

Partisan Differences on Higher Education Accountability Policy: A Multi-State Study of Elected State Legislators

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Abstract

Public institutions in the United States face a policy challenge to adapt to accountability expectations among a variety of stakeholders (Bogue & Hall, 2012; Thelin, 2004; Richardson & Martinez, 2009). Among the major stakeholders are state legislators who hold fiscal and policy influence over public institutions, but these leaders have not yet been studied to understand the extent to which political leaders differ on higher education purpose and accountability definition, instruments, and indicators. The present study examined Republican and Democrat state legislator differences on higher education purpose and accountability. The results indicated partisan differences of perspective on higher education.

A nationwide call upon state political leaders made in 2006 by the National Conference of State Legislatures articulated that reform in higher education was not only a necessity, but also a state responsibility (Bell, 2006). The call for state action has occurred during a time of rich discussion and debate on higher education accountability (Bogue & Aper, 2000; Richardson & Martinez, 2009). This dialogue has made clear that public institutions of higher learning in the United States are faced with significant leadership challenges to adapt to and meet the performance expectations of a variety of stakeholder groups (Richardson & Martinez, 2007; Bell, 2006). State legislators have been actively pursuing efforts to reform higher education to make better use of state resources and improve quality in its performance outcomes (American Association of State Colleges & University, 2006; Richardson & Martinez, 2009). In 2010, for instance, the Tennessee legislature passed significant higher education reform that called for increased effort to enhance graduation rates; to eliminate duplicity in program offerings; and to enhance the quality of student learning (Complete College Tennessee Act, 2010). The pressure to meet reform efforts such as these has intensified as legislative stakeholder criticism on higher education performance is coupled with steadily declining public support to cover operational expenses (State Higher Education Executive Officers, 2007; Rafool, 2010).

Despite the visible calls for accountability and reform, research suggests that the accountability movement in public higher education is affected by insufficient stakeholder dialogue and consensus (Bogue & Hall, 2012; Zemsky, 2009; Kirwan, 2007; Mundhenk, 2006). Stakeholders agree that higher education is in need of reform, but within these efforts to understand stakeholder criticism there is insufficient knowledge about the extent to which major stakeholders align or differ on various characteristics of accountability (Bogue & Hall, 2012). How will college and university leaders design credible accountability policy if the stakeholder groups disagree among one another on its goals and instruments? Despite the lingering questions and uncertainties, the push for accountability marches along at ever-increasing speed.

Varying Perspectives on Higher Education Accountability

Stakeholder perspectives on higher education have indicated a significant leadership challenge with regard to the capability of institutions to understand and address expectations from a wide and influential audience (Bogue & Hall, 2012; Mundhenk, 2006; Morse, 2011). Several research studies on higher education's major business, political, and academic stakeholder groups have illustrated that the perspectives that these individuals hold over accountability are significant, but these viewpoints are also diverse. For instance, Morse (2011) and Bogue and Hall (2012) addressed the complexity that higher education leaders face to adapt to the policy perspectives of the major stakeholder groups. Morse interviewed a sample of 19 institutional, legislative, and business leaders to understand what forms of outcome evidence these individuals report would help build confidence in accountability and performance. Stakeholders reported that forms of evidence that indicate student-learning outcomes were needed. Legislative and business leaders, in particular, were dissatisfied with the quality of graduates that institutions were producing and wanted to see initiatives undertaken that focused on the improvement of student learning (Morse, 2011). Despite these concerns, all of the major stakeholder groups expressed dissatisfaction with insufficient dialogue on the steps that institutions could take to construct accountability policy.

