

A BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT-LED FRAMEWORK INTEGRATING PROCESS,
CHANGE, AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY
AND GROWTH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this convergent mixed-methods study will be to investigate the absence of a Business Process Management (BPM)-led operating model in newly established online business colleges and to develop the Integrated Process, Change, and Performance (IPCP) Framework as a solution. The IPCP Framework will be defined as a structured model that integrates processes, organizational and cultural change, and performance measurement to strengthen institutional governance, adaptability, and capacity. The study will be guided by a culture change framework that focuses on cultural and leadership factors that contribute to institutional alignment and sustainability. BPM process theory will address the process dimension, while performance-monitoring mechanisms will address the performance dimension. The primary research question will examine how a BPM-led operating model, implemented through the IPCP Framework, can strengthen processes, governance, enhance cultural alignment, and ensure institutional capacity and accreditation readiness. The study setting will include newly established online business colleges operating under the Florida Commission for Independent Education (FLCIE). Data sources will consist of regulatory and accreditation reports, governance documents, and national datasets, including IPEDS and NCES, with limited primary data collected through staff interviews and surveys. Data analysis will employ thematic analysis for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative benchmarks. The IPCP Framework is expected to provide a proven model for enhancing institutional capacity, supporting continuous improvement, and ensuring regulatory and accreditation readiness.

Keywords: Business Process Management, Change Management, Performance Monitoring, Institutional Governance, Higher Education, Leadership, Startup College

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my wife, Denise, for her unwavering care and belief, which sustained me through this process of academic and personal growth, and to my children, Elijah and Elliana. May you always approach life with curiosity and a spirit of continuous learning. I also acknowledge my grandmother, Dorothy Gilmer Ross, whose example instilled in me the value of education and the power of commitment and persistence. Finally, I thank my parents, Ros and Randall, for being my greatest cheerleaders.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	2
List of Abbreviations.....	14
Overview.....	15
Background.....	17
Historical Context.....	20
Social Context.....	22
Social Context.....	23
Theoretical Context.....	24
Problem of Practice Statement.....	24
Purpose Statement.....	25
Significance of the Study.....	26
Definitions.....	27
Summary.....	31
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	32
Overview.....	32
Theoretical/Conceptual Framework.....	32
Theoretical Framework.....	33
Business Process Management (BPM).....	33
Culture Change Theory.....	35
Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring.....	37
Conceptual Framework.....	39
Literature Synthesis.....	42

Governance and Decision-Making in Higher Education.....	45
Business Process Management (BPM) in Higher Education Contexts.....	48
Operations Models for Competency-Based Education and Curriculum Development.....	51
Organizational Change and Cultural Alignment.....	55
Performance Monitoring and Institutional Effectiveness.....	59
Technology, Systems, and Academic Operations.....	63
Summary.....	66
CHAPTER THREE: DATA COLLECTION PLAN.....	73
Overview.....	73
Research Design.....	75
Rationale for Mixed-Methods in a Startup Context.....	76
Qualitative Strands.....	77
Integration: Convergence and Divergence.....	82
Interpretive Approach.....	83
Addressing Validity and Reliability.....	83
Research Questions.....	84
Setting and Participants.....	86
Site (or Setting).....	87
Participants.....	90
Researcher Positionality.....	93
Motivation and Role.....	93
Ontological Assumption.....	93

Insider Advantages.....	94
Insider Risks.....	94
Axiological Assumption.....	95
Epistemological Assumption.....	95
Insider–Outsider Dynamics.....	96
Ethical Considerations.....	96
Summary of Positionality.....	97
Procedures.....	97
Permissions.....	98
Step-by-Step Procedures.....	99
Recruitment Plan.....	100
Contingency Planning.....	101
Flow of Procedures.....	101
Data Collection.....	102
Data Collection Approach #1: Secondary qualitative data (process & cultural alignment).....	103
Data Analysis Plan #1.....	104
Data Collection Approach #2: Secondary quantitative data (performance monitoring).....	104
Data Analysis Plan #2.....	105
Data Collection Approach #3: Proposed Primary Data Collection.....	105
Interview Questions Used.....	106
Data Analysis Plan #3.....	106

Data Synthesis.....	107
Trustworthiness.....	109
Credibility.....	109
Transferability.....	110
Dependability.....	110
Confirmability.....	110
Ethical Considerations.....	111
Summary.....	111
CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.....	113
Overview.....	113
Implementation and Feasibility Plan.....	114
Implementation roadmap.....	116
Phase One: Process mapping and alignment.....	118
Phase Two: Cultural alignment and change leadership.....	120
Phase Three: Performance monitoring and continuous improvement.....	122
Resource requirements.....	124
Governance and Leadership.....	125
Faculty and Academic Staff.....	125
Technology Infrastructure.....	126
Policy Framework.....	126
Timeline Feasibility.....	127
Pre-launch to Month.....	128
Months 4–9.....	128

