

## **Organizational change in higher education: a mixed methods study of employee perceptions**

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### Abstract

The University of South Florida (USF) has systematically re-organized the structure of their regional campuses over the past decade. Identification of the perceptions of employees in the USF System about how separate accreditation will change key elements of their organizations was the purpose of this mixed methods study. This research study provides a “snapshot” of employee perceptions at each campus at a particular point in time in the organizational change process. Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four frame theory was used as the theoretical concept to develop the dependent variables and capture the perceptions of employees. The four dependent variables were organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity. Quantitative data were collected using a survey instrument. The data were analyzed by campus, employment category, gender, and years of employment using multivariate analysis of variance to identify significant differences in the means between the categories for each dependent variable. Additional comments provided by the survey respondents were analyzed using qualitative analysis to identify emerging themes during the organizational change process.

Keywords: multi-campus system, campus identity, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, organizational structure

## Introduction

Organizational change for the University of South Florida (USF) is nothing new for this relatively young institution. Established in 1956 as the fourth university in the State of Florida, the institution extended its main campus, USF Tampa (USFT), and increased access to the citizens by adding branch campuses. USF St. Petersburg (USFSP) was established in 1965, USF Fort Myers (USFFM) in 1974, USF Sarasota-Manatee (USFSM) in 1975, consisting of a two year upper level university program and sharing the campus with New College a four year liberal arts program, and USF Polytechnic (USFP) in 1981, located in Lakeland (Greenberg, 2006). Over the years, three of USF's campuses have been restructured as independent education institutions within the State University System. The USFFM campus was dissolved in 1990 and this site became Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida's 10<sup>th</sup> university. In 2001, New College, the four year liberal arts college that shared the location with USFSM became Florida's 11<sup>th</sup> institution, New College of Florida. In 2012, after the completion of this study, the Florida Legislature dissolved USFP and created the 12<sup>th</sup> institution, Florida Polytechnic University.

More changes in the structure of USF continued in 2001. During this Legislative time period, the USFSP campus leaders expressed their desire to have more autonomy and control over their budget and academic programs to meet the needs of their community. Therefore, the president of the university presented a plan for separately accredited campuses within USF to the State Legislature (Genshaft, 2000). This resulted in the State Legislature passing a law to require separate accreditation for the USFSP and the USFSM regional campuses of the USF (Florida Statute 1004.33 and 1004.34). In 2008, this Legislation was extended to USFP (Florida Statute 1004.345).

The 2001 Legislation mandating separate accreditation for the regional campuses at the university required the attention of the regional accreditation agency and set in motion a major transformation in the organizational structure of the University of South Florida. In December, 2002, the regional accreditation agency, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) approved a policy statement titled "Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution." This document provided the accreditation guidelines for extended units which are mature and have the ability to be autonomous from the parent institution. The extended units were required to have degree granting authority, a governing board, a chief executive officer, an institutional mission, institutional effectiveness, continuous operation, program length, program content, general education, contractual agreements for instruction, faculty, learning resources and services, and student support services and resources (SACSCOC, 2002).

As USF moved forward with its plans for separate accreditation for its campuses during its reaffirmation process, the accrediting agency recommended the governance structure for the university be changed to a USF System with four separately accredited institutions. In 2004, the University of South Florida Board of Trustees (UBOT) approved the USF System (UBOT, 2004). In 2005, the Florida SUS recognized USF as the USF System for accreditation purposes (Austin, 2005). This provided the university's governance structure for more than one institution to be separately accredited.

## **Background**

This study was conducted in September, 2010, at the beginning of the Fall semester when all four USF campuses were focused on changing policies and procedures to develop their individual campuses and create the USF System, with governance under one board of trustees. Each campus was working to formulate its own organizational structure to function independently, with a campus leader reporting to the university president. Each campus was creating independent campus functions which were previously managed and controlled by the Tampa campus. All four campuses were participating in building the infrastructure for the USF System, to provide the umbrella for the four separately accredited institutions.

USFSP, the largest and oldest regional campus was the first to begin the separate accreditation process, shortly after the 2001 legislation. The employees of this institution had to pioneer through the steps to create their separately accredited institution because separately accredited regional campuses were a new structure in Florida and at the university. USFSP achieved separate accreditation in 2006. At the time of this study, USFSP had been an accredited institution for four years.

USFSM, the second largest campus, received their letter of delegation of authority from the USF System President to pursue SACS accreditation in 2009. At the time of this study, USFSM had submitted their final application to SACS and was awaiting their site visit.

USFP was the youngest regional campus, and was anticipating receiving its letter of delegation of authority from the USF System President, and was beginning to prepare its application for separate accreditation when this study was conducted. Table 1 (Appendix) describes the USF System and the regional campuses at the time of this study.

The significance of this study was that each regional campus (USFSP, USFSM, and USFP) was at a different point-in-time with the separate accreditation process. The purpose of this study was to identify the perceptions of employees in the USF System about changes that they believed would or did occur as a result of the separate accreditation of campuses.

The following two research questions were addressed in the study.