Bogue and Hall (2012) further illustrated the challenge of adapting accountability efforts to meet stakeholder expectations through their multi-state study among corporate, academic, and political leaders on the purpose, design, and objectives of accountability. The authors demonstrated that while accountability is a significant policy goal among the stakeholder groups, leaders had differences of opinion on the value and validity of the forms of evidence, definitions, and goals of accountability. For instance, the stakeholder groups differed on the value of reports that indicate fiscal and educational performance as a definition of accountability and the appropriateness of ratings and rankings as a form of evidence (Bogue & Hall, 2012). Further, these groups differed on their understanding of higher education purpose; academic leaders differed from both legislative and business leaders, for instance, on higher education as a place for discovery of student talents, skills, and interests (Bogue & Hall, 2012). These studies revealed important perspective about the challenges institutional leaders face to meet accountability expectations due to the variety of conflicting viewpoints among stakeholders. The research did not explore the presence of differences of opinion within these stakeholder groups, however.

Higher Education Accountability as a Political Issue

A report released by the National Conference of State Legislatures (2006) suggested heavy concern with the performance of higher education by asserting the following: "There is a crisis in American higher education. It has crept up on us quickly. It has become clear that the states and the federal government have neglected their responsibilities to ensure a high quality college education for all citizens. Too many students are falling through the cracks. As a result, U.S. citizens are not achieving their full potential, state economies are suffering, and the United States is less competitive in the global economy." But as higher education institutions and political leaders move forward to improve performance and ensure quality, what steps should be taken to address criticisms and concerns of higher education? What leadership issues will affect higher education's ability to demonstrate accountability through increased efforts on the part of political

leaders to demand evidence of performance from institutions?

As one example, legislators have voiced concern that universities insufficiently demonstrate responsible fiscal stewardship. However, legislative perspectives on accountability policies and priorities up to this point have been inadequately addressed in the literature. Mundhenk (2006) articulated that legislators expect demonstrated stewardship of resources, but on what forms of evidence, specifically, would these individuals share consensus as an indicator of fiscal performance? As Zemsky (2009) pointed out in his critique of higher education reform efforts, those who express concern with higher education performance often fail to articulate an alternative.

In addition to a lack of clarity over what political leaders envision as the solution to higher education accountability policy, research has indicated that political leaders have differing priorities on higher education performance. Scholarship has investigated the higher education policy preferences of political leaders, but the literature has not focused, specifically, on accountability (Doyle, 2007; Mundhenk, 2006). Doyle (2007) examined the policy positions of congressional Democrats and Republicans as they related to their constituents. The study provided some evidence for partisan ideological differences between congressional representatives on higher education policy priorities with Republicans tending to focus priorities on institutional accountability and Democrats citing opportunity and affordability as preferred priorities (Doyle, 2007).

The difficulty of efforts to address policy priorities and concerns among legislators is compounded by the presence of distrust among these stakeholders on the credibility of evidence to report performance (Roberson-Scott, 2005; Morse, 2011). For instance, Roberson-Scott (2005) interviewed 15 legislative leaders within Tennessee and found that these stakeholders perceived that colleges and universities insufficiently demonstrated accountability. Legislators reported that institutional efforts to produce and report evidence were not credible and trustworthy, and stated that an independent body should be responsible for gathering evidence to heighten trustworthiness and credibility (Roberson-Scott, 2005). Morse's (2011) study indicated that legislators preferred an independent body of state government such as the State Comptroller's Office to be responsible for gathering accountability data, but academic leaders distrusted the ability of this office to adequately assess institutional performance.

Despite the growing significance of stakeholder interest in higher education accountability, it is evident that colleges and universities struggle with the task of responding to a variety of major stakeholders who hold influence on the policy priorities of institutions (Doyle, 2007; Morse, 2011; Roberson-Scott, 2005; Bogue & Hall, 2012). Institutional leaders struggle with unclear and differing policy priorities offered among critical stakeholders (Doyle, 2007; Mundhenk, 2006). Further, legislators and institutional leaders lack consensus on a credible source to compile and report accountability data (Morse, 2011; Roberson-Scott, 2005).

