Indicators of Successful Higher Education and Nonprofit Partnerships

BRAVEN

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Organizational Context

Braven, a national nonprofit organization, partners with colleges and universities in preparing and empowering students for strong first jobs or placement into graduate school. Preparation occurs predominantly through a credit-bearing course and post-course experience within the student's undergraduate course of study. Launched in 2013 by CEO Aimée Eubanks Davis, Braven was founded with the vision that "the next generation of leaders will emerge from everywhere" (Braven Jobs Report, 2023). Braven operates with the belief that the program is especially needed for their target audience (BIPOC, low-income, and first-generation students). And while disparities continue to exist, Braven anchors their program offerings on the belief that the Bachelor's degree remains the strongest path toward economic mobility (Carnevale et. al., 2023). Additionally, research has shown that internship attainment is the most important predictive factor in post-graduation outcomes (NACE, 2023), and Braven has demonstrated that their alumni are closing the economic wage gap that is historically experienced by first-generation students, low-income students, and students of color over their lifetimes (Braven Annual Impact Report). As such, Braven focuses on empowering its fellows with "the skills, confidence, experiences, and networks necessary to transition from college to strong economic opportunities, which generates greater opportunity for meaningful careers and lives of impact" (Braven Jobs Report, 2023, p. 1).

Braven currently serves partner schools in six metropolitan areas within the United States: New York City (City College of New York), Delaware (Delaware State), Newark (Rutgers Newark), Atlanta (Spelman), Chicago (National Louis University & Northern Illinois University), and the Bay area (San Jose State University and San Francisco State University). Braven continues to grow rapidly and plans to continue growing at an accelerated rate in the coming years. Currently, Braven is aiming to increase its reach from today's total of ~7k course

completers cumulatively (students who complete the Braven program and become Fellows) to 100k students by 2032. In order to achieve this ambitious goal, Braven must increase its current capacity and reach by 450%.
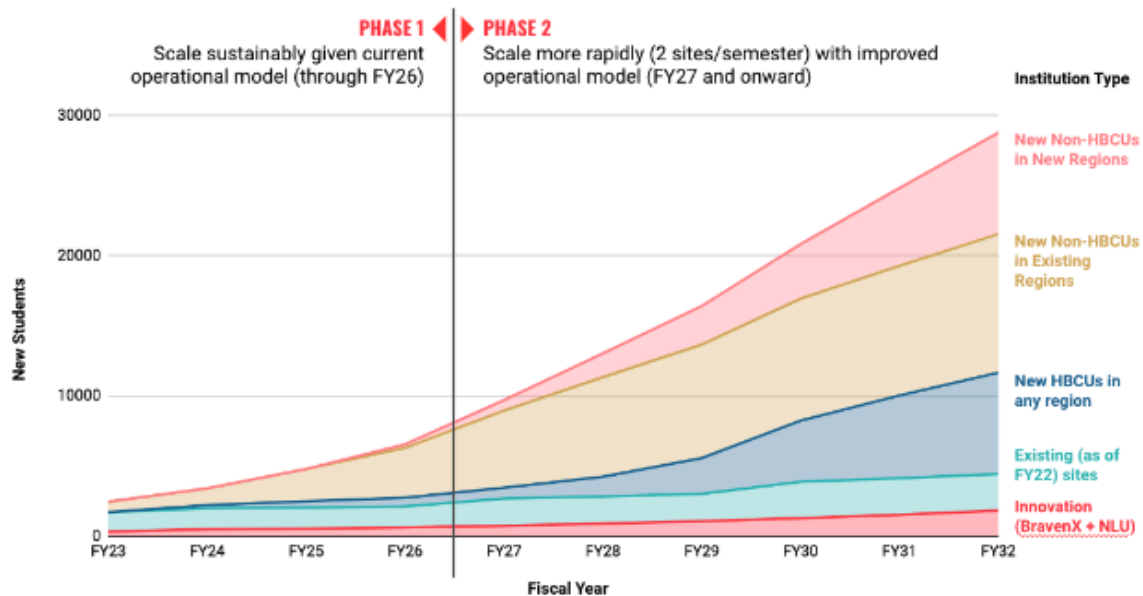
During Phase 1 of the growth process, Braven is continuing to expand in current regions of operation as well as expanding slowly into new regions within the United States. In Phase 2, which could begin as early as fiscal year 2026, Braven plans to add 2-4 new university partners each year, which will serve an additional 7-10k new students in total per year. As of April 2024, the organization employs 191 employees across its regions, with additional roles added each month.

Problem of Practice

The Braven program model consists of two parts, a credit-bearing course and a post-course experience. The Accelerator course is a semester-long, for-credit course that students typically take in their sophomore or transfer junior year, which focuses on building basic skills for landing and succeeding in their first job. The second part of the program is a

post-course experience that extends through six months post-graduation and supports Fellow's efforts to obtain internships, build networks, and connect one-on-one with mentors in their industry of choice (Braven Growth Narrative, 2023).

The Braven course and post-course program offerings currently have significant differentiation by region, which evolved over time as the organization has attempted to be responsive to higher education partner needs and interests. A current pain point for Braven is the multiple modalities and course designs that have been deployed and innovated upon, resulting in a product portfolio that has become increasingly difficult to manage and operationalize. Additionally, Braven is still developing the tools needed to systematically monitor and study product adjustments and iterations to understand what is effective in helping students achieve strong first opportunities. Braven is also in the process of more deeply understanding the contributing factors to building strong partnerships with university faculty and students, and any impacts to partnership and/or program outcomes. As the organization moves to scale, Braven recognizes its need to strategically refine its product scope, creating a product that is simultaneously cohesive, purposeful, uniquely applicable, and broadly deployable. This revised product must meet the needs of not only the students (end users) Braven serves, it must also serve the organizational goals of Bravens higher-education partners (customers).

Currently, Braven does not employ a unified operational system that guides how it partners and executes its programming within each higher-education organization. For some schools, the Braven Accelerator course is required for all undergraduates, and for others, it is an elective. The current range of program options is a result of Braven working to secure university partnerships, each university partner having its own list of concerns and contexts that Braven has sought to address. Braven hopes to more confidently identify and articulate why/how higher education institutions should partner with Braven and endure the program costs beyond the purposes of closing the economic opportunity gap experienced by BIPOC, low-income, and first-generation students.

This research, therefore, first seeks to understand the driving factors leading to successful nonprofit and university partnerships. Braven hopes for stronger success in recruiting and maintaining partnerships with higher education institutions, as well as increasing their ability to communicate their value to potential and ongoing partners. Second, we would like to understand how the products and services within the partnership should be structured to best serve the end users and the partner organizations in a sustainable way. Finally, we seek to apply these learnings to the Braven context, partnerships, and product and provide useful insights and recommendations that will assist in achieving growth goals while keeping costs down to support scalability and sustainability.

Higher Education Partnerships

The need for additional campus investment is a newly defined problem of practice and area of interest for Braven. In their partnerships with higher education institutions, Braven has historically relied heavily on key individual relationships on a given campus, which has created some moments of volatility, particularly when turnover occurs. In 2023, Braven conducted focus groups with all of its partner universities to better understand faculty communications and how Braven can best 'speak' to universities, which uncovered gaps, including Braven's under-investment in those faculty and staff relationships on campus that carry a lot of influence. If the underinvestment is not remedied, Braven risks losing partners, limiting growth in existing partners, and stifling brand buy-in and loyalty, all of which is considered vital to achieve Braven's vision and mission.

The faculty focus groups identified one tangible barrier to trust and strong partnership in the skepticism that exists when bringing non-academics and outsiders into higher education spaces. That skepticism makes it all the more important that Braven better understand the characteristics of strong partnerships between nonprofits and higher education, and how to implement those characteristics into their operating strategy. Long term, Braven desires to have

a strong network of champions across the political landscape of each campus, supporting efforts to build and maintain the Braven brand in a strong symbiosis on campus. The path to achieving a coalition of supporters on each campus is what this research hopes to address.

The Accelerator and Post-Course Experience

On the product side of the equation, the current mode of operating has allowed significant one-off customizations to multiply. As Braven has sought out new partnerships, the course design and delivery has been adjusted to meet the interests of various campuses, which has resulted in an inconsistent product offering across sites. The program, in its current form, requires extensive Braven staff to execute and operationalize. For example, it is difficult to streamline the training of new staff as support needs are highly nuanced between campuses, and materials require frequent customizations and updates. The variety of product customizations currently deployed also creates an increased risk for inconsistencies and errors. As Braven looks to its next phase of rapid growth, there is a clear understanding that the product cannot continue to support highly customized solutions, at least not to the degree of customization and flexibility that has occurred in the past. In response, the organization has led several large-scale centralization efforts around things like volunteer recruitment and data analysis/reporting, but there is more work to do.

If Braven takes no action to the high level of customization that is seen across its partner campuses, the Product team will struggle to streamline and centralize operations to the level necessary to scale. The challenge is finding the balance within the product design that constitutes a largely static product with minimal low cost / low effort customization features, but that remains customizable enough to allow partner schools to feel like their needs are also being met. Ideally, the Braven product would create a consistent student experience across campuses that allows for a sustainable cost per fellow, but continues to allow customization in

the ways that continue to generate and maintain customer satisfaction and loyalty among higher education partners.

Evidence

Current evidence of the challenges noted above have surfaced across multiple qualitative inputs. During recent external focus groups with higher education partners, university leaders noted a lack of faculty trust in some aspects of Braven's work. For example, students were asked how the Braven course enhances the university experience and were not clearly able to articulate the value, which some university staff found concerning. Braven has also received internal feedback from staff that the regional variations in product and the staffing model are becoming unmanageable/unsustainable. Additionally, the finance team maintains a pulse on the cost to execute programming per student, which currently varies significantly by region (with most consistently experiencing higher-than-expected costs). Financial projections indicate that the current model will need modification for the organization to continue to grow and scale. Current projects suggest that program delivery must be more streamlined and centralized in order to drive down programmatic costs and enable scale.