1. Are there significant differences in the perceptions of USF System employees on each of the four campuses in the areas of organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity with respect to the implications of separate accreditation of campuses with the USF System?
2. Are there significant differences between the perceptions of employees in the areas of organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity on selected demographic variables, including employee category, years of employment, and gender?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this case study is centered in the organizational four frame theory of Bolman and Deal (2003). They suggest that it is helpful to view organizations from four different frames: (a) how they are structured (the Structural Frame), (b) how they treat their employees (the Human Resources Frame), (c) how they handle the politics of power and negotiation (the Political Frame), and finally, (d) how they address the cultural dimensions of their institutional activities (the Symbolic Frame). They explain that “reframing requires an ability to understand and use multiple perceptions, to think about the same thing in more than

one way” (p. 5). Bolman and Deal (2003), Bennis (2003), Kotter (1996) and many others suggest that leaders are able to make better decision when they have more accurate information about employee’s perceptions about issues related to their work.

### **Methodology and Survey Instrument**

This mixed methods case study was conducted using a survey instrument to collect the data. Four dependent variables, organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity, were used to organize the 25 Likert-type scale survey responses from participants. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2 (Appendix) for each campus by the dependent variables.

The instrument was developed by consulting faculty members, staff and administrators about issues relating to the perceptions of employees and restructuring of the university to a USF System with separately accredited institutions. Pre-testing for the instrument was conducted by using Collins (2003) cognitive interview questions. To test the reliability of the newly created instrument a pilot study was conducted with part-time employees at USFSM. Cronbach’s (1951) alpha results for the dependent variables scored as follows: organizational structure .90, employee relationships .90, inter-campus relationships .91, and campus identity .89.

Employee perceptions were measured using four survey instruments, each adapted so terminology referenced their own campus or the USF System as appropriate. Respondents from USFSM and USFP, the campus that did not have separate accreditation at the time of this study, completed the survey based upon how they thought separate accreditation would change their institution and its relationship to the USF System. Respondents from USFSP, the institution that had received separate accreditation in 2006, completed the survey based upon how they thought separate accreditation had changed their institutional practices. USFT, the main institution, respondents completed the survey based upon how they thought separate accreditation would change the regional campuses.

The last section of the survey provided space for survey respondents to write in comments about the major strengths and major limitations of separate accreditation for the regional campuses, and to what degree the implications of separate accreditation had been communicated to them. The final two questions on the survey asked the respondents to respond “yes” or “no” if they were supportive of separate accreditation, and if separate accreditation for the regional campuses would benefit their personal situation. The independent variables for the study were employment category, years of employment, and gender. Employment category included the faculty classification which included faculty in teaching and administrative positions. The administration category, formerly known as Administrative & Professional (A&P), consisted of salaried employees on yearly contracts and may be referred to as administrators. These positions include directors, coordinators, and mid-level employees that provide administrative support to the institution. The third classification was staff, and is formerly known as University Support Personnel System (USPS). These employees are exempt and non-exempt clerical and support staff and are covered by collective bargaining within the university.

Years of employment were divided into three categories: employees who had worked one to 10 years, employees who had worked more than 10 years through 21 years, and employees who had worked more than 21 years. Gender included male and female.

## Population and Sample

For this study the population and sample were the employees within the USF System in the employee classifications of faculty, staff, and administration at each of the four campuses. The subgroups for the three regional campuses, USFSP (N = 318, n = 69), USFSM (N = 156, n = 89), and USFP (N = 124, n = 53) were significantly smaller than the USFT subgroup for the study. To be consistent in the survey procedures for the regional campus subgroups and USFT (N = 5672, n = 422), all employees received a survey and random sampling was not used. Gay, Mills and Airasian, (2009) state, “for smaller populations, say, N=100 or fewer, there is little point in sampling: survey the entire population” (p. 133). While the entire population was large, the subgroups for selected campuses were small.

Chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) Goodness-of-Fit test determine that generalizations could be made for the USFT, USFSP, USFSM, and USFP and the samples were representative of the population by gender for each campus.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis

Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), interaction effects, main effects, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Tukey pairwise comparisons were used to determine if there were statistically significant differences for campuses, employment category, years of employment, and gender for the four dependent variables, organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity. Table 3 (Appendix) provides the ANOVA results.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003), qualitative method using pre-assigned coding was used to analyze the data. Each response was reviewed and specific words or phrases were highlighted that related to the specific question being asked. Themes were developed and the themes and the response rates were reported in the findings.

## Results and Discussion

This study provides a snapshot of the employee perceptions about how separate accreditation of four campuses would affect organizational change in their institutions. The survey results identified significant statistical differences for campus location for all four dependent variables. Statistically significant results were found for the employment category dependent variables employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity. Table 4 (Appendix) displays the descriptive statistics. There were no significant differences found for years of employment or gender. The following discussion of the quantitative and qualitative results to consider about this organizational change is organized by the four dependent variables of organizational structure, employee relations, inter-campus relationships, and campus identity, and includes examples from the qualitative data and open ended responses collected to support these findings. Table 5 displays the statistics for the qualitative data for each campus, and Table 6 lists the statistics for the dependent variables for each survey item by campus.

