic and economic factors that affect West Virginia and the amount of institutional change that has occurred among public and private colleges and universities within the state; (b) to identify what planning occurred in concert with institutional transformations; and (c) to understand how administrators perceived the results produced by institutional changes. An analysis of the data may suggest that some of these factors are unique to West Virginia higher education, thus suggesting that context exerts a powerful influence on institutional choices relating to image or rebranding.

In addition, governmental factors may also prove significant. While Morphey (2000) identified five states (Georgia, Montana, New Jersey, Oregon, and South Dakota) as having produced the majority of public college-to-university transformations in the 1990s, he concluded that these were sweeping systemwide changes and were initiated by



strong statewide governing boards. These changes, based upon public policy, resulted in a majority of state supported colleges' becoming universities with a single legislative act (Morphew, 2000). While public policy continues to dictate changes transpiring at West Virginia's public institutions, similar sweeping, systemic change of state colleges to university status has not occurred to the extent of the aforementioned states. Senate Bill 448 (2004) allowed a majority (four out of seven) but not all of the state colleges to have university status. In addition, public policy has dictated several systemic changes in West Virginia's community colleges.

Even though systemic changes have occurred, the proportion of brand changes occurring in West Virginia higher education is significantly higher than that of other U.S. jurisdictions. During the years 1996 to 2005, over half of the existing regionally accredited institutions in West Virginia rebranded; during the same period, one quarter of the total number of regionally accredited institutions began using the nomenclature "university." It is this researcher's intent to understand the general reasons why so many West Virginia institutions have employed rebranding strategies; and specifically, to determine why so many institutions evolved into universities.

### **Research Questions**

This study addressed the following questions:

What factors were responsible for the specific institution's decision to rebrand as a university?

What was the administration's justification for believing that the institution met qualifications to be called a university?

What was the institution's strategy for the rebranding process?

What procedures did administration use to implement the institutional change?

What influence did regulatory bodies have upon the change?

What were the reactions of stakeholders to the change?

How did senior administrators perceive the success of the institutional change?

Did the change produce any indicators of increased prestige?

What suggestions did administrators provide upon revisiting the change.

What methods can institutions use to retain ownership of a brand?

Since this study is qualitative in design, additional questions were developed based upon the responses to interview questions.

## **Methods**

This research project is a qualitative phenomenological study proceeding from a postmodern orientation. Johnson and Christensen (2000) defined a phenomenological study as “the description of one or more individual's consciousness and experience of a phenomenon” and “it can be used to focus on the unique characteristics of an individual's experience of something” (pp. 315-316). While an analysis of each of the aforementioned institutions experiencing transformation would be optimum, this study was purposefully limited to universities that have evolved from colleges with a focus on 11 West Virginia institutions. Five of these were the public college-to-university rebranded institutions since 1996: West Virginia University Institute of Technology, Concord University, Fairmont State University, Shepherd University, and West Virginia

State University. Five included the private institutions that converted to university status since 1979: The University of Charleston, Salem-Teikyo University, Wheeling Jesuit University, Mountain State University, and Ohio Valley University. In addition, West Liberty State College was included, as the school intends to become West Liberty University during or before 2009.

Although differences in the 11 institutions exist, they were chosen because all have similar experiences in transitioning from a college identity to the university name. The public institutions are examples of higher educational institutions that were influenced by externally driven public policy changes. Being public institutions, the ultimate locus of control is the state legislature. In regard to the five private institutions, these schools have policies that were primarily driven via internal influences. The differences in locus of control may affect how staff members view institutional change. Borland (1980) indicated that faculty perceived a diminished role when the change was externally based. While not the case for the entire sample, several years have transpired since some schools employed rebranding tactics; the ability to view perceptions longitudinally may provide an opportunity to determine if it was perceived as being successful.

### **Data Collection and Participants**

This particular study's design utilized purposeful sampling, for which Patton (2002) stated that the interview subjects "are selected because they are 'information rich' and illuminative, that is, they offer useful manifestations of the phenomenon under study" (p. 40). Data collection included surveys, reported quantitative data, follow-up

interviews, and a review of pertinent primary source documentation such as institutional minutes, memos, policies, press releases, and legislation.