Stakeholders

This research aims to inform decisions around product design, faculty relationship management, and partnership acquisition and management processes. Therefore, the project involves various stakeholders, including fellows and partner institution faculty who provide funding and pipelines of large numbers of volunteers. Additionally, the Braven national/regional boards and future/prospective higher education or employer partners might have an interest in the project as it relates to the organization's ability to scale effectively.

Literature Review

This research seeks to help Braven gain clarity around higher education perceptions and needs in the college-to-career space. The intent is to help the organization refine its product to match the needs of its higher education partners/customers, as well as the students Braven seeks to empower. As the organization is currently in a rapid growth phase, the product leadership is interested in understanding the optimal way for the entire course and post-course experience to balance the competing needs of scaling its operations while remaining enticing to higher education partners and the students it serves.

Through our initial literature review, we sought to gain a clear understanding of the following:

- What are the qualities and characteristics of successful partnerships between higher education institutions and nonprofit organizations?
- What variables lead to successful relationships between nonprofit and higher education institutions to drive student empowerment?
- What characteristics of educational products or services lead to successful implementation within higher education?

Overview of Organizational Partnerships

Elements of Success. Organizational Partnerships often find their genesis in a shared desire to address complex social problems that are too large or complex to be solved by any one organization (Clarke & Fuller, 2011). The academic and empirical consensus finds that organizations that partner together and successfully achieve defined meaningful outcomes often have similar characteristics (Huxham, 1993). At a macro level, the characteristics shared by partner organizations begin with a shared sense of mission and strategy, a shared sense of values, and a shared ability to manage change. The participants involved in the partnership

further share power among those involved, decisions about how to manage the collaboration, and the resources themselves. The participants must also agree regarding the legitimacy of participants being involved in the collaboration, including the convener; perceive stakeholder interdependence, the value of collaborating, and the importance of the issue around which the collaboration will occur. Additionally, the organizations involved must reflect the complexity of the issue through the people assembled. All of these factors are underpinned by supportive communication and evocative leadership. Finally, an external mandate for the collaboration should exist, ideally arising from community stakeholders engaged in either or both of the organizations (Huxham, 1993; Coe, 1988; Dodge, 1988; Gray, 1985; Hall et al., 1977; Harrigan and Newman, 1990).

The elements of successful partnerships can be organized and summed up into four broad categories of values, motivation, communication, and equity (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). The organizations partnering should share values and be motivated to address them in proximately similar ways with the mutual belief that their shared and separate stakeholders value the outcomes of the collaboration and partnership (Huxham, 1993; Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Mendel & Brundey, 2018). An antecedent for partnership formation is a shared or adjacent context between organizations. Within similar contexts, organizations form partnerships with varying levels of alignment or misalignment around the four broad categories. It is on the implicit foundation of the four categories that the collaborative and strategic plan is conceptualized and operationalized (Clarke & Fuller, 2011).

Tension. Inherent to any multi-organizational partnership come tensions and hurdles that the partnership will necessarily navigate. As partnership strategies are developed and implemented, forms of governance, resource allocation, power relations, and the resulting dynamics from these decisions will, at different times, stimulate cooperation and, at other times, competition (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). A key factor in navigating the inherent tensions that arise during the formation and implementation stage is open and clear lines of

cross-organizational communication that flow between multiple individuals in each organization as well as a designated person for decision-making at each level of the partnership. Higher success is likely when teams have the work distributed to focused teams that are empowered to make decisions within their scope autonomously. (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998). The need for granular autonomy highlights the importance of shared values, motivation, communication, and equity alignment, which will facilitate or inhibit the overarching progress of the partnership (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998).

   Processes. Partnerships from their nascency begin to form designed and naturally occurring processes that inform and shape how the organizations communicate with each other as they seek to maintain and produce balanced equity (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). Equity, as it is used in this context, can be defined as the aggregate amount of social, monetary, and environmental effort put forward by each partner (Tencati & Zsolnai, 2009). Having rougly the same level of equity contributed to the development and implementation of the program, which has been shown to have a direct effect on the overall outcomes of the partnership (Clarke & Fuller, 2011). This is not to suggest that partners must put forth equal effort so much as they must maintain an equal footing (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). Central to maintaining the equity of the partnership and facilitating the necessary communication across and within the partnership is the need for clear and defined decision-makers that each partner recognizes as the authority over a certain portfolio (Gray, 1985). As Clarke and Fuller (2010) explain, the three-phase model of collaboration is an accessible way to understand the process of collaboration and implementation within partnerships.

   One of the most commonly referenced collaborative process models involves the three phases of problem-setting, direction-setting, and structuring (Gray, 1985; McCann, 1983). McCann (1983) explains that the problem-setting [sic] developmental stage occurs when stakeholder claims are legitimized and potential partners begin to converse. "Problem-setting is concerned with identification of the stakeholders with a domain and mutual acknowledgment of

the issue that joins them" (Gray, 1985, p. 916). The direction-setting stage occurs when

stakeholders find a sense of common purpose, including the articulation of commonly held

values and goals that will guide future activities to achieve common ends (Gray, 1985). Finally,

structuring "concerns how agreed-upon ends become institutionalized" (McCann, 1983, p. 180).

Gray (1985) explains that it might include creating structures to support and sustain their

collective appreciation and ongoing activities. Waddock (1989) builds on McCann's (1983) and

Gray's (1985) process models by contextualizing the models for use with cross-sector social

partnerships (CSSP): in such cases, for social partnership formation to occur, there must be

issue crystallization, followed by coalition building, then purpose formation all of which, when

combined, form the partnership.

        Outcomes. Partnerships generally produce six types of outcomes in addition to the

primary issue that spurred the collaboration *(*Aguilar, 1967; Fahey and Narayanan, 1986).

Outcomes include: plan-centric, process-centric, partner-centric, outside-stakeholder-centric,

person-centric, and environmental-centric (Gray, 1989; Hood et al., 1993; Logsdon, 1991). Each

of these outcomes should be identified and measured during the strategic plan formation, and a

process implementation plan deployed otherwise, identified outcomes and objectives are

unlikely to be achieved (Clarke & Fuller, 2011). The type of measures and implementation best

practices vary based on the type of partnership and the environment in which they conduct

operations. For the purposes of this study, we will focus on nonprofits partnering with higher

education institutions.

Nonprofit Partnerships

        Partnerships involving nonprofit organizations operate in a context varied from those

operating in a for-profit model. Unique to nonprofit partnerships is the undertones of competition

between the organizations partnering together (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). In any partnership,

the desire for glory (recognition and ownership of positive results) serves as a form of tension to

be managed (Huxham, 1993, pg 603). However, in nonprofits, this tension is more pronounced as both organizations may desire to avoid the perception of being in the passenger seat (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). Within nonprofit partnerships, there often exists an overlap of donors and potential donors, each organization both implicitly and explicitly trying to separate themselves from other possible recipients of donor funds (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998, 313). To mitigate donor tension, shared and separate stakeholders should be identified during the formation phase, and clear boundaries should be established prior to partnership implementation (Lowndes & Skelcher, 1998).

Two primary mediators have been found effective as a means to manage these natural tensions. First, clear, descriptive language should be jointly developed during the strategic planning process to define the partnership's purpose, desired outcomes and goals, and how the partnership will be carried out. Included in the descriptive language is identification of key stakeholders by both organizations as well as any critical donors. Second, alignment around the critical practices within each organization, as well as how the two organizations will interact across those critical practices, must be defined (Mendel & Brundey, 2018). Clarity around critical practices allows for nonprofits to work together while not competing in the same market. For example, if Partner A is focused on education and Partner B is focused on providing strong economic opportunities to college graduates, their practices are aligned but not competing and allow them to court donors without directly competing.

Higher Education Partnerships

The primary focus of this study is nonprofits partnering with higher education institutions. These types of partnerships are on the rise as a result of numerous associated benefits. Benefits, real and perceived, include: partners sharing benefits and outcomes of the venture while pursuing their own missions, both partners able to show their commitment by being hands-on involved, partners maintaining mutual footing and in the aspects of authority and

responsibility, both partners share risks and rewards, partners enjoy a reciprocal financial and non-financial benefit, the perception that the partnership contributes to the greater good of society (Mendel & Brundey, 2018, p 98). In order to achieve these outcomes, unique attention must be paid to the processes that precede them beyond what is typical in other types of partnerships (Epstein, 2002).

Within the context of nonprofits partnering with schools, the partnership should have an identified primary action that leads to a primary outcome, and this should be differentiated from a primary process (Epstein, 2002). That is to say, there should be a clear "what we do" that is separate from "how we do it." Defining this difference is essential to guard against the partnership falling into bureaucracy as 'how we do it' implicitly begins to overshadow 'what we do'. As the partnership forms and progresses, the people engaged in the partnership will progress through the four stages of a team learning to be effective: forming, storming, norming, and performing (Tuckman, 1965). Each of these stages must be intentionally managed and led in order for the desired outcome to be achieved, as well as positive ancillary outcomes in the six areas identified by Epstein (2002).

- Process-centric: outcomes that lead to alterations, adaptations, and changes to the collaboration formation, design, and implementation process, along with actions as part of the implementation process (e.g., Dalai-Clayton and Bass, 2002; Hood et al., 1993; Pinto and Prescott, 1990; Westley and Vredenburg, 1997)
- Partner-centric: outcomes related to learning and changes in the organizational behavior or structure of individual partners, both past and present (e.g., Bryson and Bromiley, 1993; Hardy et al, 2003; Huxham and Hibben, 2004)
- Outside stakeholder-centric: outcomes involving changes in the inter-organizational relationships between the collaboration (including its individual partner organizations) and non-participating stakeholders (e.g.,

Freeman, 1984; Svendsen, 1998; Wheeler and Sillanp, 1997; Wheeler and

Svendsen, 2003).

- Person-centric outcomes: those outcomes whose scope is limited to that of an

  individual (e.g., Hood et al., 1993)

- Environmental-centric: unexpected outcomes related to the ecological, economic,

  governmental, legal, political, regulatory, social, and/or technological

  environments beyond the context of those involving the focal issue(s) of the

  collaboration (Aguilar, 1967; Fahey and Narayanan, 1986).