### Organizational Structure

Seven survey items for the dependent variable organizational structure addressed “accelerated decision making,” “goal and objective achievement,” “effective operations,”

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“design of the USF System,” “independent hiring decisions,” “independent decisions for student services,” and “independent decisions for business services.” The organizational structure survey items were based on Bolman and Deal’s (2003) description of the structural frame which asks the question, “Is the organizational structure in place to meet the mission, goals, and work processes for the organization?” One of the assumptions of the structural frame is stated as follows: “structures must be designed to fit an organization’s circumstances” (p. 45).

Survey result revealed the participants from USFSM (4.31) and USFP (4.35), the campuses not currently separately accredited at the time of this study, had statistically significantly higher averages for the organizational structure survey items. The non-accredited campuses (USFSM and USFP) seemed to anticipate that separate accreditation would provide greater benefits in the organization of their colleges and the System. Selective respondents’ data from the major benefits section of the survey describe specific areas of where the respondents expect more efficient operations for the regional campuses.

“speedier attention to forms, student and staff needs. . .”;

“will allow USFSP to grow with greater independence to achieve its unique mission and goals”;

“to be supportive of the flagship campus and to enhance the work of the USF (S)ystem”;

“ability to recruit and retain qualified faculty who have a mission to support a smaller institution”;

“ability to develop, engage, and better serve its student body and campus community”.

For USFT (3.57) and USFSP (3.41), the separately accredited institutions, survey respondents’ lower perceptions indicates that those institutions with separate accreditation did not see as many benefits in the organizational structure of their institutions or the USF System as a result of separate accreditation. The qualitative data collected from USFT survey respondents on the major limitations of separate accreditation for the regional campuses may reveal some of the reasons why 21% of the respondents disagreed with the “design of the USF System.” Some of the data are as follows:

“I believe it creates a disjointed sense of university”;

“no system level coordination for mission differentiation or degree programs”;

“redundant services provided at multiple campuses”.

Likewise, one of the themes with the highest response rate identified as a major limitation for separate accreditation in the qualitative research from all four campuses was the “lack of USF System infrastructure.” The theme implies the respondents understand there will be many challenges to address as the university moves to restructure its regional campuses and create the USF System.

Notably, more than 60% of the respondents from USFSM and USFP strongly agree with the belief that with separate accreditation they would be able to hire employees with commitments to their individual campuses, without approval from the USFT. The past practice had been for the Tampa campus to exert considerable control over the hiring of employees on the separate campuses. The following comments from the USFSM and USFP survey respondents about the major strengths of separate accreditation provide support for the “hiring decisions based on mission and goals”:

“ability to develop programs, facilitate faculty promotion/tenure, and organize in ways that are meaningful to fulfilling the mission”;

“greater autonomy in hiring and evaluating faculty and staff”.

Responses for “effective operations” and “independent decisions regarding business services” produced similar results. Survey respondents’ means were higher from USFSM and USFP the campuses seeking separate accreditation, indicating they were anticipating more “effective operations” and “independent decisions regarding business services” once they were separately accredited institutions. Respondents’ means from USFT, the separately accredited institution, were lower than the responses from the two campuses seeking accreditation. Survey respondents’ means were the lowest from USFSP revealing lower expectations that separate accreditation would eliminate many problems associated with “effective operations” and “independent decisions regarding business services.” Two of the more passionate comments from survey respondents about the major limitations of separate accreditation for the USFSP are as follows:

“same administrative fights! Campus cannot stand on its own”;

“We still must get approval for administrative and business functions through Tampa HR, Finance, Budgets, Purchasing etc.”

It is important to consider the fact that USFSP began the process of becoming a separately accredited institution in 2001 before the conceptualization of the umbrella USF System. By being the first campus to achieve separate accreditation, it is likely that USFSP survey respondents were involved in the initial challenges of creating new workflows and processes and they found there were still problems with the USF System which they believed prevented effective operations.

The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that those institutions that were anticipating separate accreditation had greater hopes for the improvement of many issues of organizational structure. Those institutions that were already accredited were more realistic about the organizational change that could occur with separate accreditation. An additional finding was that all four campuses were concerned about how business systems and work flow between the institutions would take place in the evolving USF System organizational structure. It appears that all institutions were anticipating further confusion and conflict as the USF System structure evolved.

## **Employee Relations**

As the university moves to restructure into the USF System with separately accredited institutions, survey respondents’ perceptions relating to employee relations were examined. There were seven employee relations survey items. They addressed “more meaningful and satisfying work experiences,” “improved working conditions for employees by not having to report/coordinate work through the USFT departments,” “alleviating feelings of isolation,” and “increases in responsibilities and workloads with regards to separate accreditation” for regional campuses.