It was the researcher's intent to view the changes in West Virginia's higher educational institutions by determining the reasons for change and assessing the positive and negative perceptions and reactions to the various changes that have occurred within these institutions. The assessment represented an administrative perspective. By doing this, the researcher hoped to be able to gain an understanding regarding this phenomenon that has transpired within and across West Virginia higher education. For this to occur, it was necessary to compare college-to-university rebranded institutions in West Virginia to other geographic areas' university rebranded institutions. This research was conducted in three phases with the final phase having dealt specifically with West Virginia institutions.

### ***Phase One***

As described elsewhere in this chapter, Phase One required the construction of a working list of individual regionally accredited schools from jurisdictions that are administratively linked to the United States. The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) defines accreditation as "a process of external quality review used by higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and educational programs for quality assurance and quality improvement" (2003, p. 1). Currently, the U.S. Department of Education (2007) recognizes 59 private bodies which accredit institutions or educational programs. The majority are specialty/programmatic accrediting bodies that accredit specific disciplines and single purpose institutions. Examples of programmatic accreditors include the American Library Association Committee on Accreditation, the

National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission, and a host of others (CHEA, 2006).

Two types of accreditors offer institutional accreditation: national and regional. Despite the name, national accreditation is of a lower status than regional accreditation. CHEA (2003, p. 2) reports that 64% of schools operating with national accreditation do not offer degrees and 79% are for-profit institutions; “Many are single-purpose institutions focusing on . . . education in business and technology” and “Some are faith based.” According to CHEA (2003, p. 1), “Regional accreditors operate in six specific clusters of states (regions) in the U.S. and review institutions . . . 97.4% or more [of the institutions] are both degree-granting and nonprofit.”

The listing of schools included the 2005 membership lists of the six regional accrediting bodies: MSCHE, NCA, NEASC, NWCCS, SACS, and WASC. Both NEASC and WASC have separate commissions distinguishing between two-year and four-year institutions; these commissions are listed as separate entities by the U.S. Department of Education and the Council on Higher Education. Since the other four regional accrediting bodies make no such distinctions, all NEASC and WASC accredited institutions were included in the master list of schools under one parent body listing. Included in the list were 73 regionally accredited institutions that merged into other regionally accredited institutions during 1996 through 2005. The *HEP Higher Education Directories* for 1997 – 2006 provided the list of merged institutions. The number of regionally accredited schools totaled 3,036. This master list, however, did not include branch campuses that do not have individual accreditation, schools in application or candidate for accreditation status, schools that closed, or schools that lost accreditation.

From that list, 532 rebranded institutions were identified from the *HEP Higher Education Directories*; 151 of these were colleges that became universities.

### ***Phase Two***

To create a list of questions for interviews that was conducted during Phase Three, a survey was sent to presidents of colleges that became universities in states that have Appalachian designated counties. Since only 12 non-West Virginia, Appalachian region colleges became universities from 1996 to 2005, it was necessary to draw from a larger population. In the 13 Appalachian states, 60 colleges evolved into universities. Eight of these were eliminated as they were West Virginia institutions; New School of New York City was also eliminated as it became a university in 1998 but dropped the university name in 2005 (Rodenhouse, 1999; Burke, 2005). Since New School was the only New York institution that would have qualified, New York was not included. Likewise, Mississippi institutions were not part of the population, as the state experienced no college-to-university transformations during the period. Despite a merger with the University of Toledo in 2006, the former Medical University of Ohio is included as its initial university transformation occurred in 2005 (“UT-MUO Merger Timeline,” 2006).

The mailings included a cover letter, anonymous consent to participate in a research study form, survey instrument (see Appendices J, K, L and M), and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Non-Appalachian schools received a slightly different cover letter than the Appalachian regional schools. The presidents (and one chancellor) of the 51 institutions (see Appendix N) were sent the survey on November 29, 2006. To guarantee accuracy of the current president’s name and the university’s mailing address, this information was gathered from the institutional web site rather than from a compiled

published source. If the university president was not in office at the time of the change, this researcher asked that the president distribute the survey to the current most senior level staff member who was employed during the transition. This individual served as the president's proxy.

