

# A Tale of Two 'Sities' (Universities): Navigating Organisational and Operational Strategies in Higher Education Institutions

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DOI: 10.24818/mer/2024.02-10

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## ABSTRACT

*This research endeavours to unveil the nuanced impact of organisational and operational models in higher education by conducting a comparative study of two institutions: the pseudonymous Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. The purpose is to discern the implications of adopting proven business strategies on institutional performance, growth, and student outcomes. The study employs a comprehensive methodology, integrating four years' worth of personal observations, interviews with current and former employees, and rigorous data mining and analysis of government public domain databases. The comparative analysis delves into the organisational structures, academic focuses, and operational approaches of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. The design embraces a multi-faceted approach to distill the complexities of organisational dynamics in higher education. The findings illuminate a stark dichotomy between the two institutions. Old Orchard College, undergoing an academic renaissance, is grappling with a shift in executive leadership and restructuring of academic responsibilities. In contrast, Seafarer University emerges as a model of efficiency, marked by its status as the fastest-growing state-supported university. The dialogue between tradition and innovation, and the transformative power of efficient organisational models, become focal points of discovery. This research contributes to the existing body of literature by providing an in-depth exploration of the impact of organisational paradigms on higher education institutions. The originality lies in the comparative nature of the study, which dissects the interplay between traditional and modern approaches. The inclusion of personal observations and data analysis adds a layer to the exploration, offering a holistic perspective on organisational dynamics in higher education.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Business Strategies in Academia, comparative institutional analysis, higher education dynamics, operational efficiency, organisational models*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *I21, I22, I23, I26, I29.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, institutions continually grapple with the challenge of adapting to diverse operational and organisational paradigms. This comparative study delves into the intricate narrative of two proximate universities, Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, carefully crafted pseudonyms to safeguard the anonymity of the real institutions involved. These institutions, mirroring each other in size, history, and academic offerings, serve as microcosms within which to explore the nuanced interplay of organisational and operational strategies. Higher education, in its evolving complexity and competitiveness, demands a refined understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to

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institutional success. The importance of organisational structure and operational methodologies is increasingly pronounced as universities navigate the delicate equilibrium between tradition and innovation. Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, situated in close proximity, present an ideal canvas for this exploration, offering a unique lens into the dichotomy that shapes their trajectories.

This study seeks to unravel the intricate narrative woven by the choices made in organisational governance and operational frameworks. These choices extend beyond administrative offices, permeating classrooms, influencing academic pursuits, and ultimately shaping the experiences of students and faculty. The juxtaposition of business-oriented strategies against traditional liberal arts-centric approaches is not merely theoretical; it manifests itself in the very fabric of these institutions. At the heart of this exploration lies a compelling “why”, a necessity born out of the ongoing global dialogue on the future of higher education. With institutions facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities, understanding the impact of organisational and operational choices becomes paramount. This research aims to contribute not only to the academic discourse, but also to the practical toolkit available to universities worldwide. By dissecting the strategies of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, the study aims to provide actionable insights that institutions can leverage to navigate the complexities of the modern educational landscape.

As the exploration unfolds, the focus extends beyond surface-level similarities, delving into the layers that define the core of these universities. The dichotomy between embracing proven business models and adhering to the traditional liberal arts approach serves as a microcosm for broader trends within the realm of higher education. This exploration questions whether proven business models are the elixir for sustained growth and efficiency, or if the traditional liberal arts approach harbours untapped strengths. These inquiries guide the analysis, propelling an examination of the nuanced interplay between academic vision and operational reality.

This journey is not a mere comparison; it is a reflection on the evolving narrative of higher education. The paths chosen by Old Orchard College and Seafarer University are emblematic of the choices faced by institutions globally. Through this analysis, the study aims to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse surrounding effective organisational and operational strategies in higher education. The tale of these “sities”, unfolding at the crossroads of academia, offers a canvas where the convergence of academic vision and operational reality shapes the destiny of higher education institutions.

Join the exploration of this tale, where the convergence of academic vision and operational reality shapes the destiny of higher education institutions, and where the choices made ripple through the corridors of academia, leaving an indelible mark on the future of learning and knowledge dissemination.