The theoretical concept for the employee relations survey items was Bolman and Deal’s (2003) human resources frame. One of the assumptions for this frame is that employers serve the needs of employees by supplying them a place to share their talents and produce products for employers. The frame also addresses those issues that create a supportive work environment that make employees feel they are a significant part of the organization. Survey results in the employee relations section revealed the consistent theme of this study, with the survey respondents from USFSM and USFP, the campuses seeking separate accreditation having statistically significant higher averages, respectively (4.07, 3.97) than the survey respondents

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from USFT and USFSP, the separately accredited institutions (3.31, 3.35). Additional survey results for employment category indicated faculty (3.59) and staff (3.60) had statistically significant higher averages than administrative (3.34) employees.

The individual survey items for employee relations section queried survey respondents' on how they felt about their jobs in relation to separate accreditation for the regional campuses. More than 30% of the survey respondents from USFSM and USFP strongly agreed that separate accreditation would bring about "a more meaningful and satisfying work experience." This indicates that survey respondents were anticipating greater satisfaction with their work experiences once separate accreditation was achieved, while USFT (14%) and USFSP (8.7%) survey respondents' lower frequencies for strongly agree, indicate that they are not anticipating that regional accreditation would bring a "more meaningful and satisfying work" situation.

There was general agreement from USFT, USFSM, and USFP survey respondents that "faculty, staff and administrators employed at the regional campuses' working conditions would improve because of not having to report/coordinate through the USFT departments." USFSM and USFP, the campuses seeking separate accreditation produced higher means with 42% of the respondents from each campus indicating that they strongly agree. This reflects a greater anticipation for more autonomy and ownership from USFSM and USFP respondents in their daily tasks and responsibilities once they were separately accredited. It appears from the lower means and general equal distribution of the frequencies that respondents from USFSP have determined that "improved working conditions" do not necessarily improve as a result of separate accreditation.

Furthermore, the survey respondents were asked to respond to the question, "I feel my personal situation as an employee will be benefited by separate accreditation." The survey respondents from the campuses seeking separate accreditation (USFSM and USFP) indicated they are anticipating benefits to their personal situations. More than half of the survey respondents from USFSP reported there would be no benefit to their personal situation because of separate accreditation. This would seem to indicate that respondents understood there were many continuing problems in their own institutions and with the relationship to the Tampa campus. For USFT employees, over 70% of the survey respondents' indicated their personal situation as an employee would not be affected because of separate accreditation.

Survey respondents from all four campuses were in agreement that "job responsibilities" and "workloads" would increase for employees at the regional campuses. Notably, more than 50% of the USFSP survey respondents strongly agreed that "job responsibilities" and "workloads" would increase due to separate accreditation. At the time of this survey, USFSP had been accredited for four years and the higher means reflect the realities of increases in workload and responsibilities once the campuses achieve separate accreditation.

Qualitative data collected from survey respondents in this study support the notion that workloads and responsibilities have increased for survey respondents because of separate accreditation for the regional campuses. Survey respondents' revelations on the major limitations of separate accreditation for the regional campuses to support this assumption are as follows:

"More work, less recognition. Too many plates to balance at one time therefore, preventing any one job to be done really well";

"Staff suffer. Sick of hearing 'do more with less', more like 'do everything with nothing";

"Workload and responsibility increase for all staff and administration."



Finally, “alleviating feelings of isolation at the regional campuses” revealed the lowest score for the employee relations dependent variable. The theme continues with USFSM and USFP, the campuses seeking separate accreditation, having higher means from survey respondents than those from USFSP and USFT. The frequency percentages for USFP (32% neutral), USFSM (29% disagree), and USFSP (27% disagree), seem to reflect that employees do not necessarily see that by becoming individually separate accredited institutions, there will be a difference in “alleviating the feeling of isolation” from USFT for the regional campus survey respondents. Survey respondents’ major limitation qualitative comments for separately accredited campuses provide support for this observation:

“Many LIKED feeling more connected to USFT. . .many are feeling more disconnected from USFT”;

“Isolation from faculty colleagues in our disciplines—our faculty just isn’t big enough yet.”

In summary, the perceptions of survey respondents were in support of the belief that employee relations would improve for the two non-accredited campuses, but there seemed to be an understanding that separate accreditation alone would not solve all employee issues. Also, the research study implies that workload and responsibilities will increase for employees at the regional campuses once they achieve separate accreditation.

### **Inter-campus Relationships**

Research questions for this study addressed inter-campus relationships, based on the political frame of Bolman and Deal (2003). They state, “The political frame views organizations as living, screaming political arenas that host a complex web of individual and group interests” (p. 186). There were six survey items on the survey instrument that addressed inter-campus relationships. These items asked respondents about “allowing local communities to support regional campuses/institutions,” “greater identification for marketing, fundraising, and local support,” “equitable distribution of scarce resources,” “ability to create academic programs,” “leverage identity with the USF System,” and “recognition from state and national politicians to facilitate goals” for the separately accredited institutions.