Months 10–18.....	129
Months 19–36.....	129
Potential Challenges.....	130
Data Limitations and Operational Understanding.....	131
Cultural resistance and change fatigue.....	131
Regulatory and accreditation pressures.....	132
Resource constraints and sequencing.....	133
Timeline risk and competing priorities.....	133
Equity and analytics ethics.....	135
Implications for Practice and Policy.....	135
Implications for practice.....	136
Implications for policy.....	138
Expected Outcomes.....	140
Short-term outcomes (0–12 months).....	141
Medium-term outcomes (12–24 months).....	143
Longer-term outcomes (24–36 months and beyond).....	144
Dissemination of the Project.....	145
Internal audiences and mechanisms.....	146
External audiences and mechanisms.....	148
Timeline and artifacts.....	149
Conclusion.....	150
References.....	153
Appendix A.....	164

Appendix B.....	167
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List of Tables

Table 1. IPCP Framework: Operationalization of Components in the Conceptual Framework...	40
Table 2. Links Between Literature Gaps, Design Decisions, and KPIs.....	69
Table 3. Qualitative Themes and Quantitative Benchmarks Joint Display.....	82
Table 4. Research Questions and Rationale.....	85
Table 5. Comparison of startup and legacy institutional characteristics.....	89
Table 6. Comparison of startup and legacy institutional characteristics.....	108
Table 7. Condensed Risk Matrix for IPCP Framework Implementation.....	116
Table 8. Implementation Timeline for IPCP Framework.....	123
Table 9. Operationalized Risk Register for IPCP Implementation.....	134
Table 10. IPCP Framework Projected Institutional Outcomes Compared to National Benchmarks	142
Table 11. IPCP Dissemination Matrix: Stakeholders, Methods, Frequency, Deliverables, and Purpose.....	147

List of Figures

Figure 1. Depiction of IPCP Framework.....	41
Figure 2. Retention rate comparison: Traditional, online, and startup (2020–2023).....	79
Figure 3. Graduation rate comparison: Traditional vs. online vs. startup (2020–2023).....	80
Figure 4. Faculty-to-student ratio: Traditional vs. online vs. startup (2020–2023).....	81
Figure 5. Procedures Flowchart for the Study.....	102
Figure 6. IPCP Framework Implementation Flow.....	118

List of Abbreviations

Business Process Management (BPM)

Integrated Process, Change, Performance Framework (IPCP Framework)

Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC)

Florida Commission for Independent Education (FLCIE)

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Competency-Based Education (CBE)

Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA)

Learning Analytics and Knowledge Conference (LAK)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Over the past twenty years, there has been a shift in the higher education environment, with online educational institutions increasingly adopting competency-based education models. This shift is emphasized by Biggs (1996), who discussed the importance of aligning instruction, learning activities, and assessment strategies. This shift has influenced students' expectations regarding access, instruction, and interactions with the institution. Institutions are expected to offer comprehensive educational programs that are workforce-relevant, while maintaining high academic standards, accountability, and adherence to regulatory standards, such as those set by licensing and accreditation organizations. Kezar and Eckel (2004) note that governance in higher education requires balance, accountability, and shared decision-making, which can present challenges for a newly established institution that is simultaneously working to achieve operational efficiency and credibility. According to Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2011), higher education has undergone a transition with the introduction of innovative technology, including nontraditional services and digital-only schools, disrupting what was historically considered traditional education.

The setting for this study is a newly established private, online business college located in Florida. This institution offers associate, bachelor's, and master's degrees in business administration, targeting working adults and new high school graduates interested in gaining a comprehensive understanding of business management, leadership, and entrepreneurship. The online college is located and licensed in the state of Florida by the Florida Commission for Independent Education (FLCIE) and actively pursuing accreditation. The college aims to guide

students in gaining mastery in business through competency-based education with an emphasis on leadership development, applied learning, and strong organizational management.

As a startup institution, the college is currently conducting pre-faculty hiring and pre-student enrollment. It is in the design and implementation phase of its academic and administrative operating frameworks, preparing for future growth. At the same time, governance processes, curriculum development, and learning resources are being established to support the planned onboarding of faculty and the delivery of student instruction. At this stage, many systems, processes, workflows, and performance metrics necessary for longer-term institutional success have not been fully defined and implemented, necessitating a well-thought-out operational framework and business architecture, along with clearly defined decision rights to guide this new organization forward.