A method for minimizing conflict and traversing each stage of the team effectiveness

cycle is having a one-year action plan and then a strong leader who is clear on the steps

needed to elicit the action that moves them through the process and leads to an outcome

(Epstein, 2002, pg 95). Central to this are clearly defined goals that can be measured and

tracked, including both process and outcome measures. Developing and executing an action

plan while leading the team toward effective outcomes begins with having a three-year outline of

the vision and primary goals for the program and partnership (Epstein, 2002).

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework anchors on the input of shared values, which feeds into the

lifecycle of the partnership and product in order to drive toward student empowerment. As the

literature suggests (Mendel & Brundey, 2018; Clarke & Fuller, 2011; Huxham, 1993), it is

important to identify and name the mutual benefits (i.e. shared values) to ensure strong

coordination of logistics and operations of the partnership execution.

Beginning with the model used by Clarke & Fuller (2011), we can see the natural

progression of partnership from conceptualization to formation, implementation, execution, and

outcomes.

Amelia Clarke and Mark Fuller
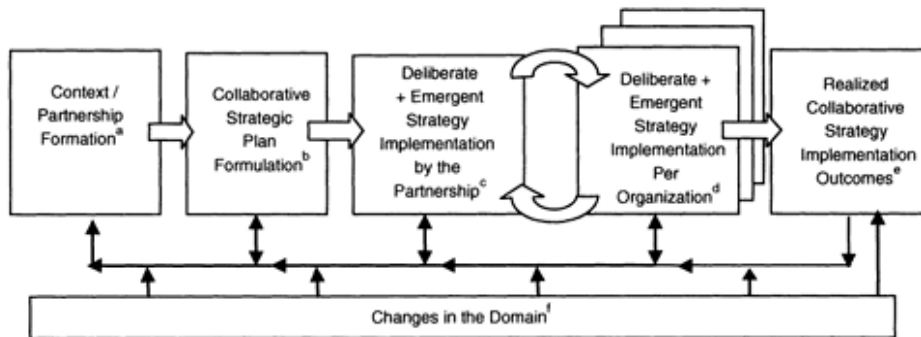
As covered in the literature, the context for a partnership is often rooted in shared interests and stakeholder desire to see a problem solved. The collaborative strategic plan is formed between the partners to define how they will work together to address the challenge. Here, there are two important elements to differentiate: the product and the partnership in practice. The product is the output created through the partnership that is engaged by the end user. The partnership in practice encompasses how the partnership behaves, makes decisions, and how it responds to the outcomes it produces. These two elements, the partnership in practice and the product itself, are at all times informing and influencing the other. This is noted by changes in the domain by Clarke and Fuller (2011) and noted in our conceptual frame by the circular notation of partnership and product around logistics and operations. This conceptualization is also in line with Porter's Five Forces, which states that firms are shaped by threats of a substitute product, supplier relationships (partnerships), and competitive rivalries (Porter, 1979).
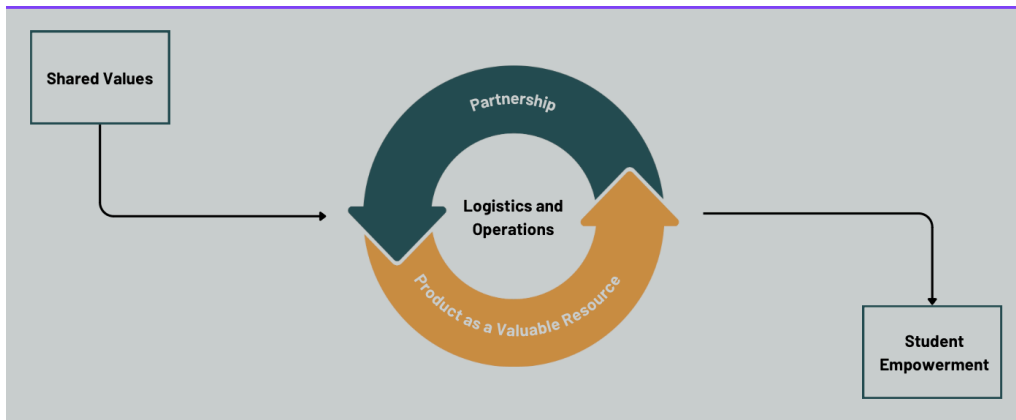
This conceptual framework assumes (and potentially limits) that student empowerment is the desired end state in a partnership between any given nonprofit and higher education institution. For the purposes of this conceptual frame, we define student empowerment as put forward by Duhon-Haynes (1996) in which students complete their undergraduate work with respect, validation, and success. Students are respected for who they are and what they do, with individual learning rates and styles respected and honored. Students are validated in that they are positioned to share their knowledge and worth with others and their community. Success is defined as building on the student's strengths and setting them up to perform and excel at their current and next endeavor (Drucker, 1989).

Project Questions

To answer our research questions, we gathered information from both the end user (students) as well as members of a potential partnership (higher education employees at both partner and non-partner institutions). This information was gathered using a combination of previously collected survey data and interviews with higher education institution faculty/staff.

Research Question	Data Collection Method and Source Material
RQ1: What is the nature of high quality	● Literature Review

partnerships and education products/services as perceived by higher education institutions?	● Pre-existing focus group responses from partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from non-partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from partner school faculty/staff
RQ2: What do Fellows value about the Braven experience?	● Pre-existing student survey responses
RQ3: How do Braven's current partnership practices and education products/services align or diverge from the qualities identified by the literature and empirical data?	● Pre-existing focus group responses from partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from non-partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from partner school faculty/staff
RQ4: How can Braven evolve its offerings and practices to best complement its higher education partnerships in service of student empowerment?	● Pre-existing student survey responses ● Pre-existing focus group responses from partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from non-partner school faculty/staff ● Interview responses from partner school faculty/staff

Project Design

Data Collection Plan

We used a combination of pre-existing and newly collected data, both quantitative and qualitative data. The first set of data was pre-existing student and faculty data provided to us by Braven.

1. Pre-existing Student Survey Responses. Braven collected pre-and post-program surveys from all Fellows. This data was provided to us by Braven in a disaggregated manner. This data provided us with insight into prior Braven students' views of the program (RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4). The data spanned over 5+ years of programming, with survey responses from the 14 week Accelerator course and the Professional Mentor Program, which includes but is not limited to:

- Net Promoter Score (i.e. how likely are you to recommend Braven to a friend?)
- Number of other classmates that are now part of a Fellow's network
- Frequency of continued connections with their Leadership Coach or Mentor
- Likert scores on: sense of community, having a mentor, feeling supported by the people met through Braven, and agreement that Braven is more than 'just a course'

2. Pre-existing Higher Education Partner Focus Group Notes. In 2023, Braven conducted focus groups with faculty from all partner schools at the time. The purpose of that internally-conducted study was to strengthen new and existing partnerships with higher education institutions by better learning the language of academics, as well as resolving any tensions in the way Braven communicates about the Braven course (i.e. the product), as well as the need to obtain stronger structural solutions to student enrollment within the higher education context. A secondary desired outcome of the focus groups was to improve the way Braven communicates with career services and the student affairs leaders in order to better articulate

how Braven is complementary rather than in competition with their services. The initial focus groups were conducted over three days in March and April of 2023, with each session lasting 90 minutes. In total, there were 8 participants representing 7 new and existing partner schools (CCNY, DSU, Lehman, NIU, NLU, SJSU, Spelman). The transcripts and summary findings were provided to us by Braven, and this data allowed us to compare insights across partner and non-partner faculty and staff (RQ1, RQ3, and RQ4).

In addition to the pre-existing data, we also conducted interviews with faculty from two sub-groups, select Braven partner schools and Braven-approved non-partner schools. Interview questions were shaped by both the prior data, the conceptual frame, and the research questions, allowing us the best possible dataset to answer our research questions.

3. Non-Partner School Faculty/Staff Interviews. Interviews were conducted with faculty from a curated list of non-partner schools. Schools were chosen by criteria of potential Braven partners focusing on large campuses and more than 1,000 students from underserved communities. We hope to discover similar themes and aim for saturation. The findings from these interviews allowed us to identify the inputs, moderators, and hygiene factors as they relate to partnerships and product creation in view of student empowerment and organizational goals (RQ1, RQ3, and RQ4).

4. Select partner school interviews. Braven permitted us to interview faculty/staff at two current partner institutions. This allowed us to gain insight into the current Braven partnership practices as perceived by the higher education institution partners. Insight from the interviews provided insight into what is working well and where Braven can improve in their current partnership practices. The findings from these interviews led to the identification of the inputs, moderators, and hygiene factors as they relate to existing partnerships and product creation in view of student empowerment and organizational goals (RQ1, RQ3, and RQ4).

Data Analysis Plan

We used different methods depending on the data source to analyze our data and answer our research questions. For interview or focus group data, we developed thematic codes based on key concepts and themes identified in the literature and our conceptual framework, such as partnership qualities, student empowerment, communication, shared values, and program effectiveness. We also compared responses across different groups to identify similarities and differences in perceptions and experiences. Our team used intercoder reliability in our analysis of digital interview transcripts by calibrating interviews across all researchers to ensure agreement within our coding (See Appendix D for additional details on methods).