## **2. EFFECTIVE ORGANISATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL MODELS: A SUCCINCT LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the pursuit of institutional excellence, the adoption of effective organisational and operational models stands as a cornerstone for success (Taouab & Issor, 2019). This section embarks on a comprehensive review of key principles gleaned from scholarly works and industry practices, shedding light on methodologies that have proven transformative across diverse sectors. Drawing from existing literature, each subheading dissects a specific facet of

these models, unveiling the intricate details contributing to organisational efficiency. As the exploration unfolds, the aim is not only to provide a theoretical framework, but to lay the groundwork for a nuanced examination of how these models manifest within the operational landscapes of higher education institutions.

### **2.1 Utilising Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma for Corporate Competitive Advantage**

Cavallini's (2008) exploration into the applications of Six Sigma and Lean Six Sigma goes beyond the confines of traditional industry boundaries. These quality management methodologies, originating in the manufacturing sector, have demonstrated unparalleled success in enhancing organisational efficiency. By streamlining processes and minimising inefficiencies, these approaches have become a hallmark for achieving corporate competitive advantage. Within the higher education sphere, the integration of Six Sigma (Furterer, 2016) principles offers a unique lens through which to assess and optimise operational workflows, creating a ripple effect on institutional performance.

### **2.2 Establishing Clear Lines of Authority, Responsibility, and Utilisation of Proven Business Models**

In the pursuit of organisational excellence, Beil-Hildebrand's (2005) emphasis on clear lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability provides a compass for institutions navigating the complex terrain of higher education. The establishment of a structured framework not only fosters transparency but also catalyses enhanced operational efficiency. As the exploration delves into the nuances of this principle, it becomes evident that the delineation of roles and responsibilities is not merely an administrative formality; it is a strategic imperative that aligns individuals and departments toward a unified organisational vision.

Namada's (2018) exploration ventures into uncharted territories within higher education by advocating for the integration of proven business models. The adaptation of corporate strategies designed for success in the business realm emerges as a transformative force in the academic landscape. Namada's work not only underscores the potential for operational effectiveness, but also sheds light on the cultivation of learning organisations within educational institutions. This combination of business acumen and academic vision becomes a potent recipe for sustainable growth and adaptability in the face of evolving educational paradigms.

### **2.3 Rigid Organisational Structure, Growth, and Efficiency**

Luthans and Church's (2002) exploration challenges conventional notions surrounding organisational structures, advocating for a balance between rigidity and realism. The establishment of a rigid but realistic organisational structure emerges as a paradigm shift in fostering positive results. This principle challenges the prevailing belief that flexibility is the sole key to success. Instead, it presents a framework where stability coexists with adaptability, instilling a sense of confidence and purpose among employees while achieving positive outcomes in terms of satisfaction and productivity.

Bal and De Lange's (2015) contribution to the discourse centres on the crucial role played by human resources in organisational growth and efficiency. The development of human capital becomes a linchpin of success, transcending the traditional focus on structural elements. As the exploration delves into the intricacies of this principle, it becomes evident that fostering a culture of continuous learning and growth is not merely an HR initiative; it is a strategic imperative that positions institutions for sustained success and adaptability in the face of evolving educational landscapes.

## 2.4 Higher Education Organisations

Comm and Mathaisel's (2005) research serves as a poignant reflection on the evolving nature of higher education organisations. The gradual shift towards proven corporate business models marks a departure from traditional paradigms. As institutions increasingly align with corporate strategies, positive outcomes in terms of growth, employee satisfaction, and improved graduation and retention rates come to the forefront. This paradigm shift challenges the status quo within the higher education sector, opening avenues for transformative change and sustained success.

In a more contemporary perspective, Lane's (2022) research sheds light on the prevalent reluctance within traditional higher education institutions to adopt operational and organisational changes. Despite the proven benefits of embracing models inspired by corporate strategies, these institutions lag behind their non-educational and for-profit counterparts. Lane's work serves as a clarion call, highlighting the challenges and potential consequences of resistance to change within the higher education sector.

## 2.5 Synthesis of Models: And Applicability to Old Orchard College and Seafarer University

As the exploration synthesises these diverse perspectives, a comprehensive understanding of effective organisational and operational models emerges. The principles of clarity, adaptability, human resource development, and the infusion of corporate strategies weave a tapestry that transcends industry boundaries. These models, proven successful in various contexts (Naveed et al., 2022), set the stage for a nuanced examination of how they manifest in the daily operations and overarching strategies of higher education institutions.