At the time of this study, the college is working to address opportunities for improvement, including a more defined governance structure and decision-making authority, cycle times in curriculum and course development, consistent communication systems, and the development of an academic operating framework to establish operational consensus and consistency. These challenges represent the broader problem of practice common to startup colleges in higher education, underscoring the importance of developing and implementing a BPM-led operating framework that can expedite the alignment of institutional processes and departments, increase capacity, and provide a foundation for immediate stability while supporting future growth.

For a newly established online business college, the digital environment can create unique opportunities. On the one hand, these new types of institutions experience fewer constraints when designing their operating frameworks than those faced by legacy institutions.

Research by Garrett, Legon, and Fredericksen (2019) confirms that newly licensed institutions face increased scrutiny from state licensing and accreditation organizations, as well as students who have higher expectations and demand transparency, practical instruction, supporting technology, and quantifiable results from the onset. Unlike traditional institutions, startup institutions must quickly achieve positive student outcomes while maintaining compliance and performance objectives to establish credibility and sustainability. In contrast, what are considered more traditional institutions may gradually evolve their processes and governance over time, as detailed by Eaton (2020).

The challenge being investigated in this study, how to implement a BPM-led operating framework for a newly established online college, must therefore be positioned within a broader context of disruptive change, monitoring production, and meeting student expectations. By taking this approach, it highlights the urgency for developing integrated structures and systems to support effective governance, with process design and cultural alignment in innovative and creative ways that bolster operations and institutional growth.

Background

Over the past twenty years, there has been a shift in the higher education environment, with online educational institutions increasingly adopting competency-based education models. This shift is emphasized by Biggs (1996), who discussed the importance of aligning instruction, learning activities, and assessment strategies. This shift has influenced students' expectations regarding access, instruction, and interactions with the institution. Institutions are expected to offer comprehensive educational programs that are workforce-relevant, while maintaining high academic standards, accountability, and adherence to regulatory standards, such as those set by licensing and accreditation organizations. Kezar and Eckel (2004) note that governance in higher

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Historical Context

The evolution of organizational operating models in higher education reflects the increasing complexity of academic institutions and the need for more agile and formalized structures that support changing student needs and guide institutional growth. Historically, colleges and universities have often developed incrementally, establishing governance structures and decision-making processes gradually over time. However, organic development alone is insufficient for a newly established institution, especially in an online setting, where academic operations and instruction must be effectively delivered from the outset. If not planned for properly, as discussed by Kezar (2004) and emphasized by Burton, Obel and Håkonsson (2020), these institutions run the risk of misalignment, inefficiencies, and a lack of clarity in decision-making, which can impact their overall operational effectiveness.

Over the past two decades, the expansion of online education has disrupted traditional classroom-based educational models. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2022), more than one-third of current students participate in an online training initiative. Moreover, online higher education institutions continue to grow as one of the fastest-growing segments of the learning industry. Christensen et al. (2011) described this as disruptive innovation, where nontraditional colleges are introducing technology and new instructional models, such as competency-based education (CBE), to challenge traditional learning. This approach builds on principles of constructive alignment in instructional design, as outlined in Biggs' (1996) research. This evolution has set the expectation that new, startup online

institutions must be workforce-relevant, technologically enhanced, and improve institutional outcomes.

Unlike traditional higher learning institutions, which evolve gradually, over an extended period, contemporary online colleges face more intense scrutiny. Additionally, these online colleges must also manage regulatory, licensing, and accreditation requirements, which necessitate governance, measurable performance indicators, transparency, and accountability processes in place so that they can deliver to an increasing number of students (Ewell, 2001). Weise (2020) emphasizes that in a shifting labor market with rapidly evolving skills requirements, online institutions need to align curriculum and operational processes to support students, ensuring they are prepared for future employment. Without these processes in place, newly established institutions face the challenge of inefficiencies, regulatory compliance shortfalls, and a lack of student trust.

At the same time, startup colleges have unique opportunities that legacy schools generally do not have access to. Free from fixed traditions, they can introduce new and innovative approaches toward operation frameworks, governance models, implement digital strategies, and focus on cultural alignment initiatives in the initial launch phase (Rowley, 2000). However, Burton et al. (2020) argue that well-thought-out and intentional planning, along with organizational design, is necessary, as even new colleges can be impacted by misalignment and breakdowns in administrative and instructional operations. While history demonstrates that universities once had a firm hold on the education market, evolving slowly, contemporary early-stage institutions can benefit from integrating BPM-led operational frameworks to ensure collaboration, alignment, scalability, and strong credibility from their initial launch.