For the existing student surveys and focus group data, we conducted a descriptive analysis of existing survey responses and compared survey responses between participant groups to identify differences and similarities in perceptions, experiences, and outcomes associated with higher education partnerships. By using multiple data collection methods to answer individual questions, we triangulated research from literature, existing student surveys, and interview results with our conceptual framework to determine where we could make recommendations. Comparisons included:

Former Student	Current Partner	Research Question(s)
As a result of working with Braven, I have more useful information for pursuing my education or career goals.	How does your university empower students? What tools/mindsets do you use to empower students?	RQ2, RQ4

As a result of working with Braven, I have developed or strengthened skills needed to pursue my education or career goals.	How do you see the Braven partnership supporting or encouraging student empowerment?	RQ1, RQ2, RQ4
What is one change that Braven could make that would have made your experience even better?	What student needs/concerns have been considered when partnering with Braven?	RQ3

Non-University Partner	Current Partner	Research Question
Can you describe how the structural elements (ex: contract negotiation, technology and data sharing, scheduling, etc) of the partnership led to success or lack of success?	Can you describe how the structural elements (ex: contract negotiation, technology and data sharing, scheduling, etc) of the Braven partnership led to success or lack of success?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
How was the partnership measured/monitored in each case?	How is the Braven partnership measured/monitored on your campus?	RQ3
How were the objectives shaped in those partnerships?	How were the objectives defined and shaped in the Braven partnership?	RQ1, RQ3

How have you experienced communication between partner organizations and your institution?	How have you experienced communication between Braven and your institution?	RQ3
How have you seen partnerships grapple with the integration of two organization's different operating models, ways of monitoring/measuring, etc.?	How have you seen the Braven partnership grapple with the integration of the two organization's different operating models, ways of monitoring/measuring, etc.?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
For a partnership to succeed, what would need to be true? (ex. modality, cost, ease of implementation, credentialing, equity concerns)	For that effort to succeed, what would need to be true? (ex. modality, cost, ease of implementation, credentialing, equity concerns)	RQ1, RQ4
If external organizations will interact with your faculty/students, what credentials or background criteria are important to you?	If external organizations will interact with your faculty/students, what credentials or background criteria are important to you?	RQ1, RQ3, RQ4
Are there any values we haven't already discussed that are critical when partnering with an external organization?	Are there any values we haven't already discussed that are critical when partnering with an external organization?	RQ3

How does your university empower students? What tools/mindsets do you use to empower students?	How does your university empower students? What tools/mindsets do you use to empower students?	RQ1, RQ4
Can you recall a partnership that supported or encouraged student empowerment? What are the characteristics of that partnership?	How do you see the Braven partnership supporting or encouraging student empowerment?	RQ1, RQ4

Results and Findings

RQ1: What is the nature of high-quality partnerships and education products/services as perceived by higher education institutions?

Looking at the model used by Clarke & Fuller (2011), there are critical elements in the formation, implementation, execution, and outcomes monitoring phases that should be attended to in order to develop strong, successful partnerships. Clarke & Fuller highlight 5 domains: partnership formation, strategic plan formation, partnership implementation, product delivery and adaptation, and outcomes monitoring. These six domains, while generally chronological in nature, also continue to inform and redirect the other domains as the partnership progresses.

Across the interviews conducted with both Braven partners and non-partners, we saw clear overlap with the literature. Within the domains of partnership formation and implementation, respondents noted that establishing key relationships, creating clear and consistent parameters for ongoing communication were important to the success of the partnership. One interview respondent said, "Partners… need to approach communications with

a degree of humility, of mutual understanding, understanding what each partner has to bring to the table, what their needs are from the other. And obviously, good communication is essential to figuring all that out" (Interview 118). All interviewees noted that identifying shared interests and goals was an important factor, both when establishing partnerships, but also in service of maintaining the partnership. For example, one respondent said, "the nature of partnerships is about connecting this community-based work with the academic programs of the university in a really integrated way" (Interview 118). Similarly, another respondent spoke to the importance of shared accountability of shared goals, naming "there are outcomes that we can create collaboratively… the organization can hold its chapter accountable… And also the college can be consistently holding [the partner organization] accountable… So there's almost a double accountability that is meant to be a failsafe" (Interview 115).

Within the domain of forming a strategic plan, respondents named that risk management, especially at the level of strategic forward planning and adaptability/responsiveness, was an important component of a comprehensive strategic plan. For example, one respondent noted a particularly tricky moment in a partnership that required quick adjustments to ensure the success of the partnership, stating "these kinds of partnerships… speak to the need for understanding the responsibility of the other and then anticipating, well, if something goes wrong in a week… we had to start putting contingency plans in place. And we did" (Interview 118). And lastly, within the domain of outcomes and monitoring, interviews supported data was valuable both in the early stages of partnership formation, as well as for ongoing monitoring. For example, one respondent said, "in every formal partnership, we do try and have a written contract or a written agreement where there is a feedback loop" (Interview 117). Nearly all interviewees shared that reliable, timely, and actionable data were foundational to the ongoing success of a partnership. Faculty were also consistently concerned with the long-term benefit to students, both academically and over their

lifetime. One respondent spoke to how data can help speak to various stakeholders, including students, particularly around "how will this experience ultimately help you?" (Interview 128).

On the other hand, interviews also highlighted two notable deviations from, or perhaps additions to, the literature. First, diversity was noted as an important aspect for partnerships to attend to. One respondent went so far as to say that they would not partner with certain organizations if diversity was not attended to, saying "there is a sort of colonial mindset when they see black and brown kids walking through the door. ANd I'm like, we're not, we're not starting down here, where I have to explain to you that the South Asian kid, or this black kid, or this, like LatinX kid, actually is brilliant, right?" (Interview 128). Interviews strongly suggested the importance of attending to the lived experiences of the population(s) being served, while also exposing them to a range of diverse people and experiences. Another interviewee noted, "If I had a magic wand, what I would hope for… is that every student understands that… they can learn from someone who represents a marginalized community, or a historically underrepresented community" (Interview 117). And lastly, while cost was never named as the most important factor, several faculty noted that they must attend to the fiscal realities of working within a university system, which means that cost will always be an important component to the long-term viability of a partnership. For example, one focus group respondent said "I think first has to be really clear what the benefit of partnership is going to be. And then always a big issue is, and what's the cost?" (Focus Group #1). See Appendix E for additional supporting evidence.

RQ2: What do Fellows value about the Braven experience?

The analysis of five years of Fellow pre- and post-course surveys provides valuable insights into the strengths of Braven's Accelerator course programming. In a review of 4330 student responses, the following elements were most noted by Fellows:

- Resume and Cover Letter Improvement (577 responses): The most frequently mentioned theme was the significant improvement in resumes and cover letters. Students highly valued the feedback and guidance they received in crafting these critical documents, which are essential for job applications and career advancement.

- Capstone Challenge (381 responses): Many students considered the Capstone Challenge the highlight of their Braven experience. This hands-on project allowed them to apply what they had learned in a practical, real-world scenario, enhancing their problem-solving and teamwork skills.

- Networking (118 responses): For many students, building a professional network and creating meaningful connections with peers, mentors, and industry professionals was a crucial aspect of the Braven experience. This networking provided valuable opportunities for career growth and professional support.

- Peer Interactions and Cohort Experience: Many students appreciated the camaraderie and support they received from interacting with fellow students and participating in cohort activities. They also enjoyed the collaborative learning environment and the relationships they formed with their peers.

- Mock Interviews (258 responses): Mock interviews were another key highlight. They helped students practice and refine their interviewing skills in a supportive setting, which was crucial for boosting their confidence and readiness for real job interviews.

- Career Exploration (103 responses): The program offered students opportunities to explore various career paths, helping them identify and pursue their professional interests. This exploration was beneficial in guiding their career decisions and future aspirations.

- Leadership Skills (99 responses) Developing leadership skills was essential to the Braven experience. Students appreciated the focus on enhancing their leadership abilities, which are essential for their professional and personal growth.

- Based on survey responses, students felt more empowered to attain the jobs they desired in their field at an increase that is statistically significant (12.5% increase, n=499, t=4.85, p=.05). It is worth noting that the positive rate of response has decreased over the last year to an average of 7%. Finally, while it cannot be shown conclusively, survey responses reflect that students may feel more empowered after completing the braven program, however they may not attribute that improvement to Braven.

The predominant finding amongst students was the benefit of the program's elements that contain interpersonal interactions. For example, one Fellow said, "In my opinion, the best part of the Braven experience was the Cohort. I really enjoyed meeting with my LC and my fellows. They were great to be around and they were also a great foundation to establish my network" (Student 40, Spring 2023). Another noted, "The best part of the Braven experience was interacting with my Leadership Coaches and other professionals and receiving advice from every single one of them about career-related topics" (Student 72, Fall 2022). Fellows frequently noted the opportunities to network and connect with peers, mentors, and industry professionals, as well as mock interviews, and feedback from mentors.

Fellows also valued resume and cover letter improvement and the Capstone Challenge. The emphasis on career exploration and professional development was also noted as important, reinforcing Braven's commitment to positive future outcomes for students by helping them identify and pursue career paths. For example, one Fellow noted, "The best part was getting the mentorship throughout the entire process. From getting advice on resumes, to getting advice for job interviews. I think being able to have a professional that has experience is invaluable" (Student 174, Spring 2022). And another said, "Spending time with people who help you and teach you how to improve in various aspects of life, for example in studies, job opportunities, looking for other methods, and networking" (Student 250, Fall 2020). See Appendix E for additional supporting evidence.

RQ3: How do Braven's current partnership practices and education products/services align or diverge from the qualities identified by the literature and empirical data?

When considering how Braven's current partnership practices and products/services align or diverge from best practices, we anchored on the framework from Clarke & Fuller (2011), as noted above. Interviews with faculty at two current partner schools provided insight into how faculty think Braven is performing across the five domains.

Partnership Formation. Faculty were highly complimentary of the Braven model, staff, and product, especially in the early planning and partnership formation stages. One respondent said, "the partnership has really been very valuable to us, because they… pretty much had already set up what we were trying to build. And so it was much easier for us to incorporate a plan that was kind of like what we planned on doing anyway, but without us having to do the work of building it" (Interview 120). On this domain, all partner school faculty we spoke to were in favor of the partnership and had no insights to offer around stronger partnership formation.

Strategic Plan Formation. The general consensus was an appreciation for the ways Braven has been flexible and adaptable in aligning with the strategic direction and opportunities of the university. Faculty noted that the early stages of strategic planning required a heavy commitment of time and resources from the campus, which can be challenging. For example, one respondent stated, "the Braven career accelerator was a real investment of time and it needed to be if students were really going to get out of it" (Interview 126). Faculty also appreciated the ability to shape the strategic direction of the partnership in order to meet the specific needs of their campus and student population. One interviewee noted, "There were modifications that needed to happen to meet the needs of our institution... there were some growing pains and some modifications, but one of the things that I really love about working with Braven is that they have been really open to, and flexible, to make the appropriate modifications needed to fit the culture… of our institution" (Interview 120). On the other hand, nearly all

respondents named the rigidity of some aspects in the partnership to be challenging (i.e. curriculum design, cost).