Consistently, survey respondents’ statistically significant higher scores from USFSM (3.96) and USFP (4.29), the campuses seeking separate accreditation, revealed their anticipation of better inter-campus relationships once they achieve separate accreditation. The survey respondents from USFT (3.33) and USFSP (3.26), the institutions with separate accreditation, revealed lower responses, indicating they anticipate less change in inter-campus relationships because of separately accredited institutions. Also, for the inter-campus relationship dependent variable survey results for employment category revealed staff (3.73) means were statistically significantly higher than faculty (3.47) and administration (3.38).

When analyzing the specific survey items, the survey respondents from all four campuses agreed or strongly agreed that separate accreditation would “allow local communities to support regional campuses/institutions” and “allow regional campuses/institutions greater identification for marketing, fund raising, and community support” for their institutions.

USFP faculty and staff produced the highest mean and 57% of the respondents strongly agreed to “greater ability to create academic programs for local needs,” while USFSM survey respondents produced the second highest score with 48% of the survey respondents strongly agreeing. USFT and USFSP, the separately accredited institutions survey respondents’ means

were lower, although 40% of respondents agreed that separate accreditation would allow “greater ability to create academic programs for local needs.” Major limitations of separate accreditation reported from a survey respondent may indicate that autonomy to create new academic programs was still a major bureaucratic problem: “all requests for new programs. . . must be approved by a Tampa based department.” In contrast, the qualitative results, revealed academic decisions was one of the themes reported as a major strength of separate accreditation for the regional campuses that produced a higher response from survey participants from USFSP, USFSM, and USFP. Survey data from respondents about major strengths of ability to create academic programs on the regional campuses is as follows:

“Greater autonomy in developing programs and courses”;

“Can design programs around USFSP’s Strategic Plan”;

“Give(s) USFP the ability to craft unique programs for students which makes the entire USF System strong in the long-run.”

Higher means were reported from each campus for “leveraging a unique identity within the USF System” and “recognition from politicians to facilitate goals” because of separate accreditation. Interestingly, USFP survey respondents strongly agreed (64%, 40%) respectively, possibly reflecting the technology based mission that is implied with their unique name, USF Polytechnic. Survey respondents’ higher averages for this item generally support USFP’s anticipation of creating a unique marketing brand around a concentration of technology programs deemed important to the area. One of the major strengths of separate accreditation reported from a survey respondent states that separate accreditation will “allow USFP to fully pursue the Polytechnic model and create a truly unique public university offering.”

Survey respondents from all four campuses rated “equitable distribution of scarce resources” the lowest out of all six survey items for inter-campus relationships. More than 20% survey respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and this may indicate “equitable distribution of resources” may be difficult to accomplish. This may be a concern for each campus, particularly in the current state and federal budget scenarios at the time of this study. USFT and USFSM survey respondents reported budget and resources as a theme with a higher response rate in their qualitative responses. The following examples from the major limitation of separate accreditation for regional campuses from the qualitative data support this assumption:

“Separate accreditation creates more competition for funding”;

“Money! Money! Money! Or the lack of. . .”;

“Limited funds to achieve goals”;

“Increased costs, workloads with limited staff resources.”

Although the idea of “equitable distribution of scarce resources” was the lowest rated overall, USFP survey respondents rated this item the highest. This may be because they have support for their campus from politicians who are in key state legislative positions to assist with funding resources for their campus. Bolman and Deal’s (2003) political frame addresses the importance of building coalitions and power when negotiating for scarce resources and the ability to bargain and negotiate for resources, and this may have had some influence on the more positive responses from USFP. Scarce resources not only included funding, but also may include employee time. For example, one survey respondent stated one of the major limitations for achieving separate accreditation for USFSM is that it “require[s] scarce resources, especially time.” In relation, USFT and USFSP lower scores for “equitably distribution of scarce resources” reflect the increase in resources needed for campuses to become separately

accredited. Data collected in the employee relations survey items reveal “increases in workloads and responsibilities” from survey respondents and this may be related to “scarce resources.”

Overall the study implies support for the inter-campus relationships for the USF System and separately accredited institutions. USFSM and USFP survey results imply enthusiasm for the power to make decisions regarding academic program, marketing and leveraging a unique identity as separately accredited institutions. The study reveals there is some concern for equitability of scarce resources within the USF System. Data collected in the employee relations survey items reveal “increases in workloads and responsibilities” from survey respondents and this may be related to “scarce resources.”

## **Campus Identity**

The survey instrument contained five survey items that addressed campus identity. This dependent variable was based on Bolman and Deal’s (2003) symbolic frame, which describes the culture, beliefs, and values within an institution. The specific items addressed “enhancement of prestige and perceptions of education quality,” “furtherance of the goal of USFT AAU status,” “promoting a sense of community,” “creation of separate identity,” and “enhancing public understanding of the value of the regional campuses/institutions.”

The overarching theme of the research study continues with the survey participants’ averages for the five survey items from the campuses seeking separate accreditation, USFSM (3.85) and USFP (4.10), being statistically higher than USFT (3.24) and USFSP (3.24), the institutions currently separately accredited. In addition, survey results revealed staff (3.67) had higher statistically significant means than faculty (3.35) and administration (3.30). As in the previous three areas considered, those institutions seeking accreditation have an anticipation that separate accreditation will assist in creating individual cultures and allow for greater campus identity.