Nineteen responses were initially received with four via the online survey tool. Since the first mailing occurred several weeks before institutional winter break, all but one of the responses were received prior to December 22. Not desiring the survey to coincide with the arrival of a large amount of mail that accumulated during the holidays, the second mailing was postponed until January 2, 2007. With post offices closed on January 2 due to a National Day of Mourning over former President Gerald R. Ford's death, the second mailing was further delayed until January 3. The second mailing garnered an additional eight responses. A third and final request for participation was mailed on January 27, 2007 and produced seven participating responses. In addition, two institutions declined to participate in the study. The total response produced a sample of 34 institutions – 66.67% of the population studied (see Table 1.8).

Table 1.8  
*Survey responses for Phase Two.*

<b>Survey Responses by Method</b>			
	<b>Paper</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
First mailing	15	4	37.25%
Second mailing	6	2	15.69%
Third mailing	4	3	13.73%
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>66.67%</b>

The survey contained a modification of Spencer's (2005) instrument of six open-ended questions. Spencer provided permission to use and modify his survey instrument (see Appendix O). In order to facilitate survey return, these questions were altered to having forced answer choices using the results mentioned by Spencer, Koku (1997), Morphew (2000), Perry (2003), and Rosenthal (2005). The complete survey with the forced choice answers is located in Appendix M. The modified questions are as follows:

Since changing name and status can be multifaceted, please rank the major compelling reasons for the change of name to a university.

In your best estimation, what was the length of time necessary to implement the name change? This should begin from the time university status was first suggested until official adoption of the new name.

Was the name change perceived as successful? \_\_\_YES \_\_\_NO

If so, please rank the five top reasons the name change can be perceived as successful.

What was the most interesting component of the process of changing the institution's name to a university?

What advice would you give other institutions who are considering the change from a college-to-university?

To Spencer's (2005) original questions, the survey contained the following forced choice questions (see Appendix M for answer choices):

When your institution changed names and became a university, who was perceived as the primary change agent(s) in renaming the institution and seeking university status?

How many regionally accredited graduate/professional degree programs were being offered by the institution at the time of the name change?

In addition, a series of nine statements on a four-point Likert scale gauged the administrator's perceptions regarding the success of the name change (see Appendix M).



The responses aided in the formulation of interview questions for Phase Three of the research.

In order to facilitate return, respondents had the opportunity to utilize a printed survey returned via a self-addressed, stamped envelop or to submit their answers online at the researcher's personal Website: [www.NewRiver.net](http://www.NewRiver.net) (see Appendix P). This site acted as a conduit to a survey hosted by SurveyKey.com and did not require a respondent to type in the lengthy web address (URL) generated by the software.

Operated by JetMan Productions, Inc., SurveyKey.com is an Internet survey creation and hosting service. While SurveyKey.com offered a free service called their "basic plan," 256-bit secure socket layer (SSL) technology and password restriction was only available through subscription to SurveyKey.com's "pro plan" at a cost of \$54.00 per quarter. The "pro plan" was purchased for six months, and only the researcher had direct access to the data (see Appendices Q & R).

In the mailing, a four-digit code was assigned to each university. This code was utilized as a password gateway at NewRiver.net that allowed the respondent to proceed to the SurveyKey.com secure survey. These codes were processed separate from the survey as an email message to the researcher. The password to enter the survey web site at SurveyKey.com was set to the word "college." The codes also alerted the researcher that a specific school had completed the online survey and that no further mailings to that specific institution was necessary.

Likewise, these codes served a similar purpose of identifying institutions that returned the paper based survey. The codes were encrypted into the zip code of the return address (but not on the main address) on all survey return envelopes. The codes were

additionally altered with each mailing to determine which mailing produced the response. For example, if a school was coded as 0101, its code was merged into the researcher's zip code of 25801 and was embedded into the return address as 25801-0101. The second mailing replaced the initial zero with a three (e.g., 25802-3101) and the third mailing used a five (e.g., 25801-5101). This allowed the researcher to identify the school and the mailing that produced results.

It was noted by one respondent that on December 5, 2006 the password gateway located on the NewRiver.net site was failing to activate the survey. Apparently, an electrical storm the previous evening, which resulted in a power failure throughout the Beckley, WV area, caused damage to the server hosting NewRiver.net and other area Internet sites. This system failure, which allowed hosted sites to appear operational, prevented Internet forms processing and required a reinstall of the server's processing engine. After notification that this would require at least one additional day to accomplish, the researcher disabled the password gateway on NewRiver.net and provided a direct link to the survey site. The survey was operational within an hour of the respondent's email and his complete survey response was posted within several minutes after being notified. On Thursday, December 6, 2006, the password gateway at NewRiver.net was restored. Outside of the one response processed on December 5, no other attempts to access the survey occurred until after the original password gateway was reestablished. No other calls or emails were received during this period.