Implementation. Partner faculty were consistently pleased with the program implementation, particularly in the many opportunities that the partnership has afforded the campus and students. That said, implementation was also noted as highly differentiated by campus landscape, including accreditation bodies, curriculum requirements, faculty senates, etc. For example, one respondent said, "We had to go through the curriculum committee for, to be approved as a course on campus, by the faculty" (Interview 120). Early formation of trust and regular communication patterns were identified as critical to the long-term success of the partnership. One respondent, in particular noted the value of regular communication, saying "we meet, you know, the schedule more often than not just allows us to kind of talk about where we are and what we're facing and what's going on with our organization's" (Interview 126).

Product Delivery and Adaptation. All interviewees noted that Braven's willingness to be flexible and adapt and evolve with the campus was significant to the success of the partnership. Flexibility was especially named as an important characteristic of successful partnership. For example, one respondent said, "The other thing is Braven's willingness to partner on novel initiatives. So Braven is partnering with us... with something that we were interested in... And it was like, well, we've got money. What would this look like? And we were able to literally in the space of two meetings come up with a model that we're implementing right now" (Interview 128). Some faculty noted that making adjustments to the curriculum were tricky, at times. However, this was also contradicted in other interviews who noted that they had experienced flexibility and success in this domain.

One area for growth that was named by multiple interviewees was to increase the reach of Braven's programming on campuses. For example, veterans and Freshman were named as possible additional audiences to target. One interview respondent said, "I would love to have veterans be able to participate, and figure out a way to be able to do that. But the restrictions

from the Department of Defense and the VA, on how they can use their funding is pretty restrictive, and actually prohibits them from being able to take advantage of programs that will be designed to help them" (Interview 126). Additionally, cost was also named as a concern for the long-term sustainability of the partnership. The cost model was seen as a potential barrier for entry or for the sustainability of partnership, but most also noted that they could not deliver the same programming for the same or less money.

Outcomes Monitoring. Several faculty noted that they valued the data that Braven was readily willing to share, especially if it allowed them to build narratives and tell the story of Braven to other faculty, staff, and even families. One faculty member noted that they have found Braven to be highly responsive to data requests, as well, saying "But the thing that I have been really, really grateful for is the way that Braven shares back information about what's happening with students generally, who are part of Braven... being able to ask that question of like, tell me in a practical way, how is a Braven student very different from a student who doesn't go through Braven, and having them come back with like real data in a very clear, presentation mode has given me talking points... Because you know, people are always skeptical about new programs and initiatives, so that, all of this came from just asking genuine questions, and then having the team come back and say, okay, and in a month, we're gonna come back, and we'll share it back with you and like, Oh, okay. And they do" (Interview 128).

On the other hand, some faculty noted significant lag in data and expressed interest in more timely data, especially for the purposes of allowing the school ro Braven to provide additional support, if and when a student has not obtained an internship. For example, one respondent said, "I would say the next thing as far as an area of improvement is their turnaround for data. So like, I, you know, it just seems like when it goes into the Braven central machine, it can take a minute before it comes back out specific to [redacted campus name]" (Interview 120). The lag in data availability was seen as prohibitive to timely intervention, especially for students who are in their Senior year on campus.

See Appendix E for additional supporting evidence.

RQ4: How can Braven evolve its offerings and practices to best complement its higher education partnerships in service of student empowerment?

The quantitative findings support that the Braven interventions create a positive net impact for students, faculty, and the larger university contexts within which Braven operates. However, findings from both interviews, focus groups, and surveys did provide some insight into how Braven can evolve its offerings and practices in service of student empowerment.

Partner School Feedback. From partner school faculty, we heard a few key suggestions for how Braven can evolve its offerings:

1. Enlist and expand the support of faculty and the campus ecosystem to extend the reach of programming. In particular, there was a push to build more intentional interactions with the people on campus who are closest to program execution, as well as several requests to extend Braven programming to a larger audience of students.

2. Build in natural cycles of strategic (re)alignment. Interviewees noted that shifting landscapes (i.e. COVID or labor market shifts) and campus turnover are not uncommon, and frequent forward planning and re-assessment are necessary to create a sustainable and long-term partnership successful. One respondent suggested a 3-5 year cycle for collaboratively refreshing the MOU as one possible tactical approach to ongoing strategic alignment (Interview 126).

3. Build in flexibility and adaptability of the product, particularly in the course curriculum. While this is notably in contradiction with Braven's strategic direction, it is worth noting that adaptability and innovative approaches to challenges were frequently brought up as a strength of Bravens. And nearly all respondents spoke positively about times when Braven was willing to enter into conversations about evolving the product to meet the specific and nuanced needs of the campus and its student body. For example, one

respondent said that Braven was initially "resistant" and "inflexible" to curricular changes, but they were pleased to see that has changed (Interview 120).

Fellow Feedback. Fellows also provided specific feedback regarding curriculum design, live/synchronous class sessions and events, interactions with mentors and coaches, grading, and feedback. From the 4330 pre- and post-survey responses analyzed, the following improvements were suggested by Fellows:

- Improved Project and Assignment Structure (446 responses): The most common suggestion was to improve the structure of projects and assignments. Students felt that making these tasks shorter, less demanding, or better aligned with career goals would enhance their learning experience.

- More In-Person Interactions (126 responses): Many students wanted more in-person meetings, classes, and networking opportunities. They believed that face-to-face interactions would strengthen their learning and networking experiences. (Note: The discrepancy between in-person interactions being the most valued quality, as well as the aspect students wanted more of, may be attributed to the survey years spanning over the COVID-19 pandemic)

- More Frequent Meetings (78 responses): Some students suggested having more frequent meetings with mentors and coaches. Regular check-ins and consistent support were seen as crucial for their development.

- Social and Networking Events (63 responses): There was a desire for more social events and opportunities to network with peers and professionals. These events were seen as valuable for building connections and professional relationships.

- Fair Grading and Evaluation (40 responses): Some students expressed concerns about the grading system. They suggested fairer or more lenient grading practices to reflect their efforts and learning better.

- Enhanced Support and Feedback (35 responses): Students commonly requested additional support and more personalized feedback from mentors and coaches. They felt that this would help them improve and succeed in the program. Some students wanted more career-focused guidance, including information about careers, job search strategies, and internship opportunities. This support would help them navigate their career paths more effectively.

Based on the five years of qualitative student survey data, we are able to see several areas for potential improvement for Braven. The most commonly reported improvement is an adjustment in project length and relevance to career goals. This would enhance their practical value and reduce unnecessary burdens. One Fellow advocated for inclusion of medical-pathway specific content, "Provide elements that help students going in the medical field as a lot of content taught in this course is business based" (Student 49, Fall 2022). Another noted, "Being more diverse in regards to the assignments, it was catered towards those unsure of what path to take and not so much those who know what they want to do. I understand the purpose for those unsure but for those sure about their career path was unfair in some regards. I feel that the course should look at different options for said students and maybe design it in such a way that helps out these students create a better marketing design ie. learn to network in different fields other than business" (Student 147, Fall 2019). And one Fellow emphasized the missing career-specific elements: "For me, expanding the professional opportunities to include more diversity of careers would be immensely helpful. While I absolutely appreciated the internships and job opportunities shared with us every week, most of the time it didn't match the career I want to pursue so it would be immensely helpful if BravenX could provide more diverse job opportunities and the programs they are partnered with" (Student 179, Spring 2021).

Fellows also noted the importance of increasing opportunities for in-person meetings, meetings with mentors and coaches, social events, and more guidance and developmental feedback. This would strengthen the community and enhance learning experiences, fostering

deeper connections and engagement among students. For example, "One change Braven can make to make my experience better is, if the Braven class remains hybrid, to adjust the first session to an in-person session as it sets the tone for a more united cohort throughout the semester. The first session (held on Zoom) did not allow for a feeling of unity and comradery in the cohort, and, unfortunately, the feeling of unity was not present throughout the semester. It was somewhat there, for sure; nonetheless, we just didn't feel that comfortable as a cohort, and I have heard from other students in two separate cohorts that they also felt the same" (Student 350, Fall 2021).

Addressing concerns about the fairness of grading and evaluations could improve student satisfaction and motivation, as transparent and fair assessment methods are crucial for maintaining trust and morale. Enhancing the quality of resources and materials, would support better learning outcomes and ease of use for students. Additionally, greater flexibility in scheduling meetings and deadlines would help accommodate students' diverse schedules, making it easier for them to balance program commitments with other responsibilities. See Appendix E for additional supporting evidence.

Recommendations

Our analysis found three macro themes: People, Operations, and Promise. Based on the findings, we offer the following framework and recommendations:

People refers to the relationships and interests of the individuals and groups that make up the Braven experience. This includes Higher Education Partners, faculty, administrators, Braven Fellows and Alumni, volunteers, and Braven's Employer Partners.

Recommendation 1a: Empower and connect people by developing strategies for integrating with the larger university community, students' home communities, and local communities. Interviewees noted the importance of diverse experiences,

including mentorship, civic engagement, and community engagement. Creating

programs fostering collaboration with university departments, student organizations, and

local communities would allow Braven students to experience more and diverse

interpersonal interactions. Examples of strategic community integration could include:

- Build early relationships on campus with people closest to program execution.

  Responses from partner school interviews and focus groups noted that program

  execution was often the most resource intensive aspect of partnering with

  Braven, and suggested targeting those critical relationships earlier in the

  partnership process.

- Consider enlisting and expanding the support of faculty and the campus

  ecosystem to extend the reach of programming. Respondents noted that building

  relationships across a wide range of stakeholders was a strong indicator of

  partnership success.

- Extend Braven programming to a larger audience of students. Respondents

  noted targeting program offerings to additional student groups, including

  Veterans and Freshman, who are often under-resourced or who could benefit

  most from supports to integrate into the university and broader community

  structures.

- Provide opportunities for deeper civic and community engagement. Both

  non-partner and partner school interviews noted the value of student

  engagement outside the walls of the higher education institution. Braven might

  look to build strategic coalitions with local community partners that could sponsor

  or host events, recruit volunteers, or provide career-accelerating opportunities for

  Fellows.