Research has shown that institutions that enter the market without defined governance frameworks often encounter challenges that impact or delay their development process. Atanaw (2024) highlighted the impact of transformational change on higher education institutions, emphasizing the need for these institutions to implement organizational strategies to prevent potential instability resulting from these initiatives. Furthermore, Alzahmi et al. (2025) noted that resilience and longer-term viability are enhanced through the incorporation of change management strategies early in the life cycle of a new institution, thereby supporting both resilience and long-term organizational viability. These findings support the historical development of organizational architecture and its implications for institutional at inceptions.

Social Context

The demands placed on new colleges extend beyond internal procedures and governance. Contemporary social demands from higher learning institutions, including accountability, student satisfaction, regulatory compliance, and instructional quality, have increased, especially in a digital age with increasingly technically advanced students. For online institutions, stakeholders expect transparent communication, organized operations, and collaboration between both administration and academic domains. When these elements are absent, the resulting inefficiencies can result in a lack of clarity, a breakdown in staff morale, and diminished trust, which can have a detrimental impact on the student outcomes, based on research by Corbo et al. (2016) and later reinforced by Bulat, Roman, and Manolesco (2024).

The adoption of organizational operational models is becoming increasingly critical due to regulatory requirements and the need for high-quality academic operations to ensure the best student outcomes. According to Chou et al. (2024), licensing and accreditation are factors that contribute to building trust and credibility, thereby instilling confidence in the institution. An

institution lacking robust governance and an effective operational system risks being hampered not only by inefficiencies but also by breakdowns in operational readiness, which impede its capacity to service students and obtain widespread acceptance, thereby hindering sustainable growth.

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Theoretical Context

The theoretical foundations of this study are derived from three complementary perspectives, including Business Process Management, organizational design theory, and Fullan's culture change framework (2007; 2014). BPM provides a framework, based on the work of Dumas et al. (2018), for process architecture, governance, and continuous improvement, emphasizing iterative cycles of monitoring and adjustment. Burton et al. (2020) argue that organizational design theory is critical to sustainable growth, contributing principles of alignment, clarity in role assignments, and performance measurement and monitoring.

Complementing these structural theories is Fullan's framework for cultural institutional transformation. His research on coherence and cultural change emphasizes the impact of structural reform without cultural alignment, reducing the effectiveness of change initiatives. In early-stage colleges, cultural scope is critical, as cooperation, leadership development, and common goals should be developed in the early stages of development. Fullan's cultural framework, in conjunction with BPM and organizational design, helps lay the foundation for a thorough theoretical approach towards this research, ensuring that structural and cultural dynamics are addressed.

Problem of Practice Statement

The problem is the absence of a business process management (BPM)-led operating model, including process architecture, governance and decision rights, and a performance system, for a newly established online business college, a challenge highlighted in system design by Burton et al. (2020), reinforced through cultural alignment evidence by Corbo et al. (2016), and echoed by Alzahmi et al. (2025) in their mapping of change management.

In practical terms, this problem is manifested in extended idea-to-launch cycle times, increased reworks during departmental handoffs, and delays in governance and decision-making, for example. Without clearly defined processes and governance structures, the institution may experience inefficiencies and reduced collaboration, which can impede academic operational effectiveness or organizational capacity. Research from Atuahene, Qian, and Ahotovi (2024) has shown that such deficiencies impact creativity, impair cultural and reduce psychological safety within an organization, which was further confirmed by Yaqoob, Sheraz, Mukhtar, and Nazir (2024). A comprehensive operating model that integrates structural frameworks with organizational cultural alignment is crucial for institutional success.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and implement a strategic organizational change initiative in a newly established online business college through organizational systems process design grounded in organizational design principles outlined by Burton et al. (2020), supported by change management that supports capacity-building strategies in higher education described by Umar et al. (2025), and informed by the BPM lifecycle explained by Dumas et al. (2018) to guide the development of academic and administrative staff. Further complementing these frameworks, Fullan's culture change theory (2007, 2014) provides additional guidance for leadership development and staff collaboration to achieve cultural alignment. The goal of this study is to examine the impact of developing and implementing an integrated, scalable academic operational model that provides clarity, enhances capacity, improves alignment, and fosters a sustainable culture of leadership excellence, teamwork, and continuous improvement.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is reflected across three distinct areas: theoretical, empirical, and practical. The theoretical significance of this study lies in its integration of Business Process Management (BPM), organizational design theory, and Fullan's culture change framework into a comprehensive conceptual strategy for establishing higher education startup organizations. While BPM has been studied and utilized extensively in the commercial industry, Tapia, Martinez, and Andrade (2023) found that its application in an educational setting has been limited, primarily focusing on the administrative side. By expanding BPM's application and implementing cultural frameworks within the educational startup environment, this study contributes to the expansion of the theoretical landscape of applied organizational design in colleges and universities.