One additional potential problem regarding the online survey was noted on December 12, 2006. One respondent submitted the survey at 9:24 AM but did not answer any questions. The survey was arranged to only allow one access per computer to the

survey to prevent duplicate submissions by the same individual. An Internet browser cookie impeded further access to the survey. Fearing that a respondent was attempting to access the survey a second time without success, this feature was immediately disabled and allowed individuals who may have experienced technical difficulties multiple opportunities to participate. The respondent never submitted another electronic survey response; however, a paper version matching the password gateway code of the failed electronic submission arrived within several days following the survey attempt. While the possibility to reenter the survey was now available, duplicate gateway codes were never noted, and therefore subsequent submission entries did not occur.

Table 1.9  
*Survey responses by geography.*

<b>Survey Responses by Geographic Locations</b>			
<b>State</b>	<b>Number of Institutions</b>	<b>Number of Responses</b>	<b>Percentage of Responses</b>
Alabama	1	1	100.00%
Georgia	16	9	56.25%
Kentucky	6	6	100.00%
Maryland	2	1	50.00%
North Carolina	3	2	66.67%
Ohio	8	5	62.50%
Pennsylvania	7	4	57.14%
South Carolina	1	0	0.00%
Tennessee	3	2	66.67%
Virginia	4	4	100.00%
Appalachia	12	8	66.67%
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>66.67%</b>

As the surveys were returned, several respondents provided documentation concerning their institution's strategic plan and rationale for the transition from a college to a university. Several university administrators indicated that they had additional information and offered to become interview subjects. Following the reception of a signed consent form, two of these administrators were interviewed via telephone. The

processing of these interviews followed the guidelines set forth in Phase Three of this research project. Thirty-four completed surveys (a response rate of 66.67%) were returned, which represented nine of the 10 states in the original population (see Table 1.9). Appendix S contains the results of the survey.

The initial tabulation of the data indicated that a large percentage of the institutions indicated a growth in enrollment since the university name adoption. To see if this growth was significant, it was necessary to replicate Koku's 1996 study regarding the impact of a strategic name change upon institutional enrollment. Koku confirmed his hypothesis "That the name change strategy is not effective in increasing student enrollment in colleges and universities" (1996, p. 60). In his study, Koku selected 140 institutions that employed a strategic name change and compared enrollment data five years prior to the name change to enrollment data from five years following the name change.

In Koku's (1996) population, the name changes spanned 10 years from 1978 to 1988 and excluded 1986 from which no data was available. From the yearly enrollment figures for each institution, the percentage of growth or loss in enrollment from one year to the next was tabulated. Unfortunately, not all enrollment data was available and the number of schools represented in the pre and post name change event tabulations varied from 113 to 139 in any given event year. Koku compared the means of the incremental enrollment changes from the five years prior to a strategic name change to the means of the incremental changes from the five following a name change. He analyzed the data with a two-sampled T test and failed to reject his hypothesis. Koku concluded that a strategic name change did not indicate a significant growth in enrollment (1996).

To replicate Koku's study, this researcher created a list of regionally accredited colleges that adopted the university designation during the years 1996 to 2001. Since enrollment figures were only available up through 2006, it was necessary to limit the population to those where a complete ten-year cycle of incremental change data could be generated. A population of 103 institutions was generated from the *HEP Higher Education Directories* for 1997 through 2002.

For enrollment data collection, the researcher originally desired to utilize enrollment reports from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); however, data for this period was inconsistent. Whereas total student head count might be available on one year's IPEDS report, fall full time enrollments or full time equivalent (FTE) data may only be available the next year. The inconsistencies in the data types available did not allow for an accurate growth or loss comparison from one year to the next. In addition, IPEDS data did not exist for the year 1999. The only available and consistent enrollment data was reported directly by institutions to the yearly *HEP Higher Education Directories*.