Building strategic partnerships between university faculty and administration, Braven

staff, and local community organizations will support these initiatives, creating

networking opportunities and a sense of belonging for students while positively

impacting the broader community.

Recommendation 1b: Make the impact of partnership with Braven visible and indisputable, especially through stories of success (not only statistics) of Braven partner organizations and Fellows.

- Create strategic opportunities for partner school faculty to interact with Braven students and alumni. Partner school interviews noted that the proof of impact was immediately visible when faculty met and interacted with Braven Fellows. They were noticeably more confident and prepared than non-Braven Fellows, and they showed up "looking like they run the place (Interview #128)."

- Highlight the diversity and impact of specific Braven Fellow's experiences. Finding ways to communicate that impact through stories told on social media, the Braven website, in relevant meetings, with higher education leaders, and employee partners (EP's) will allow all stakeholders to internalize and connect with the shared values they have with Braven.

Operations refers to the elements of tangible inputs and outputs of the Braven

experience that can be monitored via a scoreboard. These include Braven's operational,

financial, and strategic activities that create future outputs that are articulated in the strategic

planning process.

Recommendation 2: Drive strong and impactful operations by defining and communicating the product's unique flexibility and stability, empowering partners to customize essential areas while ensuring outcomes are consistent with each partner's mission and vision. Higher education partners consistently noted Braven's flexibility as one of the top attributes contributing to partnership success. However, given

Braven's interest in scalability of programming, Braven will need to establish clear guardrails around flexible offerings. For example:

Possible Places of Stability:

- Resumes and mock interviews must be included in the Braven experience
- The Accelerator must be a credit-bearing course
- Both the Accelerator and post-Accelerator offerings must drive towards internship attainment

Possible Places of Flexibility:

- Explore opportunities to collaborate on speciality objectives and stretch opportunities: Partner interviewees mentioned Braven's willingness to co-host fundraising events or community events as a strength.
- Implement a dynamic cost structure: Interviewees consistently named cost as an area for improvement. Braven might consider developing a clearly defined value-based structure that allows the cost to move up and down based on the level of flexibility partners want. Braven may also consider offering a primary product package and then allowing partners to bundle other features and services that meet their needs at a clearly stated additional value.
- Respond to specific student needs in the following areas: Leadership mentor pairing, assignment length and structure, group work, in-person cohort meetings

Promise refers to the future aspirational outcomes that higher education partners and Fellows can expect as a result of participating in the Braven experience.

Recommendation 3a: Define and regularly communicate the promise of how/why partnering with Braven enhances the university's position. Research shows that a critical lever for successful partnership is aligning on, driving towards, and continuously monitoring against shared outcomes.

- During the initial strategic alignment process, define shared outcomes, i.e. mid- and long-range outcomes with the partner, paying particular attention to those outcomes that have intrinsic value to a particular higher-education organization that also aligns with Braven's unique menu of product offerings. In theory, the shared outcomes should clearly signal to higher education partners how Braven will measurably benefit them.

- Braven should work to define the unique value proposition and ROI it offers to each higher education institution. For example, Braven could create a series of (data-informed) ready-to-launch value proposition statements that can be teed up and packaged based on what will best align with each higher education partner's strategic plan:

    - Braven alumni attain strong first jobs, adding to the outstanding value of a degree from your university, which has been shown to drive higher subsequent applications.

        - Advertising the stories of Braven fellows at partner institutions attaining greater outcomes can help drive up university applications in a time of shrinking college enrollment.

    - Participation in the Braven program leads to increased post-graduation job attainment and/or graduate school admission rates.

    - Braven helps today's students become tomorrow's financial leaders.

        - Braven might signal to higher education leaders that their future alumni will have greater potential to invest in future school endowments because of their participation in the Braven program.

    NOTE: These are illustrative examples and not based on actual findings. Braven should define these value proposition statements grounded in research-backed, data-informed findings from the Braven programming.

Recommendation 3b: Deliver on university enhancement promises by strengthening outcomes monitoring and strategic (re)alignment process.

- Establish and follow through on monitoring shared goals/outcomes and data sharing commitments by developing customized scoreboards and creating clear commitments and timelines for data sharing. The literature notes that partnerships require consistent and objective scoreboards that communicate how work is progressing throughout the partnership. As such, it is important to align on key progress indicators (KPIs) during the strategic planning process and develop dashboards to support timely and relevant data sharing with partner schools. Interview findings similarly suggested that timely and relevant data was an important and valued aspect of the partnership. Faculty were especially interested in data that allowed them to more effectively tell the story of Braven's work across their respective campuses.
- Build in natural cycles of strategic (re)alignment based on the outcomes and objectives noted on the scoreboard.

Final Thoughts and Possible Next Steps

The above recommendations aim to enhance the Braven experience by focusing on key themes critical to its success: People, Operations, and Promise. Braven can create a more interconnected community by fostering early, strategic relationships, expanding faculty and community support, and targeting diverse student populations. Defining clear parameters for flexibility and stability will allow for a tailored yet consistent program implementation. Clearly articulating and continuously communicating the value proposition and outcomes of Braven partnerships will align expectations and demonstrate tangible benefits. Through monitoring and

regular strategic realignment, Braven can ensure the sustainability and scalability of its impact, ultimately achieving its aspirational goals for students and higher education partners. This comprehensive approach will position Braven to effectively navigate and thrive in the evolving landscape of higher education.

If Braven is interested in pursuing further research in the area of higher education partnerships and the impact to student empowerment, the above findings and recommendations suggest some possible areas of interest. First and foremost, we recognize the limitation of our research in that we interviewed four faculty members from only two of Braven's partner schools. A more expansive and thorough study across all current and past Braven partners would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the Braven partnership experience. In particular, we suggest that Braven conduct interviews with any school that exits the partnership to better understand how and where the partnership practices aligned or diverged with best practices, the literature findings, and the experiences and interests of comparable partner schools.

Additionally, we suggest a deeper analysis of student pre- and post-survey data. While our findings suggested that students valued in-person engagements, deeper analysis across campuses and semesters might yield additional insights into what, when, and where Fellows most value in-person engagement. Additionally, analysis of student survey data showed that students did not connect the growth and empowerment they experienced during their Braven experience to Braven, specifically, and further research should be conducted to better understand causality.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Communications

<u>**Initial Outreach Email**</u>

Subject: Invitation to Participate in Research Study on University and Nonprofit Partnerships

Dear [Name],

I hope this email finds you well. We are doctoral researchers at Vanderbilt University studying university and nonprofit partnerships. We are reaching out to invite you to participate in a research study that will inform our understanding of the factors that lead to successful partnerships between universities and nonprofits.

Your qualified expertise in leading [Your University] make your insights invaluable to this study. We are requesting to schedule a 30-minute interview with you to explore your perspectives on:

- The benefits and challenges of external partnerships in the university ecosystem
- Strategies for effective collaboration and partnership development to drive student empowerment
- Insights from previous partnerships

Your participation will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this field, informing best practices and future collaborations. Participation is confidential, and any identifying information will be anonymized in the study's findings.

If you are interested in participating, please use this link to schedule an interview at a time most convenient for you. If none of the available times work for you, please let us know some alternate times where you have availability.

If you have colleagues who would be a valuable contributor to this study, please feel free to pass this email along! Thank you for considering this invitation, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Regards,

[Your Name]

Response Email

Dear [NAME],

We appreciate your willingness to participate in our research study, which aims to explore the relationships between universities and non-profit organizations. Your perspective and insights will be invaluable to our research.

As we prepare for your scheduled interview, please complete and return the attached consent form for study participation. This form will help us ensure that you are adequately informed about the study and that your rights as a participant are protected.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with questions or concerns about the study before the interview. We look forward to engaging with you.

Regards,

[Name]

Appendix B: Interview Protocols

Non-Partner Higher Ed Institution Interview Protocol

Before turning the zoom recording on:

1. Introduce yourself with a warm hello.

2. Explain the purpose of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. We are interested in learning about the nature of high quality partnerships in higher education. I will ask you questions within the confines of the topics outlined in our email.

- The benefits and challenges of external partnerships in the university ecosystem
- Strategies for effective collaboration and partnership development to drive student empowerment
- Insights from previous partnerships

3. Consent Process: Verbally confirm that we have received their informed consent document and ask if they have any questions.

Before we begin the interview, I want to remind you that participating in this study is voluntary, and your responses are completely confidential. Do you have any questions about the study before I begin recording?

Zoom Recording begins.

It is (date) *at* (time). *This is interview number XXX.*

- **INTRODUCTION TO PERSON/CAMPUS**
  - Can you provide a brief overview of your role and responsibilities on your campus?
- **THOUGHTS ON PARTNERSHIPS**
  - Our research study is interested in better understanding how universities partner with external organizations, especially in a service delivery context. Do you have direct knowledge of any such partnerships on your campus? Can you describe a partnership that you have seen at your university?
    - *STRUCTURE: Can you describe how the structural elements (ex: contract negotiation, technology and data sharing, scheduling, etc) of the partnership led to success or lack of success?*
    - *MONITORING: How was the partnership measured/monitored in each case?*
    - *SHARED GOALS: How were the objectives shaped in those partnerships?*
    - *INTERACTION: How have you experienced communication between partner organizations and your institution?*
  - How have you seen partnerships grapple with the integration of two organization's different operating models, ways of monitoring/measuring, etc.?

○ If you could wave a magic wand and partner with an organization to solve one burning challenge on your campus, what would it be?

○ For a partnership to succeed, what would need to be true? (ex. modality, cost, ease of implementation, credentialing, equity concerns)

○ What student needs/concerns are considered when partnering externally?

○ If external organizations will interact with your faculty/students, what credentials or background criteria are important to you?

○ Are there any values we haven't already discussed that are critical when partnering with an external organization?

- **STUDENT EMPOWERMENT** (RQ4)

  ○ How does your university empower students? What tools/mindsets do you use to empower students?

  ○ Can you recall a partnership that supported or encouraged student empowerment? What are the characteristics of that partnership?