The empirical significance of the research stems from its application to startup institutions, an area that has been underrepresented in the literature. A review of existing works on this subject focuses on established universities systematically adapting to change over extended periods (Corbo et al., 2016). Few examine new institutions that attempt to develop a structured approach toward governance, decision rights, and performance management systems from the inception phase, presenting a significant opportunity for further research. By documenting the development of a BPM-led operating framework in a newly established online business college, this study will offer new empirical insights into institutional readiness and scalability.

The practical significance of the study is presented in the insights it offers in informing leadership, accreditors, regulators, and policymakers on how to approach the establishment of a new educational institution. For startup leadership, the model presented herein provides a

replicable framework for establishing and aligning processes, defining decision-making authority, and integrating performance management. For creditors, regulators, and policymakers, the outcomes of this study highlight the strategies newly established colleges can use to ensure a compliant approach while still maintaining innovation to achieve a sustainable and credible organization. By demonstrating how aligned structural and cultural frameworks can be used together to enhance institutional capacity in higher education, this study aims to close the gap in the related literature and provide deeper insight into how this approach can be applied in higher education.

To provide clear empirical insights, this project will employ the action research methodology to identify the effectiveness of implementing an operating model in an academic institution. These findings may provide insight and inform future studies on organizational design, leadership development, and change management in relation to the operation of online higher learning organizations, particularly in emerging colleges. Practically, the study provides a replicable structure that newly established higher learning institutions can employ to guide and manage growth, ensure academic operational efficiency, instructional consistency, and management regulatory compliance, while preparing the institution for student delivery. Through clearly defined processes, procedures, workflows, decision rights, and governance structures, institutions can establish academic and administrative clarity, cooperation, and alignment.

Definitions

To establish the consistent understanding and provide clarity throughout this study, key terms and concepts are defined within this section. The specific definitions used are based on their application within the context of organizational design and business process management in higher education operations. The definitions provided herein are grounded in the specific subject

and researched literature, offering relevant explanations connecting to the theoretical framework, problem of practice, and purpose. These definitions provide essential information for understanding the findings and discussions detailed throughout this study.

1. Accreditation - A formal review done by an external authorized organization that evaluates the institution against defined requirements to receive approval as an accredited institution (Ewell, 2001)
2. Alignment - The process that ensures organizational strategies, structures, and workforce actions are coordinated to achieve shared objectives and performance outcomes (Burton et al., 2020).
3. Business Process Management (BPM) - A structured methodology for designing, governing, and improving organizational processes. In higher education, BPM establishes a comprehensive operational framework for institutional governance and operational efficiency (Dumas et al., 2018).
4. Change Management - The structured strategies used in guiding leadership, people, and resources to evolve and sustain performance during transformation (Umar et al., 2025).
5. Competency-Based Education - An instruction strategy where students progress based on mastery of clearly defined competencies, rather than classroom time and exam-based instructional strategy. This approach emphasizes the development of improved skills through a transparent and measurable process (Voorhees, 2001).
6. Digital Transformation - The integration of technology into the operational and instructional strategy, and governance, improving access, oversight, scalability, and effectiveness (Tapia et al., 2023).

7. **Decision Rights** - Clearly defines the correct authority to make, authorize, and execute strategic and operational decisions in an institution. Clarity in decision rights reduces potential conflicts and misalignments and improves organizational efficiency (Burton et al., 2020).
8. **Fullan's Cultural Framework** - A leadership approach designed to help organizations, particularly learning institutions, navigate the complexities of continuous change (Fullan, 2007; 2014).
9. **Governance** - Refers to a system of accountability, decision-making, and oversight that ensures effective institutional management of the workforce and resources in maintaining high institutional quality and obtaining objectives. Valuable in educational organizations as it offers a way to provide transparency and legitimacy in administrative and academic decision-making (Atanaw, 2024).
10. **Institutional Effectiveness** - Is an indicator of an institution's ability to achieve its mission and key objectives, through assessment of institutional needs, aligned and coordinated planning, and resource allocation for best potential outcomes (Banta and Blaich, 2011).
11. **Institutional Readiness** - The degree to which an institution is prepared to implement and manage operational models, instructional strategies, technology, and innovation, requiring alignment, governance, culture, and processes (Atuahene, 2024).
12. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)** - KPIs are quantitative measures used to monitor and evaluate the performance of administrative, academic, and operational performance. For example, student retention, program completions, on-time course development, and cost-to-service per student (Teshome, 2025).