USFP, USFSM, and USFSP survey respondents’ revealed higher mean responses for “prestige and perception of educational quality at the regional campuses/institutions,” with USFP mean being the highest and 40% of respondents indicating they strongly agree, USFSM the second highest with 27% of the respondents indicating they strongly agree, and USFSP the third highest, with 24% responding they agree. USFT administrators and faculty survey respondents revealed the lowest average for this item, with 27% of the respondents disagreeing. Historical research has implied there is the perception that education quality on branch campuses can be inferior to educational quality on main campuses (Sammartino, 1964; Schindler, 1952). Survey results from USFT seem to imply that respondents believe that accreditation alone doesn’t make the difference. Survey data from some of the USFT survey respondents seem to support the perception that separate accreditation for the regional campuses may not alone make a difference in the perceptions of education quality. Major limitations of separate accreditation for regional campuses from survey respondents support this assumption:

“Even those regional campuses with their own accreditation suffer from a public perception of being less than the “real” university”;

“Degree from the regional campus may not be as prestigious or recognizable as the main campus.”

USFT participants agreed (41%) with the item “furthering the goal of achieving the AAU status for USFT.” This implies that the survey respondents from USFT do perceive achieving separate accreditation for the regional campuses will affect the goal of achieving the AAU status

for USFT. USFT has been accredited for many years and is likely seen by most in the USF System as the campus that will receive greater support and recognition, particularly if AAU status is obtained. The separate accreditation will likely allow USFT to provide a better institution profile to enhance AAU qualification.

“Promoting the campus sense of community” and “creation of a separate identity” revealed higher scores for all four campuses for these items, with USFSM and USFP, the campuses seeking separate accreditation, revealing the higher means. Survey respondents agreed with 40% frequency rate, from all four campuses that “promoting the campus sense of community” and “creation of a separate identity” would be a result of separate accreditation for the regional campuses. Quotes from survey respondents from the major strengths of separate accreditation for regional campuses support the higher means for “promoting the campus sense of community”:

“The quality we have and always have had gives us a sense of pride second to none. We ARE USFSP!!!”;

“We will come into our own—defining ourself [sic], . . .our reputation for quality, responsiveness.”

In addition, the major strengths of separate accreditation for regional campuses from all four campuses survey respondents repeatedly produced data to support the higher means for “creation of a separate identity”:

“Individual goals/objectives more easily met; allows for individual identity”;

“Develop a unique identity”;

“Ability to create separate identity”;

“Transition entirely to a polytechnic vision.”

Interestingly, USFSP survey respondents’ means were the lowest for the items addressing the “campus sense of community” and “creation of a separate identity.” USFSP is the oldest of the three regional campuses and the closest in physical distance from USFT. Identity and culture for the separately accredited regional institutions may take time to develop. Some survey participants may be experiencing a sense of withdrawal from USFT, as USFSP continues to develop its own identity and culture. Major limitations of separate accreditation from USFSP survey respondents’ suggests employees are experiencing the differences now that they are separately accredited:

“A Masters III institution does not have the same impact in grants, nor does it allow the focus on research”;

“No national recognition to a major research institution.”

Lastly, the campus identity section addressed “enhancing public understanding of the values of the regional campuses/institutions.” Again, the USFSM and USFP, the campuses seeking separate accreditation, had higher means for this item indicating they seem to perceive the public will have a better understanding of the value of their campuses once they achieve separate accreditation. USFT administrators and faculty respondents had the lowest averages for this item. USFSP administrators and faculty survey respondents also reported lower averages for this item. It is possible that separate accreditation doesn’t really do much to help the public understand the values of separate institutions. One of the major limitations for separately accredited campuses from a survey respondent supports this assumption: “No one outside academia has any idea what ‘separate accreditation’ means and why a regional campus might want it or would benefit from it.” In summary, more than half of the survey respondents from each of the four campuses reported they were supportive of separate accreditation for the

regional campuses (USFT 56% USFSP 78% USFSM 93% USFP 98%). The survey results indicated separate accreditation for the four campuses would enhance campus identity for the regional campuses, but would not necessarily enhance the public's understanding of accreditation. Implications support historical research with regards to the perception of education quality at regional campuses and suggest campus identity for the USF System and each of the four separately accredited institutions may take time to develop.

### **Conclusion**

This study is one attempt to measure the perceptions of employees about a major institutional change as it was taking place, and with the participants in different stages of the change process. The organizational change of creating a university system with separately accredited institutions is complex and fraught with challenge. As mentioned earlier, change continues for this university. Shortly after this research study was completed, in 2012 USFP was dissolved and the 12<sup>th</sup> university was created by the Florida Legislature, Florida Polytechnic University with its own separate organizational structure within the State University System. This study and future research studies within post-secondary educational institutions will add to the research and enhance our understanding of how to facilitate major organizational change within higher education institutions more effectively.