Before delving into the specific applications within the case study institutions, it is essential to establish a robust foundation by understanding how these effective organisational and operational models have proven successful across industries. This synthesis serves as a lens through which to dissect the organisational frameworks of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, exploring how they align or diverge from these proven principles.

## 3. METHODOLOGY: UNVEILING THE COMPARATIVE INSIGHTS

The insights encapsulated in this comparative analysis emanate from a methodology designed to unravel the intricacies of organisational structures and their impact on key performance indicators within higher education institutions. The approach encompasses a multifaceted exploration, blending personal observations, one-on-one interviews, and significant data mining and analysis of publicly available information.

### 3.1 Methodological Framework

The foundation of the exploration into the organisational intricacies of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University lies in a methodological framework carefully crafted to uncover the comparative insights shaping this study. This section illuminates the strategic blend of personal observations, one-on-one interviews, and data mining, which collectively form the lenses through which we gain a comprehensive understanding of the organisational structures and their impact on key performance indicators within higher education institutions.

The four-year journey into the inner workings of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University began with personal observations. This longitudinal perspective provided a qualitative lens into the daily operations, academic climates, and organisational cultures of

these institutions. The observations were not confined to specific departments but spanned across academics, operations, and human resources, offering a holistic understanding.

To complement personal observations, we conducted one-on-one interviews with current and former employees of both Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. These interviews were instrumental in garnering qualitative insights into the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of those directly involved in the institutional dynamics. The open-ended nature of these interviews allowed for the exploration of nuanced aspects, shedding light on organisational nuances that might not be readily apparent through quantitative metrics alone.

Rigorous data mining and analysis formed the quantitative backbone of our comparative study. Leveraging publicly available data from government databases, we extracted critical metrics related to enrolment, retention rates, graduation rates, financial endowments, and other key performance indicators. This approach provided a robust foundation for quantitative comparison, allowing us to triangulate the qualitative insights from personal observations and interviews with concrete statistical data.

### **3.2 Ensuring Rigor and Ethicality**

To uphold the integrity of our methodology, we implemented checks and balances throughout the research process. Personal biases were acknowledged and mitigated through reflexive engagement and peer debriefing. The triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding, acknowledging the limitations and nuances inherent in each approach.

In adherence to ethical standards, the anonymity of interviewees was rigorously maintained. The research aimed to contribute to academic discourse and organisational improvement rather than pinpointing individuals or institutions. Consent was sought and obtained from interview participants, emphasising the voluntary nature of their involvement.

### **3.3 Methodological Limitations**

Although our methodology is robust, it is essential to acknowledge the inherent limitations. The subjective nature of personal observations and interviews introduces an element of interpretation. Additionally, the availability and accuracy of publicly accessible data may vary. We navigate these limitations with transparency, recognising that our findings represent a snapshot within a specific timeframe.

This comprehensive methodology forms the bedrock of the comparative analysis, ensuring a balanced integration of qualitative and quantitative insights. As we transition into the subsequent sections, the methodological underpinning serves as a guide, illuminating the process through which the comparative insights into Old Orchard College and Seafarer University were unearthed.

## **4. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

In the intricate tapestry of higher education, the organisational structures of academic institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of both faculty and staff, ultimately influencing the overall efficacy and success of the institution. This section embarks on an exploration of the organisational architectures of two proximate entities, Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. As we dissect the structural facets of these institutions, the goal is not merely to unveil administrative frameworks but to unravel the intricate threads that bind

the academic, administrative, and operational realms. This comparative analysis delves into the fundamental structures that govern the day-to-day operations and overarching strategies of each institution, uncovering how these blueprints contribute to the institutional climate, employee satisfaction, and overall efficiency.

#### **4.1 Organisational Structures**

Old Orchard College, founded in the 1850s with a religious affiliation and a quaint park-like campus nestled in a small town, presents a unique organisational structure characterised by relatively small academic affairs, administrative duties allocated to department chairs, and a leadership tier comprised of a president and three vice presidents, all with exclusive higher education experience. However, this structure leans towards the organic, with unclear lines of accountability and responsibility, and has observed the beginnings of toxicity, manifesting in increasing voluntary attrition.