13. **Mastery-Based Learning** - Students progress through their studies after demonstrating mastery of academic knowledge and skills. This approach focuses on outcomes rather than time in the class (Bloom, 1968).
14. **Performance Monitoring** - The structured and systematic tracking of institutional cross-departmental production and outcomes to support accountability, and is used for continuous improvement initiatives (Head 2011).
15. **Operating Model** - A defined system of processes and procedures, decision-making authority, and governance frameworks that impact capacity, growth, and organizational alignment (Burton et al., 2020).
16. **Organizational Capacity** - The organization's capabilities to effectively manage and align its workforce with processes and resources to achieve strategic objectives. (Umar, et al., 2025).
17. **Organizational Culture** - Refers to the shared values, standards, expectations, behaviors, and practices that define the behavior of an organization and guide the decision-making process (Schein and Shein, 2017).
18. **Organizational Design** - The structuring of roles, processes, and systems to align people and resources with institutional goals for efficiency and growth, circumventing inefficiencies and bolstering organizational readiness (Burton et al., 2020).
19. **Process Mining** - Uses data collection from digital systems to analyze, visualize data, and assess information to improve institutional workflows. This approach is often applied in monitoring education efficiency (van der Aalst, 2016).

20. Shared Governance - A governance model where faculty, administrative staff, institutional leadership, and governing boards work in coordination towards decision-making, supporting institutional effectiveness with academic freedom (Birnbaum, 2004).

Summary

In this chapter, the background and justification for this study were introduced. The background examined the historical development of operating models, the social pressures experienced by new institutions, and the theoretical structures that support this study and guide its outcomes. The Problem of Practice Statement clearly defined the absence of a BPM-led operating model and its impact on a new institution. At the same time, the Purpose Statement provides clarity on the project's scope. The Significance section highlighted the theoretical, empirical, and practical applications, and the Definitions provided clarifications on key terms being used throughout this process. These components, together, work to create a comprehensive and integrated foundation for Chapter Two, which will offer an extensive literature analysis.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This review of existing literature that has informed this study positions its findings to contribute to the broader body of knowledge related to organizational design, governance, and enhancing institutional effectiveness. This literature review provides a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical and empirical context to improve understanding of the problem of practice, specifically the absence of a Business Process Management (BPM)-led operating framework in a newly established online business college. This study is organized thematically, beginning with theoretical and conceptual frameworks that provide direction for the study, followed by a synthesis of research related to governance, business process management, competency-based education (CBE), change management, culture, performance monitoring, and the influence of technology on instructional delivery and academic operations. Furthermore, this literature review identifies areas of agreement, disagreement, and gaps in the current literature, highlighting the need to create an integrated framework that connects structural, cultural, and performance management.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

The theoretical and conceptual framework establishes the foundation for this study by linking the problem of practice to established models of organizational design and research in higher education. It draws on Business Process Management (BPM) theory, cultural change scholarship, and performance monitoring literature, providing the foundation for the design of the Integrated Process, Culture, and Performance (IPCP) Framework as an integrated operating model. These perspectives provide the structure needed to analyze governance, cultural alignment, and performance within a startup institution, ensuring that the study remains

grounded in both scholarship and practical application. By aligning these domains, the framework provides a coherent lens through which the research design, data collection, and analysis are organized, enabling conclusions that are both rigorous and actionable.

Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this study is built on three theoretical frameworks: Business Process Management (BPM), Cultural Change Theory, and Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring. These components are combined into a conceptual framework that details how they interact as inputs, mechanisms, processes, and outputs, influencing institutional performance. Furthermore, this study presents a distinct analytical approach that encompasses structural, cultural, and performance aspects, used to examine the absence of a BPM-led operating framework in newly established online business colleges. This integrated model is referred to as the IPCP Framework throughout this study. The IPCP Framework offers a structured approach to designing the operational structure of a startup online business college, aligning process efficiency, cultural alignment, and performance measurement.