To test if a rise in prestige occurred, similar measures were used to compare these indicators five years following the change. Sevier (2002a) indicated that a rise in a university's tuition is a signal of the institution's prestige that he and others have termed as the "Chivas Regal" effect. The idea is that parents and students will be willing to pay more at a well-known institution, and if a university raises tuition, prestige will come via a self-fulfilling prophecy. To test the "Chivas Regal" effect as an indicator of prestige, incremental rises in tuition were compared five years prior to the change to five years following the change.

Likewise, Morphew (2000) indicated that when a college became a university, it had a greater emphasis on graduate education. Morphew analyzed three areas of prestige: Carnegie Classifications, the number of graduate degrees awarded, and undergraduate selectivity. Using methods similar to Koku (1997) rather than Morphew's, this study compared changes in Carnegie Classification, the number and types of graduate programs, and undergraduate selectivity. While Morphew used a snapshot method comparing data from two different years without emphasis on the distance from the name change, Koku's model provided a basis of looking at these indicators at the time of the change and five years later. Each institution could be compared equally.

Although Koku (1997) used five-year increments, data earlier than 1996 was not readily available. Since these indicators did not fluctuate as much as enrollment and tuition, the year of change was used as the benchmark figure and were compared to the data from the fifth year after the change. Carnegie Classification data came from the *HEP Higher Education Directories 1997-2007* and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. Institutional catalogs and archived web sites were accessed for the number and types of graduate programs for the 103 institutions. *U.S. News and World Reports America's Best Colleges 1998-2008* were used for selectivity data. While the entire population of schools was used for most indicators, selectivity data was only available for 71 schools.

### ***Phase Three***

***Interview subjects.*** To narrow the scope of this study, the third phase included only institutions that evolved from colleges to universities. West Virginia has 10 such

institutions (see Table 1.10) – five public and five private. The five public schools are West Virginia University Institute of Technology, Concord University, Fairmont State University, Shepherd University, and West Virginia State University. Private institutions that exhibited a university rebrand are The University of Charleston, Salem International University, Wheeling Jesuit University, Mountain State University, and Ohio Valley University. Although West Liberty State College would not undergo its change until 2008 or 2009, it was included as this public institution is currently working through the change in status process.

The 22 interview subjects represented administrators from all 11 West Virginia institutions in this study, one representative of West Virginia Independent Colleges and Universities, a representative of one of the West Virginia governing boards, a legislator, two administrators from Georgia, and two administrators from Pennsylvania. Forty-eight additional individuals from institutions, governing boards, consortia, accrediting bodies, researchers, state agencies, and the federal government participated in one to three question interviews. Institutional representatives were from West Virginia, Kentucky, Maryland, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Virginia.

Table 1.10  
*West Virginia Colleges Rebranded as Universities*

Current University Name	Date of University Designation	2005 Graduate Degree Programs*	Carnegie Classification**	2005 Graduate & Professional Students
The University of Charleston	1979	4	Bachelor's: Diverse	40
Salem International University	1989	3	Bachelor's: Diverse	232
WVU Institute of Technology***	1996	1	Bachelor's: Diverse	29
Wheeling Jesuit University	1996	6	Master's – Smaller Programs	467
Mountain State University	2001	7	Master's – Medium Programs	365
Concord University	2004	1	Bachelor's: Diverse	66
Fairmont State University	2004	1	Bachelor's: Diverse	45
Shepherd University	2004	4	Bachelor's: Diverse	65
West Virginia State University	2004	2	Bachelor's: Arts & Sciences	26
Ohio Valley University	2005	1	Bachelor's: Diverse	0
West Liberty State College	In the Future	0	Bachelor's: Diverse	0

Degree programs from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools' individual Statements of Affiliation Status (SAS). Program listings represent only currently accredited programs and do not consider those in candidacy status. Enrollment data from Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reports from the National Center for Educational Statistics of the US Department of Education.

\*Graduate programs were based on the institutional Statement of Affiliation Status (SAS) from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association. Schools that had two degrees (i.e., an MA and an M.Ed.) in the same programmatic fields were counted as having two distinct degrees. Graduate certificates were not counted as these are no longer specified on the SAS.

\*\*Carnegie Classifications were based on 2003-2004 data; classifications may be different for subsequent years.

\*\*\*WVUIT became a division of WVU on July 1, 2007; separate accreditation status expired at that time.