In contrast, Seafarer University, established in the 1870s with both private and state-supported facets and situated in a small city, exhibits a distinct organisational makeup. With a well-represented academic affairs division, administrative duties allocated to department chairs, provosts, and deans (with a focus on business cognition), and a leadership hierarchy encompassing the president, provosts, deans, and chairs, Seafarer University boasts a rigid structure with clear lines of accountability and responsibility. Notably, this structure aligns with a generally positive outlook among staff and faculty, coupled with a low voluntary attrition.

##### ***4.1.1 Geographic and Demographic Overview***

Old Orchard College, located in a small town with a park-like campus spanning 100 acres, caters to approximately 1250 students with an endowment of \$18 million. Its athletic affiliation is in NCAA Div. II. In contrast, Seafarer University, situated in a small city with a park-like campus spanning 190 acres, accommodates around 4000 students with a slightly higher endowment of \$19 million. Seafarer University also engages in NCAA Div. II athletics.

##### ***4.1.2 Impact on Employee Satisfaction, Productivity, and Efficiency***

The organisational structures of these institutions become instrumental lenses through which we scrutinise their impact on key performance indicators. Old Orchard College, with its liberal arts focus and slow implementation of new programs, grapples with operational challenges. Insufficient maintenance and support personnel, deteriorating buildings, and outdated technology contribute to a lack of operational effectiveness, fiscal challenges, and inconsistent technology usage, all mirrored in rising voluntary attrition.

On the flip side, Seafarer University, with a balanced focus on liberal arts and professional programs, rapidly expanding online graduate programs, and continuous addition of new programs stands as a testament to operational efficiency. Sufficient maintenance and support personnel, effective upkeep of buildings, fiscal strength with additional revenue streams, and the utilisation of current technologies mark its organisational prowess, reflected in a generally positive outlook among staff and faculty, coupled with low voluntary attrition. Table 1 illustrates an organisational comparison of the two institutions.

**Table 1. Organisational Comparison of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University**

Aspect	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
Location	Small City (~14,000)	Small City (~25,000)
Campus Size	100 Acres	190 Acres
Student Population	~1250 Students	~4000 Students
Endowment	\$18 Million	\$19 Million
Athletic Affiliation	NCAA Div. II	NCAA Div. II
Academic Affairs Representation	Relatively small	Well-represented
Administrative Duties Allocation	Department chairs	Chairs, provosts, and deans
Departmental/College Deans	None	Present
Leadership	President, three vice presidents	President, provosts, deans, chairs
Organisational Structure	Organic, unclear lines	Rigid, clear lines of accountability
Organisational Climate Observations	Toxicity rising, attrition increasing	Positive outlook, low attrition

Source: (Wikipedia, 2022) and anonymised institution websites

## 4.2 Academics and Operations

In scrutinising the academic and operational landscapes of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, distinct profiles emerge, each reflecting the unique ethos and strategic approaches of these higher education institutions.

### 4.2.1 Academic Focus

Founded in the 1850s, Old Orchard College boasts a heritage steeped in a liberal arts tradition. The academic landscape is characterised by a predominant focus on traditional programs, with a new small online graduate program being a recent addition. However, the slow implementation of new programs and a 95% reliance on traditional classes pose challenges to adaptability and growth.

Established in the 1870s, Seafarer University presents a dynamic academic focus that strikes a balance between liberal arts and professional programs. Notably, the institution has rapidly expanded its online graduate programs and consistently introduced new programs in response to growth and evolving academic needs. This approach aligns with a trajectory marked by adaptability and responsiveness to market demands.

### 4.2.2 Operational Approaches

The operational landscape of Old Orchard College reveals challenges in infrastructure, technology, and fiscal sustainability. Insufficient maintenance and support personnel, deteriorating buildings, and outdated technology contribute to operational inefficiency. The institution grapples with fiscal challenges, and the usage of open-source technologies for critical systems poses limitations on technological advancement.

On the contrary, Seafarer University exhibits a robust operational framework. Sufficient maintenance and support personnel, effective maintenance of buildings, and a proactive approach to technology contribute to operational efficiency. The institution enjoys fiscal strength with additional revenue streams, reflecting a strategic stance toward financial

sustainability and growth. The usage of current technologies for critical systems positions Seafarer University at the forefront of technological integration.