Business Process Management (BPM)

To improve operational efficiency, organizations often employ Business Process Management (BPM). This comprehensive approach integrates operations management, business architecture, systems thinking, collaboration, and technology to enhance workflow effectiveness across the organization. According to Dumas et al. (2018), BPM encompasses key elements, including design, implementation, monitoring, and continuous improvement to ensure that processes are continually aligned with organizational strategy and objectives. This process-centered approach is practical in organizations operating as interconnected systems, where roles

are clearly defined, accountability is present, and feedback loops are employed to drive efficiency and sustainability.

Historically, BPM has been primarily deployed in the corporate and public sectors, used to enhance decision-making, reduce redundancies, and expedite cycle times by reshaping organizations through technology and workflow redesign (Davenport, 1993; Hammer and Champy, 1993; vom Brocke and Mendling, 2018). Later research by Trkman (2010) and supported further by Harmon (2019) highlights the key success factors for BPM, including leadership, cultural alignment, and strategic fit. While Trkman (2010) and Harmon (2019) identify BPM's use and general success in corporate settings, Tapia et al. (2023) and Antonopoulou et al. (2023) identified that higher education often encounters cultural and governance challenges preventing full adoption of the principles of BPM, frequently relying on decentralized governance structures and legacy institutional systems that are fragmented.

New online institutions have an opportunity to approach operational frameworks differently as they lack the entrenched traditions or incremental histories. For a startup institution, BPM presents a chance to design scalable and transparent processes and systems from the earliest stages of its establishment. An important aspect of BPM is the use of process governance, which is employed to develop decision rights, establish methods of accountability, and define escalation procedures, ensuring that transparent mechanisms are in place to support operational needs. Burton et al. (2020) emphasized the significance of governance in ensuring alignment within multifaceted organizations, where multiple stakeholders require coordination in interdependent processes. In higher education, this approach clearly distinguishes between academic governance, which encompasses curriculum, assessment, and faculty authority, and administrative governance, which includes admissions, enrollment, and compliance.

While this methodology has proven effective, critiques of BPM must be acknowledged to gain a comprehensive understanding. Recent analysis supports its efficiency; however, its corporate origins risk over-structuring institutions if not integrated strategically. Antonopoulou et al. (2023) and Renna and Colonnese (2025) highlight that workflows and digital transformation can overstrain academic environments, making it essential to preserve flexibility in instructional delivery, pedagogy, and student creativity, which are not easily formalized in defined workflows.

Recent analysis of BPM within higher education institutions supports its efficiency, as critiqued by Antonopoulou et al. (2023) and Renna & Colonnese (2025), who warn that its corporate origins risk over-structuring academic environments if not implemented strategically. While BPM is widely regarded as effective for efficiency, critics note that it risks over-formalizing academic work if applied as rigid control. To address this, the study employs a balanced BPM model that standardizes decision-making processes and feedback loops while maintaining flexibility and pedagogical autonomy.

Culture Change Theory

At the same time, BPM is used to resolve or implement organizational structures and has a proven track record of success when employed for this purpose. When applying this methodology to education, it is essential to be intentional in addressing culture within the organizational context. Understanding how new practices are accepted and integrated into educational institutions, as Fullan (2016) provides in his book "Culture Change Theory," offers valuable and practical insights into how this approach can be deployed. Fullan goes on to identify moral, purpose, relationship building, collaborative work culture, and knowledge sharing as critical to establishing a foundation for continuous improvement.

In higher education, culture can often act as a challenge or a roadblock to change, which necessitates a well-planned approach toward resolving. When existing traditions and power structures oppose the introduction of new methods, these initiatives can be inhibited and stifle innovation, as Corbo et al. (2016) explain, echoing classic organizational culture theory that highlights the importance of shared values, learning systems, and standardized instruction in shaping integration (Senge 2006; Scott, 2016; Schein and Schein, 2017). However, in colleges in the formative stage, there is the prospect of creating a culture from the outset, rather than having to manage an existing one. Research by Atuahene (2024) highlights how this offers both an opportunity for alignment, collaboration, and innovation at the early stages of an institution's establishment; conversely, it also presents the risk of introducing fragmentation, disagreement, and resistance, especially when culture is not prioritized.

Fullan's theory (2016) is particularly pertinent to newly established online educational institutions due to its emphasis on continuous and recursive change, in contrast to the more linear models of Kotter's eight-step change model (2012) or Lewin's three-step "freeze-change-refreeze" process (1951), as well as later frameworks that stress the role of institutional transformation, adaption, capacity and environmental pressures in higher education (Sporn, 1999; Eckel and Kezar, 2003; Kezar, 2014). While both Lewin and Kotter offer valuable insights, their event-driven approaches may not be as applicable in the more dynamic environment of online higher learning, which requires an ongoing, adaptive, innovative, and iterative approach to operations and instruction. Earlier studies by March (1991) explained this tension as the balance between exploiting innovation and further exploring established processes, a dilemma relevant in startup colleges that must pursue innovative approaches to education while also maintaining operational stability and alignment. Fullan approaches this subject differently,

emphasizing that cultural change is an ongoing organizational process, rather than a static or one-time event.