The 11 institutions also represent a majority of the geographic regions of the state of West Virginia (see Figure 1.6), as the regions correspond with the service areas defined by the Community and Technical College System of West Virginia. UC & WVSU represent Advantage Valley. Southeastern West Virginia is home to Mountain State University, Concord, and WVU Tech; OVU represents the Mid Ohio Valley, and the North Central West Virginia region includes SIU and FSU. Shepherd is in the Shenandoah Valley and WJU and West Liberty are in the Northern Panhandle. Two regions are unrepresented in this study: the Southern Mountains and the Potomac Highlands. These two regions include only two-year institutions Southern WV CTC, Potomac State, and Eastern WV CTC.



Figure 1.6  
*Geographic Regions of West Virginia*

## GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF WEST VIRGINIA



**Interview questions.** The interview questions dealt with general topic areas on how the change was implemented, its effects (perceived and actual), the return on investment, and any hindsight perceptions of how the change could have been better implemented. While answers from the Phase Two surveys guided the primary interview questions, other questions followed the major benefit areas identified by Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001), Cobb (2001), and Sevier (2002a).

Nguyen and LeBlanc (2001) concluded that institutional loyalty, and hence student retention, occurred when students had favorable perceptions of both institutional reputation and image. While a number of brand indicators exhibited positive correlations with student retention, Cobb (2001) noted that a strong brand focused upon institutional

quality was the most significant branding tactic influencing a student's intent to persist. Furthermore, Sevier (2002a) identified the additional benefits of a successful brand: (a) an ability to charge higher tuition; (b) greater constituent loyalty; (c) increased alumni satisfaction; and (d) messages that are superior to those of competitors.

The questions are as follows:

Do stakeholders exhibit a greater brand loyalty to the newer brand?

Have stakeholders' perceptions of the institution improved since the rebranding?

Has student enrollments increased since the rebranding?

Has student retention increased since the rebranding?

Has the institution significantly increased tuition in response to the rebranding?

Has the institution exhibited greater alumni satisfaction with the new brand?

In addition, questions about the rebranding implementation strategy emerged and aided in classifying the changes along the six areas defined by Kaikati and Kaikati (2003).

The interview process, as Patton (2002) suggested, served to "capture direct quotations about people's personal perspectives and experiences" (p. 40). Snowball sampling occurred in several instances as interviewees identified "one or more additional people who meet certain characteristics and may be willing to participate in the research study" (Johnson & Christensen, 2000, p. 176). Prior to all interviews, participants signed a waiver of informed consent as set forth by the Marshall University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix T).

Survey respondents were guaranteed anonymity and interview subjects were assured confidentiality as legally possible. This study did not identify interview subjects by name or by specific title. Since university administrators were interviewed, no direct association with their current or former institution was noted in this study's analysis of results unless it was key to the discussion at hand. In addition, this study did not classify an institution's former or current administrative participants as such. Several participants were no longer in the employ of the institution or agency that they formerly represented.

### **Data Analysis**

Results from the Phase Two surveys were analyzed and sections tabulated according to theme. The semi-structured interviews were audio-taped and transcribed to a written format. Once transcribed, the data was sorted, coded, and organized in preparation for interpreting and reporting the results. Thematic descriptors identified the relevant topic areas that emerge. See Appendix U for a sample transcribed telephone interview and Appendix V for a sample transcribed live interview.

As the data were categorized, an ongoing inductive analysis occurred (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Triangulation was achieved by using multiple methods of data collection and, as Merriam (1995) stated, provided dependability and validity. These methods included analyses of official institutional documentation, legislative information, and relevant news archives. Spencer (2005, p. 23) qualified his study's validity in the following manner:

The validity of this study is dependent on the interviews. The information from the interviews was limited to the colleges and universities included in

the study. Each college and university presented unique circumstances surrounding the name change process, which included but were not limited to political elements, funding, alumni responses, and current student perceptions.

## **Dissertation Structure**

### **Significance**

As the researcher generates hypotheses and conclusions are drawn, this study should add to the body of knowledge regarding institutional image. While some of the literature indicated that such changes have a minimal impact upon enrollment, this study was to either support or negate this assumption in respect to a region that has endured significant demographic and economic shifts in recent years. By assessing institutional change within the context of geographic boundaries, this study stands to provide unique information of some value to higher education administrators. Therefore, a localized focus provided a different perspective than previous studies and, as Bogdan and Biklen (1998) suggested, would “describe something that never has been described before” (p. 206).