## Appendix

**Table 1**

Organizational Changes for the USF System

Timeline: Summer 2010 Pilot Study → Fall 2010 Research Study → Fall 2011 Results

USF System	Year Founded	Headcount* Fall 2009	Legislation Authorizing Separate Accreditation	Org. Change Date	Organization Change Description
USFT	1956	39,852	NA	2005	Became USF System with multi-campus units
USFSP	1965	3,900	2001	2006	Received separate accreditation from SACS and became an “institution.”
USFSM	1975	2,067	2001	2010	Submitted application to SACS. Received letter of delegation from USF President.
USFP*	1981	1,303	2008	2010	Anticipating letter of delegation from the USF President and beginning to prepare initial application for separate accreditation.

Source: USF System Facts 2009-2010

*Note:* USFP was dissolved and Florida Polytechnic University was established by the Florida Legislature in 2012 (Florida Statutes 1004.345)

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**Table 2**

Descriptive Statistics for each Campus by the Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	USFT <i>n=422(7%)</i>			USFSP <i>n=69(22%)</i>			USFSM <i>n=89(57%)</i>			USFP <i>n=53(43%)</i>		
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>SK</i>	<i>KU</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>SK</i>	<i>KU</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>SK</i>	<i>KU</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>SK</i>	<i>KU</i>
Organizational Structure	3.57(.90)	-.54	.08	3.41(.95)	-.34	-.49	4.31(.63)	-.96	.56	4.35(.58)	-.81	.48
Employee Relations	3.35(.86)	-.27	-.05	3.31(.78)	-.88	.22	4.07(.74)	-.85	.77	3.97(.59)	-.70	1.35
Inter-campus Relationships	3.33(.92)	-.35	-.26	3.26(.95)	-.25	-.79	3.96(.76)	-.29	-.79	4.29(.56)	-.44	-.63
Campus Identity	3.24(.93)	-.15	-.45	3.24(1.05)	-.16	-.60	3.85(.85)	-.31	-.52	4.10(.59)	.024	-1.27

*Note.* n = sample; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; SK = skewness; KU = kurtosis; Outliers were found in the following categories = USFT Organizational Structure, Employee Relations, Inter-campus relationships; USFSP Employee Relations; USFSM and USFP Organizational Structure, Employee Relations

**Table 3**

Summary Table for ANOVA Main Effects by the Dependent Variables

Source	SS	df	MS	F	<i>f</i>	<i>p</i>
<i>Organizational Structure</i>						
Between Campus	65.13	3	21.71	30.04	.3844	.0001
Between Employment Category	3.65	2	1.82	2.52	-	.0810
Error	440.77	610	.7226	-	-	-
Total	511.98	615	-	-	-	-
<i>Employee Relations</i>						
Between Campus	48.06	3	16.02	24.33	.3479	.0001
Between Employment Category	4.87	2	2.43	3.70	.1107	.0254
Error	397.11	603	.6585	-	-	-
Total	452.85	608	-	-	-	-
<i>Inter-campus Relationships</i>						
Between Campus	64.49	3	21.50	28.22	.3738	.0001
Between Employment Category	8.71	2	4.36	5.72	.1377	.0035
Error	461.65	606	.7617	-	-	-
Total	536.86	611	-	-	-	-
<i>Campus Identity</i>						
Between Campus	53.31	3	17.77	21.57	.3270	.0001
Between Employment Category	9.91	2	4.96	6.02	.1413	.0026
Error	498.33	605	.8237	-	-	-
Corrected Total	562.18	610	-	-	-	-

Note. SS = Type III Sums of Squares; *df* = Degrees of Freedom; MS = Mean Squares, F = Wilks' Lambda statistic; *f* = Cohen Effect Size; *p* < .05.

**Table 4**

Employment Category Main Effect Means for Statistically Significant Dependent Variables

Dependent Variable	Administration	Faculty	Staff
	<i>n</i> =217 <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i> =242 <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>n</i> =130 <i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )
Employee Relations	3.34(.85)	3.59(.89)	3.60(.92)
Inter-campus relationships	3.38(.86)	3.47(.98)	3.73(.99)
Campus Identity	3.30(.83)	3.35(.88)	3.67(.88)



**Table 5**  
Section 7 Additional Comments Descriptive Statistics

Questions/Comment*	USFT <i>N=5672</i>		USFSP <i>N=318</i>		USFSM <i>N=156</i>		USFP <i>N=124</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Major strengths of separate accreditation for the regional campuses/institution	203	3.5	36	11	58	37	41	33
2. Major limitations of separate accreditation for the regional campuses/institution	220	3.8	36	11	61	39	29	23
3. To what degree have the implications of separate accreditation been communicated to you as an employee?	210	3.7	35	11	58	37	32	26
4. I support separate accreditation for the regional campuses/institution.	366	6	65	20	86	55	50	40
5. I feel my personal situation as an employee will be benefited by separate accreditation for the regional campuses/institution.	368	6	63	20	82	53	48	39

*Note.* *n* = sample size. \*The respondents from USFSP, USFSM, and USFP replied to each item in relation to their campus. The respondents from USFT replied to each item in relation to the three regional campuses. (See Appendix 23-26 for surveys)