Therefore, the problem is that while the calls to improve performance through accountability have been made clear by political leaders, there is insufficient knowledge about the political and ideological challenges that impede the ability for higher education institutions to respond to legislator expectations and concerns. As a result, the purpose of the research is to identify the

significance and types of similarities and differences that exist among political leaders across six states and according to political party affiliation on higher education accountability policy. Specifically, the study will add to research by Bogue and Hall (2012) on major stakeholder perspectives of accountability. However, their multi-state study did not examine political leader differences along party lines on accountability policy. Based on prior research, the present study predicts that Republicans and Democrats will differ in terms of the purpose, instruments, and indicators of higher education accountability policy (Bogue & Hall, 2012; Doyle, 2007). Therefore, the present study will examine the data from their research to address the following questions:

- What differences exist among political leaders by party affiliation on the purpose and instruments of accountability policy?
- What differences exist among the political leaders by party affiliation on their attitudes toward the present status of higher education accountability?

Research Design and Methods

This study utilized a survey design. The questionnaire items were single-response ordinal likert-scale prompts for comparison across the political leaders. These responses indicated the extent to which legislators agree or disagree based on party affiliation to various aspects of accountability definition and purpose as well as methods and expectations for producing evidence of quality.

Participants

The study investigated the perspectives of political leaders across six states to gain a broad perspective from different geographic regions of the United States on higher education accountability policy. Every elected legislator in the states of Tennessee, Connecticut, Georgia, Michigan, Colorado, and Oregon was contacted to participate in the survey. The study included a total of 122 state political leaders (70 democrat, 52 republican). The legislative respondents varied by degree level with 54 percent holding an advanced (Master's, Doctoral, or Professional) degree; 37.3 percent had earned Associate's or Bachelor's degrees; and 8.7 percent held a High School Diploma. Tennessee (40%) and Oregon (25%) had the greatest percentage of total responses of the six states. Colorado (17.6%) and Georgia (12%) followed in total participation, and Connecticut (9.6%) and Michigan (8.8%) provided the smallest response rates out of the political leader participants.

Instrumentation

A quantitative survey design was utilized for this study because this approach allowed for the researcher to obtain data from which to make observations about participant attitudes and perceptions (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) stated that a survey design illustrates attitudes and perspectives of a population through a numeric description. The survey helped the researcher to collect data that allowed for comparisons to be made among the participant groups.

Content validity was established through submitting the survey instrument to an expert review process by faculty, administrators, and policy scholars across the United States. The survey inquired about various components associated with higher education accountability policy. Specifically, the survey sought to inform about the preferred definitions that stakeholders hold on accountability; the perceived effectiveness of existing accountability measures; expected priorities over institutional mission and purpose; the observed importance of stakeholders; the intended outcomes of accountability policy; and the overall importance of accountability evidence. Reliability for the survey was established by employing the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient test (.89).

Procedure and Data Analysis

The names and contact information of each elected state legislative representative across the six states were gathered for participation in the study. This study did not utilize a randomized sample of participants to guarantee that the respondents accurately represented the total population in each group. Instead, the survey was administered to each elected state legislator within the six states identified for the study.

Upon completion of data collection, the researcher first ran descriptive statistics to understand the frequencies of participants and general characteristics of the sample before running inferential statistical analyses. These descriptive analyses included frequencies of political party affiliation, state-by-state participation, and academic degree attainment among the political leader participants. To examine differences between political leaders on party affiliation, the researcher conducted chi-square tests for independence. The chi-square test for independence accounted for item-by-item analysis of the data.

Findings

A total of 122 state legislators (70 Democrat, 52 Republican) participated in the survey. The legislative respondents varied by degree level with 54 percent holding an advanced (Master's, Doctoral, or Professional) degree, 37.3 percent had earned Associate's or Bachelor's degrees, and 8.7 percent held a High School Diploma. Tennessee (40%) and Oregon (25%) had the greatest percentage of total responses of the six states. Colorado (17.6%) and Georgia (12%) followed, and Connecticut (9.6%) and Michigan (8.8%) provided the smallest response rates out of the political leader participants.