    ■ *If no example is available, how do you think a partnership can drive towards student empowerment?*

Thank you for your participation today.

Zoom recording ends.

Partner Higher Ed Institution Interview Protocol

Spelman and Rutgers-Newark

Before turning the zoom recording on:

1. Introduce yourself with a warm hello.

2. Explain the purpose of the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. We are interested in learning about the nature of high quality partnerships in higher education. I will ask you questions within the confines of the topics outlined in our email.

- Your experience with the Braven partnership
- The benefits and challenges of external partnerships in the university ecosystem
- Strategies for effective collaboration and partnership development to drive student empowerment
- Insights from previous partnerships

3. Consent Process: Verbally confirm that we have received their informed consent document and ask if they have any questions.

Before we begin the interview, I want to remind you that participating in this study is voluntary, and your responses are completely confidential. Do you have any questions about the study before I begin recording?

Zoom Recording begins.

It is (date) *at* (time). *This is interview number XXX.*

> - **INTRODUCTION TO PERSON/CAMPUS**

- ○ Can you provide a brief overview of your role and responsibilities on your campus?
- **THOUGHTS ON PARTNERSHIPS**
  - ○ Our research study is interested in better understanding how universities partner with external organizations, especially in a service delivery context. Can you describe the Braven - (Spelman OR Rutgers-Newark) partnership? What has worked really well?
    - *STRUCTURE: Can you describe the structural elements (ex: contract negotiation, technology and data sharing, scheduling, etc) of the Braven partnership led to success or lack of success?*
    - *MONITORING: How is the Braven partnership measured/monitored on your campus?*
    - *SHARED GOALS: How were the objectives defined and shaped in the Braven partnership?*
    - *INTERACTION: How have you experienced communication between Braven and your institution?*
  - ○ How have you seen the Braven partnership grapple with the integration of the two organization's different operating models, ways of monitoring/measuring, etc.?
  - ○ How has the Braven partnership changed since it began?
  - ○ If you could make one improvement in your partnership with Braven, what would it be?

- - - ■ *For that effort to succeed, what would need to be true? (ex. modality, cost, ease of implementation, credentialing, equity concerns)*
    - ○ What student needs/concerns have been considered when partnering with Braven?
    - ○ If external organizations will interact with your faculty/students, what credentials or background criteria are important to you?
    - ○ What criteria were met that makes you willing/eager to partner with Braven?
    - ○ Are there any values we haven't already discussed that are critical when partnering with an external organization?
    - ○ Do you envision continuing the Braven partnership for the foreseeable future? Why or why not?
  - **STUDENT EMPOWERMENT** (RQ4)
    - ○ How does your university empower students? What tools/mindsets do you use to empower students?
    - ○ How do you see the Braven partnership supporting or encouraging student empowerment?
      - ■ *If unsure, what opportunities exist where the Braven partnership could more effectively drive towards student empowerment?*

Thank you for your participation today.

Zoom recording ends.

Appendix C: Timeline

Date	Milestone
January 2024	Get sign off from Braven on Initial Research Questions, Literature Review, and Scope of Work
February 2024	Finalize Conceptual Framework
March 2024	Finalize Data Collection and Analysis Memo
	Get sign off from Braven on Data Collection and Analysis Plan
	Schedule interviews with Non-Partner Faculty/Staff
April 2024	Receive all existing data from Braven
	Complete interviews with Non-Partner Institution Faculty/Staff
	Complete interviews with Spelman/RU-N Faculty/Staff
May 2024	Analyze existing Fellow survey and HEP focus group data
	Transcribe and code interview data
June 2024	Finalize analysis of all data
July 2024	Produce report with findings and recommendations
	Share findings and full report with Braven

Appendix D: Detailed Data Analysis Plan

Interview Analysis

In order to analyze the interview and focus groups, we went through the following steps:

1. Assign a unique identifier to each interview or focus group to allow for anonymity of responses

2. Convert interview audio to a text transcript using Otter.ai, including a manual review of the full transcript to ensure accuracy of transcription

3. Redact all identifying information, including campus names, specific individual's names, etc.

4. Transfer all files to ATLAS.ti for qualitative analysis

5. Use intercoder reliability in analysis of digital interview transcripts by calibrating interviews across all researchers to ensure agreement within our coding

6. Code all interviews and focus groups using both Structural and Descriptive codes

   a. Structural Codes (14 total codes identified) were pre-defined prior to analysis to allow for categorization of findings that aligned with the literature. These codes helped us identify areas of overlap and differentiation with the literature, including but not limited to:

      i. Communication

      ii. Improving Partnerships

      iii. Monitoring

      iv. Partnership Characteristics

      v. Shared Objectives

      vi. Student Empowerment

      vii. Student Needs

b. Descriptive Codes (42 total codes used) were determined as we gained comfort with the interview transcripts to identify topics that frequently emerged, and included codes such as:

    i. Community-Based Learning

    ii. Contingency Planning

    iii. Cost Model

    iv. DEI

    v. Partner Flexibility

    vi. Reporting

    vii. Strategic Plan

    viii. Student Engagement

    ix. Sustainability

7. Review coded findings and synthesize findings to identify emerging themes and continue with comparative analysis

Comparative Analysis

To look at the data comprehensively, we utilized the existing survey datasets, existing focus group data, and the data we collected from non-partner and partner school interviews. We then conducted the following steps in our data analysis:

1. Organized each data set using unique metrics IDs to allow for individual and cross-comparison.

2. Analyzed each data set for trends or outliers that may need further investigation.

3. Compared the quantitative and qualitative data sets against each other for trends, outliers, and contradictions.

4. Compared the data sets individually and collectively against the identified characteristics of successful partnership outcomes.

5. Compared the data sets individually and collectively against the identified characteristics of successful product outcomes.

6. Determined the places where Braven is currently exhibiting the characteristics of a nonprofit partner generating the desired positive outcomes.

7. Determined where Braven is not currently exhibiting the characteristics of a nonprofit partner generating the desired positive outcomes.

8. Determined the characteristics currently present and those currently missing from Braven's current product offering.

Appendix E: Findings Tables

RQ1: What is the nature of high-quality partnerships and education products/services as perceived by higher education institutions?

Theme	Supporting Quotes & Sources	Overall Findings Summary
Communication and Relationships	I think, partners, I think need to approach communications with a degree of humility, of mutual understanding, understanding what each partner has to bring to the table, what their needs are from the other. And, and obviously, good communication is essential to figuring all that out. (118) I do think having a good relationship with whatever like organization, or people that you might bring in, and so how are they just humanizing their service to the campus? How are they really building a relationship to say, like, oh, yeah, we worked with	Clear and consistent communication structures are important for successful relationship and partnership management.

	[redacted campus name] for, you know, the last 10 years, like, you know, we have a good relationship. (131) But I would say the main characteristics would be a clear plan that's scalable, and something that's realistic, communication, honesty. (117)	
Cost	I think first has to be really clear what the benefit of partnering is going to be. And then always a big issue is, and what's the cost? (Focus Group #1) Well, you know, I'm a financial person, I've been involved in the finances of universities for over 30 years. So my mind immediately goes to cost. (117) And so, you know, you know, the other thing is just being able to figure out, you know, kind of the long term sustainability on the, on the financial side. (126)	Cost matters, especially if a partnership is going to remain sustainable over the long term.
Diversity/DEI	I think we just want to, you know, the need is that you recognize the diversity in our population, and that you not be overly impressed with the, with our population... it's recognizing the excellence but not saying that there can't be more or that there shouldn't be learning that has to happen. (120) I absolutely will not partner with, because there is a sort of	It is important to attend to student diversity. Faculty and staff believe that exposure to

	colonial mindset when they see black and brown kids walking through the door. And I'm like, we're not, we're not starting down here, where I have to explain to you that the South Asian kid, or this black kid, or this, like Latin X kid, actually is brilliant, right? (128) I think if I had that magic wand, what I would what I would hope for, is to wave it would be that every student understands that, that they can learn from someone who represents a marginalized community, or a historically underrepresented community. (117)	difference is important to the student experience.
Monitoring	I would like to see the results from your other partnerships and what particular internships or positions students were able to obtain as a result of participating in the program. (Focus Group #1) But I think in our university, in every formal partnership, we do try and have a written contract or a written agreement where there is a feedback loop. (117)	In early stage negotiations, faculty are interested in seeing a proven track record of success. In ongoing partnerships, feedback loops are important. Timely, accurate, and actionable

		data are critical for ongoing monitoring.
Risk Management	So these kinds of partnerships, I think, again, speak to the need for understanding the responsibility of the other and then anticipating, well, if something goes wrong, in a week, we knew sort of suspected kind of months ahead of time that some of these apartments for [redacted building name] were just not going to get done. So we had to start putting contingency plans in place. And, and did. (118) I mean, we, we certainly expect we have a high bar for ethics, ethical behavior, ethical business practices, whether it's profit or nonprofit. And I think if we had any whiff that that anything was touching against some ethical considerations we would we, as a university, we would be very involved in investigating them. (117)	Forward thinking and risk mitigation are critical aspects for successful negotiation. Attending to risk builds trust.

Integration of Shared Interests	I think the nature of the partnership is about connecting this community based work with the academic programs of the university in a really integrated, in a really integrated way. (118) Anytime we can have a cohort model, and a way of packaging that for students and families, so that you can say, your kid is going to be a part of a special experience that is geared towards preparing them for something bigger. Parents really get into that, and I would because you know it, this has substance to it (128) But in this particular program, it was... it was pinned to the strategic plan of the University, which was to build community strength through partnership. And so I'd say that's where it came in the actual sort of goals of what people do is a 50/50 thing between the student's interests, the organization's needs, and the university's ability to support those things. (117) How can we support each other in our outcomes? So are there outcomes that we can create collaboratively between a headquarter staff and a college level process that are not redundant, but also seek to achieve the same thing and can hold... the organization can hold its chapter accountable. And also the college can be consistently holding them accountable through the same means. So there's almost a double accountability that is meant to be a failsafe. (115)	Identifying mutual interests and benefits builds buy-in. Anchoring on strategic plans or other outcomes and accountability systems is a key enabler in partnerships.