**4.2.3 Challenges and Strengths**

The comparative analysis illuminates the challenges and strengths inherent in the academic and operational paradigms of these institutions. Old Orchard College, while steeped in tradition, faces hurdles in adaptability and technological advancement. In contrast, Seafarer University, with a more dynamic and responsive academic approach, reaps the benefits of operational efficiency and fiscal strength. Table 2 encapsulates the distinct academic and operational profiles of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, highlighting key features, challenges, and strengths inherent in their respective approaches. As we progress, this comparative snapshot will inform a broader analysis of institutional dynamics and performance indicators. As we delve deeper into this comparative exploration, the academic and operational dimensions serve as crucial facets shaping the overall institutional dynamics of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. The following sections will further unravel the implications of these observations on broader aspects such as student outcomes, employee satisfaction, and institutional growth. Table 2 illustrates the academic and operations comparison of the two institutions.

**Table 2. Organisational Comparison of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University**

Aspect	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
Academic Focus	Liberal Arts focus	Balanced focus on Liberal Arts and Professional Programs
	Traditional programs	Rapidly expanding online graduate programs
	New small online graduate program	Continuous addition of new programs
	Slow implementation of new programs	Adaptability and responsiveness to market demands
Operations	Insufficient maintenance and support personnel	Sufficient maintenance and support personnel
	Deteriorating buildings	Effective upkeep and construction of buildings
	Outdated technology	Usage of current technologies for critical systems
	Fiscal challenges	Fiscal strength with additional revenue streams
	Inconsistent/outdated technology usage	Operational efficiency
	Usage of open-source technologies for critical systems	Technological advancement

Source: authors conception

**4.3 Decoding Institutional Metrics**

In the labyrinth of higher education, numbers weave a tapestry that tells the story of institutional identity, progress, and challenges. The following exploration into the numerical realm serves as a compass, guiding us through the multifaceted metrics that carve the unique paths of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University. Enrolment dynamics, retention rates, student ratios, and the financial landscape stand as quantifiable signposts, each holding a key to understanding the nuanced narrative of these higher education institutions. As we embark on this numerical journey, the subsequent analyses will not merely decipher figures, but will unveil the vibrant narratives behind the statistics, painting a comprehensive portrait of the academic and operational landscapes these institutions navigate.



In this comprehensive numerical exploration, we delve into the institutional landscapes of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, deciphering the quantitative facets that shape their trajectories. The comparative analysis spans key enrolment metrics, retention rates, and various performance indicators, providing a panoramic view of the numerical contours that define the educational journeys of these institutions.

#### 4.3.1 Enrolment Dynamics

As we dissect the enrolment dynamics, a compelling narrative emerges. Seafarer University exhibits a remarkable 5-year growth of 53%, positioning it as a beacon of academic allure. In contrast, Old Orchard College, with a more modest 12% increase, prompts introspection into the factors shaping its enrolment trajectory. The exploration will extend beyond the raw numbers, delving into recruitment strategies, program offerings, and the institutional charm that resonates with prospective students. Enrolment comparisons are evident in Table 3.

**Table 3. Enrollment Dynamics**

Metric	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
2017 FT Enrollment	1115	2624
2022 FT Enrollment	1250	4025
Five-year enrollment growth	12%	53%
Metric	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
2017 FT Enrollment	1115	2624

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics (2023)

#### 4.3.2 Retention and Graduation

The journey through higher education entails not only enrolment but the sustained engagement and successful culmination of academic pursuits. Seafarer University shines with a first-to-second-year retention rate of 75%, surpassing Old Orchard College's 61%. The nuanced examination of graduation rates, based on 150% of expected graduation time, unfolds an intricate narrative. Seafarer University's 49% graduation rate and Old Orchard College's 51% prompt us to explore factors influencing student persistence and degree completion. This exploration will navigate the complexities of academic support structures, program offerings, and the institutional ecosystem that fosters or challenges student success. Table 4 provides an illustration of the retention and graduation rates for the two organisations.

**Table 4. Retention and Graduation Rates**

Metric	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
First to Second-Year Retention Rate	61%	75%
Overall, 150% Graduation Rate	51%	49%

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics (2023)

#### 4.3.3 Student Ratios

In the educational ecosystem, student ratios provide a lens into the level of personalised attention, academic engagement, and administrative support. Seafarer University, with slightly higher ratios, prompts exploration of the implications of these dynamics on the quality of the student experience. This analysis, illustrated in Table 5, will uncover the delicate balance between student support and academic rigour, offering insight into the institutional commitment to fostering a conducive learning environment.