Political leaders were first asked to indicate how appropriate a variety of goals of accountability (Table 4) are. No significant differences between Republicans and Democrats were observed on the goals of higher education accountability, but their responses tended to indicate that legislators expect that accountability goals should help to prove adequate performance to stakeholders. For instance, Republicans ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .828$) and Democrats ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .714$) viewed accountability as a demonstration of achievement of established goals as a moderate to highly appropriate policy goal. Further, no significant differences were observed between the political leaders on their perspectives of what the effective instruments of accountability are to demonstrate accountability (Table 5).

Several significant differences were found between Republicans and Democrats on the purpose each ascribes to higher education (Table 6). For instance, Democrats placed more importance on the purpose of higher education as allowing for unimpeded truth, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 13.86, p < .01$, with Democrats placing greater importance on this indicator, on average, than Republicans. Further, a significant differences were observed on higher education purpose as a place for students to discover talents and skills, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 8.49, p < .05$, with Democrats placing greater importance than Republicans, on average, on this purpose of higher education was noted. Republicans and Democrats differed on the level of importance each ascribed to the purpose of higher education as to serve as a forum for the study and debate of public policy, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 13.62, p < .01$, with Democrats placing greater importance on this purpose than Republicans. Lastly, a significant effect for higher education purpose to serve as a depository for cultural history and heritage was noted, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 19.81, p < .001$, with Democrats again placing higher importance on this purpose than Republicans. Republicans ($M = 3.56, SD = .639$) and Democrats ($M = 3.66, SD = .535$) both tended to find higher education's purpose as a contributor to economic and workforce development to be moderately to highly important.

Differences between Republicans and Democrats were observed with regard to the responsibility that institutions hold to a variety of stakeholder groups (Table 7). For instance, a significant difference on the priority institutions held to the federal government, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 14.38, p < .01$, with Democrats indicating higher responsibility should be given than Republicans. Significant differences also existed between the major parties with regard to the responsibility institutions should hold to the local government, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 7.83, p = .05$, with Republicans reporting less responsibility toward this group than Democrats. Democrats ($M = 3.34, SD = .634$) and Republicans ($M = 3.27, SD = .795$) both viewed that higher education institutions held a moderate to high level of responsibility to state government.

A variety of significant differences were noted between the political leaders on their attitudes toward the present status of accountability efforts (Table 8). For instance, the political leaders differed on the extent to which they viewed that institutions will use cosmetic and adaptive responses to avoid disclosing unflattering information, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 23.96, p < .001$, with Republicans tending to place greater agreement on this statement than Democrats. Despite the presence of differences among the political leaders on attitudes toward accountability, both Democrats and Republicans expressed concern over the efforts currently underway for institutions to demonstrate performance through accountability.

The survey inquired with legislators on their desirability of a variety of accountability indicators. First, legislators were asked about their preferred enrollment indicators (Table 9), and despite the strong level of desirability of Republicans ($M = 3.69, SD = .506$) and Democrats ($M = 3.80, SD = .469$) alike on retention and graduation rates, differences were observed among the political leaders on enrollment trends and entering ability. For instance, a significant partisan difference was noted on the desirability of enrollment trends by race/ethnicity and gender, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 10.91, p < .05$, with Democrats desiring this indicator more, on average, than Republicans. Additionally, a significant effect existed between the political leaders with regard to entering academic ability as indicated by ACT or SAT score, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 17.19, p < .01$, with Republicans desiring this indicator more than Democrats.

State legislators were asked about their desirability of student learning outcomes as an indicator of accountability (Table 10). Republicans and Democrats placed a high level of desirability on indicators that report student field or major knowledge, analytical and critical thinking skills, and oral and written communication skills. However, partisan differences were observed with regard to the desirability of learning outcomes that assess and report liberal arts education as an indicator of performance. For example, a partisan effect, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 45.81, p < .001$, on knowledge and appreciation of other cultures as an indicator of student learning was observed between political leaders, with Democrats placing greater desirability than Republicans on this indicator.