**Table 6**

Survey Items Averages for Dependent Variables for USFT, USFSP, USFSM, and USFP

Survey Item	USFT n=422(7%) M(SD)	USFSP n=69(22%) M(SD)	USFSM n=89(57%) M(SD)	USFP n=53(43%) M(SD)
<i>Organizational Structure</i>	3.57(.90)	3.41(.95)	4.31(.63)	4.35(.58)
1. will accelerate the decision making process for regional campuses/institution	3.55(1.14)	3.66(1.26)	4.51(.75)	4.38(.83)
2. will enable regional campuses/institution to achieve its individual goals and objectives	3.72(1.09)	3.42(1.28)	4.36(.81)	4.51(.62)
3. will allow regional campuses/institution to operate more effectively	3.25(1.20)	2.98(1.40)	4.28(.92)	4.28(.90)
4. supports the design of the four campuses/institution as a university system	3.07(1.37)	3.67(1.24)	4.03(.97)	4.40(.69)
5. will allow regional campuses/institution to make hiring decisions based on its campus mission and goals	3.89(1.01)	3.70(1.12)	4.53(.78)	4.60(.61)
6. will enable regional campuses/institution to make independent decisions regarding student services	3.79(1.00)	3.61(1.03)	4.32(.78)	4.42(.71)
7. will enable regional campuses/institution to make independent decisions regarding business services	3.61(1.12)	2.85(1.28)	4.07(.98)	4.04(1.03)
<i>Employee Relations</i>	3.35(.86)	3.31(.78)	4.07(.74)	3.97(.59)
1. will create a more meaningful and satisfying work experience for employees at regional campuses/institution	3.18(1.15)	2.58(1.30)	3.86(1.14)	3.83(1.05)
2. will improve the working conditions for faculty at regional campuses/institution by not having to report to the USF Tampa academic departments	3.17(1.22)	3.06(1.28)	4.3(3.86)	4.27(.86)
3. will improve the working conditions for staff at regional campuses/institution by not having to coordinate work through the USF Tampa academic departments	3.23(1.21)	3.05(1.34)	4.15(1.03)	4.07(1.00)
4. will improve the working conditions for administration at regional campuses/institution by not having to coordinate work through the USF Tampa academic departments	3.29(1.22)	2.92(1.16)	4.26(.96)	4.30(.70)
5. will alleviate feelings of isolation at regional campuses/institution	2.82(1.22)	2.51(1.09)	3.33(1.28)	3.00(1.14)
6. will increase job responsibilities for employees at regional campuses/institution	3.80(1.07)	4.45(.89)	4.47(.68)	4.23(.96)
7. will increase workloads (tasks) for employees at regional campuses/institution	3.70(1.13)	4.50(.82)	4.42(.82)	4.25(.94)

**Table 6 (Continued)**

Survey Items Averages for Dependent Variables for USFT, USFSP, USFSM, and USFP

Survey Item	USFT	USFSP	USFSM	USFP
	n=422(7%) <i>M(SD)</i>	n=69(22%) <i>M(SD)</i>	n=89(57%) <i>M(SD)</i>	n=53(43%) <i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Inter-campus Relationships</i>	3.33(.92)	3.26(.95)	3.96(.76)	4.29(.56)
1. will allow local communities to support regional campuses/institution	3.36(1.07)	3.36(1.18)	3.98(.85)	4.00(.98)
2. will allow regional campuses/institution to have a greater regional identification for marketing, fund raising and local community support	3.61(1.13)	3.50(1.18)	4.09(.98)	4.42(.76)
3. will allow scarce resources to be distributed more equitably within the system	2.55(1.18)	2.17(1.16)	3.00(1.32)	3.50(1.14)
4. will enable regional campuses/institution greater ability to create academic programs that respond to local/regional needs	3.59(1.10)	3.55(1.05)	4.39(.72)	4.60(.61)
5. will position regional campuses/institution to leverage a unique identity within the USF System	3.47(1.11)	3.50(1.22)	4.09(.95)	4.69(.47)
6. will allow regional campuses/institution recognition among the state and national politicians in the region to facilitate regional goals	3.22(1.20)	3.29(1.23)	3.84(.95)	4.36(.71)
<i>Campus Identity</i>	3.24(.93)	3.24(1.05)	3.85(.85)	4.10(.59)
1. will enhance the prestige and perception of educational quality at regional campuses/institution	3.36(1.27)	3.20(1.26)	3.53(1.22)	4.13(.99)
2. will further the goal of achieving the AAU status for USF Tampa	3.61(1.31)	3.00(1.26)	3.81(1.10)	3.73(1.04)
3. will promote each regional campus/institution sense of community	2.55(1.02)	3.44(1.33)	4.13(.85)	4.19(.82)
4. will allow each regional campus/institution to create a separate identity	3.59(.98)	3.35(1.31)	4.09(.93)	4.44(.68)
5. will enhance public understanding of the value of regional campuses/institution	3.47(1.23)	3.02(1.28)	3.67(1.15)	3.93(.99)

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