**Table 5. Student Ratios**

Ratio	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
Student/All Staff Ratio	6:1	7:1
Student/Faculty Ratio	14:1	17:1
Student/Non-Teaching Staff Ratio	11:1	11:1
Student/Academic Affairs Ratio	92:1	51:1

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics, (2023)

**4.3.4 Financial Landscape**

Financial health and sustainability underpin the operational agility and growth potential of higher education institutions. While Seafarer University boasts a marginally higher endowment, the core expense per student at Old Orchard College surpasses that of Seafarer University. This financial discrepancy evident in Table 6 prompts an examination of resource allocation, fiscal strategies, and their impact on the overall financial health and sustainability of each institution.

**Table 6. Financial Landscape**

Metric	Old Orchard College	Seafarer University
Endowment	\$17,988,360	\$19,205,276
Core Expense per Student	\$23,996	\$21,919

Source: National Center for Educational Statistics (2023)

**5. DISCUSSION: SIGNIFICANCE AND DIFFERENCES, UNRAVLEING THE INSTITUTIONAL COMPARISONS**

In the comparative landscape of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, the nuances of differences emerge as significant threads in the institutional tapestry. These differences, whether in enrolment dynamics, retention rates, student ratios, or financial landscapes, hold profound implications that extend beyond numerical values. Understanding the significance of these divergences becomes crucial to unravelling the overarching narratives that shape the distinctive trajectories of these higher education institutions.

**5.1 Enrolment Dynamics**

The stark contrast in enrolment growth, with Seafarer University boasting a remarkable 53% increase against Old Orchard College's more modest 12%, bears profound implications. This numerical difference signifies not merely an influx of students, but encapsulates the resonance of each institution with prospective learners. The significance lies in dissecting the strategies, academic offerings, and institutional appeal that position Seafarer University as a beacon of academic allure, while Old Orchard College grapples with a more modest trajectory. This divergence prompts an exploration into the dynamics that contribute to or hinder enrolment success, fostering a deeper understanding of each institution's market positioning.

**5.2 Retention and Graduation Rates**

The higher retention rates of Seafarer University, coupled with a nuanced examination of graduation rates based on 150% of expected graduation time, illuminate pivotal aspects of student success. The significance lies not merely in the numerical disparities but in the intricate web of academic support structures, program offerings, and campus culture that influence student persistence and degree completion. Seafarer University's ability to retain students at a higher rate prompts inquiries into the effectiveness of support systems, academic

advising, and the overall campus environment. Conversely, Old Orchard College's challenges in this realm necessitate an exploration of strategies to enhance student engagement and commitment.

### **5.3 Student Ratios**

The ratios depicting student-to-staff, student-to-faculty, student-to-non-teaching staff, and student-to-academic affairs ratios offer insights into the quality of the student experience and institutional support. The significance lies in unravelling the delicate balance between academic rigour and personalised attention. Seafarer University, with slightly higher ratios, prompts exploration of the implications of these dynamics on the student journey, academic engagement, and administrative support. This exploration will shed light on the institutional commitment to fostering an environment conducive to holistic student development.

### **5.4 Financial Landscape**

The financial disparities, which include endowment size and core expense per student, signify the differential approaches to resource allocation and fiscal strategies. The significance of these differences extends beyond numerical values, delving into the sustainability and growth potential of each institution. Seafarer University's marginally higher endowment and Old Orchard College's higher core expense per student prompt a scrutiny of resource allocation strategies, fiscal health, and the broader financial ecosystem that supports institutional operations. This exploration contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how financial decisions impact the institutional landscape.

### **5.5 Loyalty, Efficiency, Accountability, and Growth**

In the symphony of higher education, the melodies of loyalty, efficiency, accountability, and growth harmonise to shape the institutional ethos. Old Orchard College and Seafarer University stand as unique compositions, each weaving its narrative within the intricate dynamics of organisational structures. As we delve into the orchestration of these elements, the dialogues among stakeholders become the notes that resonate through the corridors of academia. Loyalty, born from organisational efficiency, and growth nurtured by accountability are themes that echo not only in the numerical metrics, but in the nuanced conversations that define the soul of these institutions. Join us in exploring the harmonious interplay of these elements, where the pursuit of efficiency becomes a melody that inspires loyalty, and accountability becomes the rhythm that propels growth.