Significant differences were found between Republicans and Democrats on the desirability of satisfaction among higher education constituency groups as an indicator of accountability (Table 11). Partisan effects were found for faculty and staff satisfaction as a desirable indicator, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 16.70, p = .001$, with Democrats indicating higher desirability than Republican, on average. Further, effects were observed for desirability of community and civic leader satisfaction, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 13.95, p < .01$, with Democrats placing higher value on this constituency group's satisfaction than Republicans.

Despite Republican ($M = 3.67, SD = .617$) and Democrat ($M = 3.87, SD = .487$) bipartisan desirability of faculty teaching performance records as an indicator of accountability (Table 12), numerous points of difference were also observed on the extent to which faculty indicators were a desired form of accountability evidence. In general, Democrats tended to place greater emphasis on the desirability of faculty indicators of performance compared to Republicans. For example, differences were observed between parties on the desirability of faculty salaries compared to peer institutions, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 17.41, p = .001$, with Democrats placing higher desirability than Republicans on this indicator.

Lastly, political leader respondents were asked about the desirability of fiscal indicators of performance to demonstrate accountability (Table 13). Republicans and Democrats differed on the desirability of state funding for institutions compared to designated peers, $\chi^2(3, N = 122) = 11.51, p < .01$, with Democrats placing greater desirability on this indicator than Republicans, on average. Despite this difference of perspective, the political leaders tended to find moderate to high value of many of the fiscal indicators of higher education performance.

Discussion

This study examined the differences of perspective that state political leaders held toward higher education accountability policy in the form of its purpose, instruments, and effect on institutional performance. The present research adds to the literature on the complexity of the accountability task – that colleges and universities face scrutiny from a wide stakeholder audience, but criticism has not been met with clarity and consensus on the steps institutions should take to be held accountable. The present study predicted that Republicans and Democrats differ in terms of the purpose, instruments, and indicators of higher education accountability policy.

As a major stakeholder group, state political leaders have demonstrated an interest in the improvement of higher education accountability. However, consistent with prior literature on

accountability that suggests a lack of stakeholder agreement on the purpose, instruments, and effect of accountability these leaders expressed a variety of differences based on their party affiliation (Bogue & Hall, 2012). Unless paths of consensus can be identified, the complexity and challenge of responding to a wide and differing stakeholder audience will persist for higher education leaders.

For instance, a major finding of this study was that Republicans and Democrats expressed differences on the purpose of higher education. Republicans were less inclined than Democrats to view higher education as a place for students to discover their talents and skills; as a depository for cultural history and heritage; and as a forum for the study and debate of public policy. Instead, political leaders tended to consent to the purpose of higher education as a contributor to economic and workforce development. The view that higher education is a venue for the production of the future workforce has been affirmed through prior research on stakeholder accountability preferences (Bogue & Hall, 2012; Morse, 2011; Roberson-Scott, 2005; Tipton-Rogers, 2004).

The “What’s a college for?” question is central to discussion on higher education accountability policy construction because each institutions’ indicators of performance will emanate from the ways in which each serves the public through mission. However, a lack of consensus among stakeholders in general, and legislators, in particular, poses a significant policy challenge to demonstrate performance if these individuals express differences on the purpose of higher education.

Despite several differences of opinion on preferences for a variety of performance indicators to demonstrate accountability, Republicans and Democrats tended to prefer outcome-oriented accountability evidence. Legislators tended to share consensus on the value of persistence and graduation rates as an indicator of performance, which prior research has also affirmed as an attractive indicator of performance for legislators (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2002; Bogue & Hall, 2012; Richardson & Martinez, 2009). The emphasis in outcomes can serve as a point of dialogue among stakeholders and institutional leaders with regard to the form that accountability evidence can take, but the results of this study suggest that discussion is needed on the appropriate instruments and indicators of performance.