This study has the potential to aid administrators in making decisions regarding rebranding as an attempt to recreate an institutional identity. Administrative experiences relating to the transformation process and the perceptions of the rebranding’s success or failure will become a resource for administrators considering similar institutional changes. Thus, new information generated from this study will assist higher education administrators in the basic functions identified by Gulick and Urwick (1937) as planning, organizing, developing, coordinating, and budgeting.

According to Haller and Kleine (2001), “Educational administration is an applied field, a field in which practitioners apply knowledge to solve real problems in schools” (p. 6). As resources become scarcer and institutions are forced to become increasingly competitive, the understanding and application of such data could aid in the survival or loss of certain schools. This is of particular importance in West Virginia, where the subjects of closing, changing of status, reallocating resources, or merging certain institutions are perennial undertakings in the Legislature. These findings will be applicable to other regions similar to West Virginia where the future of specific public higher educational institutions remains uncertain (Jarvis, 2003).

### **Definitions**

For the purpose of this study, the following terms are defined.

**Appalachia:** as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission, the region of the United States that consists of 410 counties of 13 states surrounding the Appalachian Mountain range. West Virginia is the only state completely within Appalachia.

**Brand identity (as related to colleges and universities):** the marketable distinction that a college or university possesses. Compared to product brand identities, institutional brands are the qualities that attract students to a particular school. In essence, the brand becomes synonymous with a particular college or university.

**Chief Executive Officer (CEO):** a generic term used to reference an institutional president or branch campus provost.

**Foreign corporations:** institutions operating in one state as a branch of a parent college or university whose headquarters are located in another state. In most cases, these

branch campuses do not have individual accreditation and may operate under the accreditation of a regional accrediting body outside of the jurisdiction where the branch campus is located.

**Individual accreditation:** component campuses/branches of larger institutions with regional accreditation status separate from the parent institution.

**Regional accreditation:** the imprimatur placed upon public, private, and proprietary institutions by one of the six regional accrediting bodies. Regional accreditation in West Virginia is granted by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA).

**Stakeholder:** a person directly or indirectly affected by an institutional transformation. Directly influenced stakeholders include college or university students, alumni, faculty, staff, administration, and trustees. Community leaders and state legislators are indirect stakeholders.

### **Limitations**

While this undertaking contributes to the body of literature, problems exist due to the existence of only one identifiable higher education research model – Spencer’s (2005) dissertation regarding institutions that changed name during the years 1992 to 2001. In addition, the 10-year period of analysis (1996 to 2005) produces the distinct probability that certain direct agents of a particular institutional change may have been unavailable to complete the survey during Phase Two. Some participants may only have been able to provide a current perspective to a previous transformation, whereas the direct change agent would have been able to elaborate further regarding the actual purpose of the

change. The *HEP Higher Education Directories* provided much of the data for the analysis of the 103 rebranded institutions. Because this data may have been reported by university offices that do not typically handle enrollment figures, it may not be as accurate as data from other sources. The *HEP Higher Education Directories*, however, reported the data in a more consistent manner than conventional sources. Additionally, interview subjects during the third phase may have provided an unrepresentative personal perspective regarding the success of their institution's change.

### **Delimitations**

This study is limited to an analysis of regionally accredited West Virginia institutions that rebranded as universities. This subset of rebranded institutions may provide evidence that these changes are related to other changes occurring in West Virginia over the past 30 years. Of the 10 institutions in West Virginia that became universities and the one in the change process, the interview subjects were limited only to administrators that are current West Virginia residents. Therefore, West Virginia's distinctive demographics, economic condition, political climate, and other variables may constitute unique circumstances that may not be applicable to any other geographic region.

In addition, the preliminary survey of institutions in Phase Two is limited by geography and only includes states that have counties designated as part of Appalachia. Regionalism raised unique issues related to the entire region, individual states, Appalachia, the three subregions of Appalachia as defined by the Appalachian Regional Commission (see Appendix W), or the Appalachian counties of an individual state. With the exception of West Virginia, only a portion of the 12 other states are designated being

within Appalachia. Because of having no qualifying institutions, New York and Mississippi were eliminated from this study.