#### ***5.5.1 Efficiency's Ripple Effect on Loyalty***

Efficiency within organisational structures is not merely a measure of streamlined processes; it's a catalyst for engendering loyalty among students and employees. Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, each with its unique organisational dynamics, present an intriguing canvas to examine the intricate relationship between efficiency and loyalty.

The organisational fabric at Old Orchard College, characterised by a relatively small academic affairs team and administrative duties allocated to department chairs, reveals a structure that may lack the clarity of accountability and streamlined processes. This scenario can inadvertently influence the student and employee experience. As we delve into the impact on loyalty, questions arise about the perceptible outcomes of an organisational structure that leans towards the organic and less rigid.

Contrastingly, Seafarer University boasts a more rigid organisational structure, with clear lines of accountability and responsibility. This structural clarity often correlates with higher

employee satisfaction and a positive organisational outlook. The ripple effect extends to students, who may perceive a well-organised and efficiently run institution as one invested in their academic success and overall well-being. Understanding the dynamics between organisational efficiency and loyalty is paramount in deciphering the institutional dynamics of Seafarer University.

### ***5.5.2 Accountability: A Pillar for Growth***

The symbiotic relationship between accountability and growth forms a cornerstone for the prosperity of higher education institutions. The ways in which Old Orchard College and Seafarer University navigate this terrain reveal distinctive narratives that contribute to or challenge their respective growth trajectories. Old Orchard College's organic structure, lacking clear lines of accountability and responsibility, may inadvertently sow the seeds of inefficiency and challenges in sustaining growth. The absence of well-defined accountability structures can impact decision-making processes, hindering the institution's agility in adapting to evolving educational landscapes. Exploring the intricacies of accountability at Old Orchard College unveils the delicate balance between flexibility and the need for structured organisational frameworks.

In contrast, Seafarer University's rigid structure with clear lines of accountability and responsibility positions it favourably for growth. A positive outlook among staff and faculty, coupled with low voluntary attrition, signifies an organisational climate conducive to efficiency and innovation. The clarity in accountability structures allows for more agile responses to emerging challenges and opportunities, fostering an environment ready for growth. Understanding the intersection of accountability and growth provides insight into the institutional strategies that drive Seafarer University's upward trajectory.

## **5.6 Update and Future Prospects: Winds of Change**

Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, each on its unique academic odyssey, find themselves at the crossroads of change and adaptation. As the winds of transformation sweep through their hallowed halls, both institutions grapple with shifts that promise to redefine their trajectories.

### ***5.6.1 Old Orchard College's Academic Renaissance***

In the realm of Old Orchard College, a notable transformation is underway, marked by strategic adjustments at the executive administration level. The recent appointment of a new Vice President of Academic Affairs heralds a paradigm shift, infusing the institution with fresh perspectives and leadership. Conversations within the college echo with the anticipation of a new academic era, one that aligns with proven business models and navigates the complexities of modern academia with precision. The restructuring involving deans at the helm of separate colleges and departments signifies a departure from tradition, sparking dialogues about the potential implications on efficiency and collaborative dynamics.

### ***5.6.2 Seafarer University's Soaring Trajectory***

Meanwhile, Seafarer University stands as a beacon of growth and efficiency, solidifying its position as the fastest-growing state-supported university in its region. The winds of change at Seafarer University carry the scent of success, with efficient organisational and operational methods propelling its trajectory. Conversations within the university resonate with the pride of accomplishment and the commitment to sustaining this momentum. The institution's steadfast embrace of proven business models sets the stage for continued growth, echoing the significance of organisational efficiency in shaping its narrative.

## **5.7 Future Growth, Retention, and Aspirations: Navigating the Horizon**

With these winds of change come the expectations of future growth and improved retention strategies for both institutions. The dialogues within Old Orchard College and Seafarer University about the future prospects reflect a blend of optimism, strategic foresight, and a commitment to academic excellence.