If political leaders express differences on higher education purpose, then what might that suggest about the indicators of institutional performance that will be accepted as legitimate and credible among these stakeholders? Political leaders tended to agree on the value of fiscal audit reports to demonstrate acts of responsible stewardship, but differed on the value of state contributions to higher education compared to other states. The evidence gathered from this study has illustrated that while the possibility for consensus exists, a variety of differences complicate the ability for institutions to represent the complex set of responsibilities held to students, citizens, and the fields in which scholars are engaged all while acting as responsible stewards of resources. For instance, the results of the study indicated that Republicans tend to be less inclined than Democrats to find learning outcomes that traditionally align with a liberal arts education (i.e. learning about diverse cultures) to be a desirable form of accountability evidence.

As the world continues to flatten as Thomas Friedman (2005) put it with regard to the rapid

shrinking of our borders due to globalization, higher education will be tasked with preparing undergraduates with the education to be proficient within a constantly changing, increasingly diverse environment, and faculty will act not only as the developers and discoverers of new knowledge, but also as stewards along students' educational journeys. But at the same time, the pressure for institutions to demonstrate performance in a credible and compelling manner to a diverse stakeholder audience is critical to achieve the accountability task. What if the task of being accountable to one audience ignites criticism with performance to another?

Institutional leaders are also faced with the challenge of negative attitudes on the part of legislators toward the present steps to demonstrate accountability. Although there were significant attitudinal differences between Republicans and Democrats on a variety of accountability themes, these stakeholders tended to agree that institutionally-developed reports cannot be trusted and that independently-developed reports of accountability would be viewed as more credible. Who, then, should be responsible for compiling accountability evidence? Morse (2011) addressed this question through interviews with academic, political, and business leaders in Tennessee. Legislators shared consensus on the credibility of evidence gathered by the State Comptroller's Office given its perception among these leaders as an independent auditor. However, academic leaders responded by sharing their perspective that this source would inadequately capture the performance of colleges and universities and instead consented to the idea that the office could be one voice involved in accountability efforts (Morse, 2011). Further study could address the value of independent review such as major and field accreditation at demonstrating accountability given that these processes are well established and also viewed as credible among academic leaders (Morse, 2011, Bogue & Hall, 2012).

Despite a rich compilation of legislator perspectives in the study, there are limitations worth acknowledging. While this study investigated the relationship between Republicans and Democrats on higher education accountability perspectives, its focus did not address what priorities these leaders find most prudent to build confidence in higher education performance. Further research might address what these steps might be among the political leaders to focus the efforts among institutional leaders to address concerns with performance among legislators.

Overall, the study's findings are significant because they suggest that the development of accountability policy that responds effectively to stakeholder calls for performance evidence will not be achieved without consensus. The dissent on higher education purpose, the instruments and indicators to measure and report performance, and the attitudes legislators report on present accountability expressions highlight the difficulty placed upon institutional leaders to provide evidence of performance that is viewed as valuable across party lines. Without consensus, legislative stakeholders and the institutional leaders that rely upon public support to operate colleges and universities will continue to struggle to meet one another's expectations.

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Table 1.
Frequency of Political Leader Respondents by Party Affiliation

Party Affiliation	Frequency (%)
Democrat	70 (57.4)
Republican	52 (42.6)
Total	122

Table 2.
Frequency of Political Leader Respondents by Education Level

Degree Level	Frequency (%)
High School Diploma	11 (8.7)
Associate's Degree (AA, AS, etc.)	4 (3.2)
Bachelor's Degree (BS, BA, etc.)	43 (34.1)
Master's Degree (MA, MS, etc.)	35 (27.8)
Doctoral Degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)	5 (4.0)
Professional Degree (JD, MD, etc.)	28 (22.2)

Table 3.
Frequency of Political Leader Respondents by State and Party Affiliation

State	Democrat	Republican	Total (%)
Connecticut	10	2	12 (9.6)
Colorado	16	6	22 (17.6)
Georgia	4	9	15 (12)
Michigan	9	2	11 (8.8)
Oregon	15	9	25 (20)
Tennessee	16	24	40 (32)

Table 4.

Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on Goals of Accountability Policy

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Institution Achieves Established Goals	3.43	.714	3.50	.828	5.32	.150
Institution Demonstrates Fiscal and Management Integrity	3.47	.696	3.48	.828	3.90	.272
Institution is Responsive in Achieving State Goals	3.10	.705	3.10	.934	7.57	.056
Institution Offers Public Evidence on Educational and Fiscal Performance	3.46	.755	3.47	.864	.89	.828

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Appropriate, 2 = Somewhat Appropriate, 3 = Moderately Appropriate, and 4 = Highly Appropriate.

Table 5.

Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Preferred Instruments of Accountability

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Institution Accreditation	3.14	.804	2.92	1.02	6.12	.106
Major Field Accreditation	3.24	.711	3.10	.955	4.78	.189
Financial Audit Reports	3.20	.754	2.88	.878	4.64	.200
Ratings & Rankings such as U.S. News & World Report	2.57	.910	2.42	.936	2.36	.501

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Effective, 2 = Somewhat Effective, 3 = Moderately Effective, and 4 = Highly Effective.

Table 6.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Perception of Higher Education Purpose

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
To Contribute to Economic/Workforce Development	3.66	.535	3.56	.639	1.54	.464
To Encourage Student Discovery of Talents, Interests, & Values	3.64	.566	3.33	.810	8.49	.014
To Engage in Unimpeded Search for Truth	3.56	.673	3.15	.777	13.86	.003
To Serve as Forum for Study and Debate of Public Policy	3.31	.772	2.83	.857	13.62	.003
To Serve as Depository of Cultural History and Heritage	3.24	.751	2.58	.801	19.81	.000
To Build and Sustain Democracy	3.26	.879	3.00	.970	2.38	.497

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Moderately Important, and 4 = Highly Important.

Table 7.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Priority of Institutional Accountability to Selected Stakeholder Groups

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Alumni	2.93	.804	2.67	.810	2.98	.394
Business/Civic Leaders	3.04	.751	2.81	.817	3.05	.83
Citizens/Taxpayers	3.54	.630	3.42	.801	5.24	.073
Donors	2.93	.729	2.94	.938	6.84	.077
Federal Government	2.86	.787	2.38	1.013	14.38	.002
State Government	3.34	.634	3.27	.795	3.62	.305
Local Government	2.77	.871	2.37	.864	7.83	.050
Parents	3.47	.812	3.52	.671	1.93	.588
Students	3.84	.439	3.87	.397	.12	.944

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Responsible, 2 = Somewhat Responsible, 3 = Moderately Responsible, and 4 = Highly Responsible.

Table 8.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on Attitudes toward the Present Status of Accountability Efforts

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Accountability Data Submitted by Institutions Can Be Trusted	2.77	.487	2.52	.671	9.10	.028
Independent Financial & Audit Reports are More Valuable than Accreditation Reports	3.03	.659	3.27	.689	6.59	.086
Institutions Will Use Cosmetic and Adaptive Responses to Avoid Disclosing Unflattering Information	2.76	.576	3.27	.689	23.99	.000
Accountability Information is More Valuable When Developed by an Independent Evaluation than by a Board/Institution	3.03	.659	3.27	.630	4.33	.228
A Periodic Public Poll Should be Administered to Gauge Public Confidence in Higher Education	2.46	.716	2.40	.799	1.46	.692
Isolated Instances of Integrity Violations Overshadow Good Reports of Academic and Fiscal Stewardship	3.30	.574	3.06	.608	.12	.994

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, and 4 = Strongly Agree.