	So, in in terms of our partnerships... we want organizations to be involved. We want people in fields to be communicating with students... People returning, people mentoring and so forth. So we... that's something we want out of a partnership. Generally people... like, organizations that have access to students have usually been donors, like so they're giving to scholarships, they're giving to internships, and so forth. So we make those sort of mutually connected possibilities. (124)	
Student Empowerment and Outcomes	...being able to explain to students, how will this experience ultimately help you? (128) And so I think helping also very early on, helping students understand that one of the most important outcomes of college is this cultivation of a constellation of mentors that will help them pursue, help them achieve their goals, help them achieve their their dreams, and these relationships are going to matter more than what they majored in. And, and how pretty the campus was. (118)	Faculty are interested in student's ability to understand how experiences will benefit them. Partnerships can bolster the network of mentors that drive and support student outcomes.

RQ2: What do Fellows value about the Braven experience?

Theme	Supporting Quotes & Sources	Overall Findings Summary
Fellow Pre- and Post-Survey Data	Statistical analysis of the following pre- and post- Fellow survey questions: - *I have people in my network with different skills that will be useful to me as I pursue my goals.* - *I know how to do well at my school.* - *You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic intelligence.*	Braven's interventions did not produce a statistically significant result that showed they valued their Braven experience as rated by Cohen's D. Students do not link the growth and empowerment they achieve during their Braven experience to Braven.
Fellow Survey Responses	*What was the best part of the Braven experience for you?* Resume and Cover Letter Improvement 577 Capstone Challenge 381 Networking and Making Connections 376 Peer Interaction and Cohort Experience 372 Mock Interviews 258 Career Exploration 103 Leadership Skills 99 Feedback and Guidance 30	Fellows found value in the skills development associated with resumes and cover letters, networking, and mock interviews. They also found the capstone challenge and peer interaction to be of value.

	Professional Development	13	Fellows would value
	Self-Discovery and Personal Growth	2	improvements in the project and assignment structure
			and many noted an interest
	What is one change Braven could make that would have		in more in-person
	made your experience better?		interactions.
	Improved Project/Assignment Structure	446	
	More In-Person Interactions	126	
	More Frequent Meetings	78	
	Social and Networking Events	63	
	Fair Grading and Evaluation	40	
	Enhanced Support and Feedback	35	
	Career Guidance and Support	20	
	Better Resources and Materials	16	
	Flexibility in Scheduling	14	
	Food and Refreshments	11	
Faculty Perspectives	And we're not starting from the, you know, I'm rescuing this, this young person from whatever it is you think you're rescuing, like, we're not having the, the that conversation. I love that that has never had to be part of the conversation with Braven. Because there's an automatic... the start point is, oh, these kids are brilliant. And so let's just take that brilliance, and then level it up to make sure that they then have access to opportunities. (120)		Faculty perceive Fellow's outcomes to be higher than their peers. Fellows are perceived as having a stronger future than non-participants. (No present day benefit was noted)

	students will come back or we have these events for seniors and they will be Braven fellows and those share about how thanks to Braven, they have been able to find these opportunities. They feel like they're graduating now, and they have the resources and the tools that they need to not get low balled, low balled out a job or be discriminated against or how to advocate for themselves. (125) we look at programs that, you know, can can work within our students budgets, and, and, you know, and above our programs, and, you know, Braven's a great example of this, that really fit with our goal of promoting social mobility, right. (126) It's about the professionalism, it's about the ease of talking about, here are the big things that my field is grappling with. And here's a way I'm situating myself in that, and here are the kinds of things that I've studied. But here's also the kinds of conversations I've already been having with people who know what they're doing. And here's the experience that I'm bringing to bear. [Braven Fellows] can tie those things together so fluidly, that they look like they're already in the field, which is how you get you get hired, right, like, you look like you're	

	already belong in the space. (128) I think it's that beautiful combination of excellences that come to bear, that [Braven Fellows] then set themselves apart from young people who are also very bright, right, but just don't know, they don't have the social capital or the knowledge capital to be able to recognize that the way you show up in a room is going to determine whether or not anyone's going to talk to you. You know, the way that you talk about what you're trying to do? Where you, that level of confidence, because you know you know what you're talking about? They're just well coached. (128)	

Research Question 3: How do Braven's current partnership practices and education products/services align or diverge from the qualities identified by the literature and empirical data?

Theme	Supporting Quotes & Sources	Overall Findings Summary

Partnership Formation	I think that what I've seen is like a lot of the pieces that we do care about, like diversity and inclusion, creating equitable spaces, creating those opportunities. So I will say that, I think that's why [we were] open to creating the partnership with Braven. (125) I would say the other thing, you know, that's, that's short of this is, is the cost model. You know, what they're doing is, is a great program, but it's more expensive than the cost to, to run our traditional instructional kind of a typical lecture class, you know, more expensive, I think, than to run our, our laboratory science classes. And so, you know, you know, the other thing is just being able to figure out, you know, kind of the long term sustainability on the, on the financial side. (126) I think that the partnership has really been very valuable to us, because they've been pretty much had already set up what we were trying to build. And so it was much easier for us to incorporate a plan that was kind of like what we planned on doing anyway, but without us having to do the work of building it. (120)	Faculty spoke highly of the partnership formation, key relationships, and opportunities that Braven presents in partnership. The cost model is seen as a potential barrier for entry or sustainable partnership, though most also noted that they could not deliver the same programming for the same or less money.

| Strategic Plan Formation | I've been involved with partnerships with other groups on our campus where the other group wanted to tell us how we should do things, and I really feel that working with Braven, it really is a collaboration because I feel like Braven is, knows what they're good at, and they know what the academic side is good at, and they let us do what we can do what we're strong at. (Focus Group #1)

the Braven career accelerator was a real investment of time and it needed to be if students were really going to get out of it, what there could be so, so again, so over times, we looked at who participated and how people stayed in the program, and talked about what our goals were. (126)

There were modifications that needed to happen to meet the needs of our institution... there were some growing pains and some modifications, but one of the things that I really love about working with Braven is that they have been really open to, and flexible, to make the appropriate modifications needed to fit the culture of our of our institution. (120) | Faculty appreciate the ability to shape the strategic direction of the partnership, especially as it helps situate the program into their campus culture.

The early stages of planning were noted as 'intense' and require a significant investment of time and resources on both sides of the partnership. |

| Implementation | A regular set of communications... we cancel with some regularity but we meet, you know, the schedule more often than not just allows us to kind of talk about where we are and what we're facing and what's going on with our organization's. (126)

We had to work with our institutional advancement group because we had our part of the money... for implementation, the institution's responsibility. And then you know, how are we going to work that out with regard to how Braven is raising money for Braven? And then we need to raise money for [redacted campus name] Braven. And so there was a little bit of back and forth with institutional advancement for that. We had to go through the curriculum committee for, to be approved as a course on campus, by the faculty. (120) | Implementation is highly dependent on the campus landscape, including accreditation bodies, curriculum approval, faculty senates, etc.

Early formation of trust and regular communication patterns were seen as critical to the long-term success of the partnership. |

	I guess one thing that's worked well, and I think one of the reasons why it's been a good, strong, healthy relationship is that it's evolved over time. A number of the partnerships have been kind of set in stone, and they kind of like refresh the MOU, like every three to four or five years, without very many changes. Even when there are changes in the partner organization, or changes at the university, or, you know, just kind of changes in the surrounding world. Those types of partnerships tend to sunset. (126)	Adaptability, flexibility, responsiveness, in all aspects of programming, are valued by faculty.
Product Delivery / Adaptability	I just really like that Braven has been responsive to our needs, and we've been able to be responsive to what Braven needs. (120) The other thing is Braven's willingness to partner on novel initiatives. So Braven is partnering with us... with something that we were interested in... And it was like, well, we've got money. What would this look like? And we were able to literally in the space of two meetings come up with a model that we're implementing right now. (128) we had a student one time, we had a student go to our capstone company, or whatever, and they had a horrible time. And what I loved is that Braven took action, and	Faculty are interested in increasing access to Braven to more students (i.e. freshman, veterans, etc).

	there were consequences associated with how they treated our students, which is one of the things that we really emphasize. This is a precious resource. (120) I would love to see, like our freshmen coming in the door and sort of landing immediately in Braven and being able to continue to sail in that direction. Even in a kind of, even if we can't do it for every single freshman, I think doing it for a subset of freshmen who we know are going to be especially in need of those kinds of of mentorship supports. (128) I would love to have veterans be able to participate, and figure out a way to be able to do that. But the restrictions from the Department of Defense and the VA, on how they can use their funding is pretty restrictive, and actually prohibits them from being able to take advantage of programs that will be designed to help them. (126)	
Outcomes Monitoring	I would say the next thing as far as an area of improvement is their turnaround for data. So like, I, you know, it just seems like when it goes into the Braven central machine, it can take a minute before it comes back out specific to [redacted campus name]. (120) But the thing that I have been really, really grateful for is	Faculty appreciate the data, but noted that the lag on some data was prohibitive to timely intervention, especially for students later in their coursework.

	the way that Braven shares back information about what's happening with students generally, who are part of Braven... being able to ask that question of like, tell me in a practical way, how is a Braven student very different from a student who doesn't go through Braven, and having them come back with like real data in a very clear, presentation mode has given me talking points... Because you know, people are always skeptical about new programs and initiatives, so that, all of this came from just asking genuine questions, and then having the team come back and say, okay, and in a month, we're gonna come back, and we'll share it back with you and like, Oh, okay. And they do. (128)	Data sharing is an important method for reducing skepticism and increasing buy-in.

RQ4: How can Braven evolve its offerings and practices to best complement its higher education partnerships in service of student empowerment?

Theme	Supporting Quotes & Sources	Overall Findings Summary
Fellow Pre- and Post-Survey Data	Statistical analysis of the following pre- and post- Fellow survey questions: *- I feel certain about my ability to get the job I want.* *- I believe that I can do what I need to do in order to make my career successful.*	Braven's interventions are statistically significant in helping students to feel empowered, achieving a medium effect as rated by

	- I am confident in my ability to grow and improve professionally.	Cohen's D.