### ***5.7.1 Old Orchard College's Aspirations for Renewal***

Within Old Orchard College, stakeholders aspire for a future that transcends numerical targets, envisioning an institution that proactively shapes the educational landscape. The recent organisational adjustments, coupled with the appointment of new leadership and structural changes, fuel dialogues about the synergy between efficiency, accountability, and growth. As the institution charts its course, the dialogues explore how these adaptations will redefine Old Orchard College's identity, positioning it for sustainable growth and academic excellence. Retaining students and fostering an environment where they thrive is a focal point in the dialogues. As Old Orchard College looks towards the horizon, the conversations explore strategies for improved retention rates. Stakeholders consider how the recently implemented structural changes and leadership transitions will contribute to a more conducive environment for student success. The aspirations extend beyond numerical metrics, aiming for an environment where students not only persist but flourish.

### ***5.7.2 Seafarer University's Continued Ascendancy***

Conversations within Seafarer University are tinted with the hues of success, as stakeholders revel in the institution's status as the fastest-growing state-supported university. Anticipations for the future revolve around maintaining this upward trajectory and further solidifying Seafarer University's position in the educational landscape. Dialogues reflect a commitment to organisational efficiency as the cornerstone of continued growth, exploring how the institution's success story will unfold in the chapters yet to be written. For Seafarer University, discussions about the future include a keen focus on retaining the essence of excellence. Beyond numerical metrics, stakeholders engage in conversations about creating an environment that not only attracts, but retains students. The institution's commitment to efficiency extends to ensuring that students feel valued and supported throughout their academic journey. How the university plans to enhance retention strategies becomes a pivotal theme in these dialogues, with an overarching goal of fostering an atmosphere where students find not just education, but a sense of belonging.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

### **6.1 Summarising the Harmonies and Dissonances**

As we navigate the juxtaposition of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, the resonance of their distinct organisational symphonies becomes apparent. The comparative study illuminates the impact of organisational and operational models on the performance and dynamics of higher education institutions. Old Orchard College, with its foray into a renaissance of academic structure, stands in stark contrast to the soaring trajectory of Seafarer University, a testament to the influence of proven business models.

In the corridors of Old Orchard College, the recent changes at the executive level and the restructuring of academic responsibilities have set the stage for a nuanced exploration of traditional and emerging organisational paradigms. The dialogues within the institution reflect a simultaneous yearning for renewal and a commitment to preserving the essence of liberal

arts education. The implications of these changes extend beyond the immediate academic landscape, with potential reverberations in efficiency, accountability, and future growth.

Conversely, Seafarer University emerges as a beacon of efficiency, embodying the success born from the adoption of proven business models. The institution's accolade as the fastest-growing state-supported university underscores the transformative power of organisational models grounded in corporate strategies. The dialogues within Seafarer University reverberate with a commitment to sustaining this upward trajectory, emphasising the enduring influence of efficient operations on growth, student satisfaction, and overall institutional success.

## **6.2 Implications and Potential Avenues for Further Exploration**

The comparative study accentuates the far-reaching implications of utilising proven business organisational and operational models in higher education climates. The dialogue between traditional and modern paradigms becomes a lens through which institutions can envision their futures. The implications extend beyond the walls of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University, casting a ripple effect across the broader landscape of higher education.

Old Orchard College's journey speaks to the delicate balance between tradition and innovation. The restructuring of academic responsibilities and the infusion of fresh leadership signal an acknowledgment of the evolving demands on higher education institutions. The implications for Old Orchard College lie not only in the immediate changes but also in the institution's ability to harmonise its rich traditions with the demands of a rapidly changing educational landscape.

Seafarer University's narrative underscores the transformative potential embedded in adopting efficient organisational models. The institution's designation as the fastest-growing state-supported university in the region illuminates the profound impact of streamlined operations on growth, student satisfaction, and institutional excellence. The implications reverberate as a compelling case for other higher education institutions to explore and embrace the tenets of proven business models.

## **6.3 Charting the Path Forward**

As we conclude this comparative exploration, the path forward for higher education institutions becomes a focal point of reflection. The dialogue between Old Orchard College and Seafarer University opens avenues for further study, inviting researchers to delve into the evolving dynamics of organisational and operational paradigms. The implications of this study extend to the strategic decision-making processes of institutions worldwide, urging leaders to consider the transformative potential embedded in efficient, proven business models.

In essence, the comparative study of Old Orchard College and Seafarer University becomes not just a reflection of two institutions but a symphony of narratives that resonate with the broader complexities and opportunities within the higher education landscape. As we draw the final notes of this research, the invitation is extended to further explore, innovate, and harmonise the organisational symphonies that shape the future of academia.

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