Table 9.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Desirability of Accountability Indicators – Enrollment Indicators

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Student Enrollment Trends by Gender, Ethnicity, etc.	2.84	.862	2.31	.940	10.91	.012
Student Entering Academic Ability (SAT/ACT score, etc.)	2.99	.648	3.29	.848	17.19	.001
Student Retention/ Graduation Rates	3.80	.469	3.69	.506	3.05	.217

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Desirable, 2 = Somewhat Desirable, 3 = Moderately Desirable, and 4 = Highly Desirable.

Table 10.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Desirability of Accountability Indicators – Student Learning Outcome Indicators

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Knowledge and Appreciation of Other Cultures	3.39	.728	2.27	.819	45.81	.000
Knowledge in a Specific or Major Field	3.66	.535	3.73	.490	.62	.733
Knowledge of Democratic Culture & Heritage	3.20	.791	3.00	.950	3.54	.316
Knowledge of Modes of Thought Associated with Pursuit of Truth	3.27	.741	2.75	.813	12.55	.006
Knowledge of Religious and Ethical Thought	2.83	.816	2.52	.918	4.73	.193
Proficiency in Artistic and Aesthetic Expression	2.77	.745	2.33	.810	11.72	.008
Proficiency in Analytical and Critical Thinking	3.77	.516	3.77	.469	.98	.613
Performance on Exit and/or Professional Licensure Exams	3.20	.773	3.37	.658	2.18	.535
Proficiency in Interpersonal Skills and Social Interactions	3.33	.675	3.10	.748	3.49	.175
Proficiency in Oral and Written Communication	3.73	.509	3.75	.437	1.65	.437
Proficiency in Foreign Language	2.91	.717	2.79	.800	4.41	.221

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Desirable, 2 = Somewhat Desirable, 3 = Moderately Desirable, and 4 = Highly Desirable.

Table 11.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Desirability of Accountability Indicators – Constituent Satisfaction Indicators

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Enrolled Student Satisfaction	3.43	.734	3.27	.689	4.70	.195
Alumni Satisfaction	3.07	.767	2.87	.817	2.84	.417
Employer Satisfaction	3.49	.654	3.50	.672	2.41	.492
Faculty/Staff Satisfaction	3.30	.709	2.81	.715	16.70	.001
Community/Civic Leader Satisfaction	3.27	.658	2.81	.715	13.95	.003
Parent Satisfaction	3.36	.703	3.35	.738	.13	.988

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Desirable, 2 = Somewhat Desirable, 3 = Moderately Desirable, and 4 = Highly Desirable.

Table 12.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Desirability of Accountability Indicators – Faculty Indicators

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Faculty Degree Credentials	3.41	.577	3.10	.748	8.18	.042
Faculty Publication Record	2.74	.695	2.27	.630	14.25	.003
Faculty Teaching Performance Records	3.77	.487	3.67	.617	2.71	.538
Faculty Community/Professional Service Record	2.93	.709	2.54	.753	8.29	.040
Faculty Salary Compared to Peer Institutions	3.00	.742	2.38	.820	17.41	.001

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Desirable, 2 = Somewhat Desirable, 3 = Moderately Desirable, and 4 = Highly Desirable.

Table 13.
Descriptive Statistics of Political Leader Participants by Party Affiliation on the Desirability of Accountability Indicators – Fiscal Indicators

	Democrat (n = 70)		Republican (n = 52)		χ^2	Significance Level
	M	SD	M	SD		
Fiscal Audit Results and Compliance with State Fiscal Policy/Regulations	3.53	.653	3.62	.631	3.82	.282
Trends in and Market Value of Endowments	2.97	.701	2.85	.277	1.34	.710
Trends in Private and Voluntary Contributions	3.10	.705	3.08	.710	1.34	.720
State Funding Compared to Designated Peer Institutions	3.21	.740	2.83	.857	11.51	.009
Trends in External Research Funding	3.30	.688	3.17	.734	1.09	.780

Note: Responses were averaged on a 4-point likert scale from 1 = Not Desirable, 2 = Somewhat Desirable, 3 = Moderately Desirable, and 4 = Highly Desirable.