Critiques by Crawford et al. (2020) of Fullan's theory are that it downplays the power dynamics and structural barriers present in legacy higher education settings. An example can be found in the critical task of relationship building, one of Fullan's central principles for transformation, which does not occur by itself. It is often influenced by institutional standards, external regulatory pressures, or accreditation requirements, all of which can hinder the culture of collaboration, which is essential for institutional success. This highlights the importance of integrating BPM with organizational design, supporting cultural shift through aligning processes, and strengthening performance management systems.

Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring

A third theoretical foundation is organizational design and performance monitoring, which is connected to organizational structure and institutional outcomes. Based on research by Burton et al. (2020), when people, processes, structures, and strategy align, organizations have been found to achieve a level of operational effectiveness supporting administration, instructional operations, and student outcomes. For higher education institutions, this places the focus on aligning academic objectives with administrative systems, the proper allocation of resources, and effective governance processes.

The integration of systems for performance monitoring is essential in higher education, as it establishes accountability and contributes to workforce and instructional planning. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), as detailed by Williamson and Kizilcec (2022), are widely used to monitor institutional effectiveness, building upon earlier methods of assessment that utilized assessment results to gather important feedback, as outlined by Banta and Blaich (2011) and

reinforced by Kuh et al. (2014). Recent reviews emphasize their role in retention, student persistence, and course efficiency, while warning of challenges in conceptualization and governance.

These KPIs help clarify key patterns in the student experience, the effectiveness of the technology being used, and highlight instructional skills of faculty, while also identifying areas that require attention or opportunities for improvement. Systemic reviews confirm that dashboards and analytics enable institutions to evaluate efficiency through process-oriented metrics, including cycle times and rework rates, as noted by Ifenthaler and Yau (2020) and Gašević et al. (2022). These tools can provide early warning, but are most effective when integrated with governance. In addition to downstream academic results, including graduation and retention rates, these operation-oriented KPIs provide institutional leadership with early warning indicators that, if acted upon, can improve operational and educational outcomes.

In the context of competency-based education (CBE), the monitoring of performance carries even greater importance. According to Marcellis, Frerejean, Bredeweg, Brand-Gruwel, and van Merriënboer (2024), educational strategies that deploy a mastery-based model require an effective measurement and feedback mechanism that aligns with curriculum outcomes, assessment procedures, and institutional objectives. This is especially important when implementing the CBE model, as it runs the risk of being more aspirational than operational if not closely managed. Critiques of performance monitoring, as presented by Feng et al. (2025), warn that excessive reliance on quantitative metrics may lead to distorted or abused incentives or may negatively impact the value of the qualitative aspects of learning. To address this challenge, organizational design theory places increased emphasis on balance, where metrics should be used to inform decision-making, while ensuring that academic objectives remain a priority.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework, referred to as the Integrated Process, Culture, and Performance (IPCP) Framework, illustrates how these theories connect in this study. BPM establishes process architecture and decision rights; Culture Change Theory explains adoption, collaboration, and readiness; Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring provide accountability and measurable outcomes. Together, they form an integrated model that links inputs encompassing governance structures, processes, and culture to mechanisms, including collaboration, feedback loops, and monitoring, as well as outputs, comprised of alignment, operational efficiency, and institutional readiness.

The three proposed conceptual frameworks in this study combine distinct theoretical models to create a system-based operational framework for implementation within an online business college startup. These three domains form a comprehensive approach towards institutional operations and management, supporting instructional delivery and positive student outcomes. These three approaches include

1. Business Process Management (BPM): Process architecture, governance, decision rights (Dumas et al., 2018; Burton et al., 2020).
2. Cultural Change and Alignment: Shared vision, collaboration, moral purpose, relationship building (Fullan, 2016; Corbo et al., 2016).
3. Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring: Metrics, accountability systems, and role clarity (Burton et al., 2020; Atuahene, 2024).

A significant influence and at the nexus of the combined framework is the CBE approach in online early-stage business colleges, which relies heavily on transparency, cultural acceptance, and quantifiable results as emphasized by Feng et al. (2025). This framework posits that

integrating these domains is an effective method for developing sustainable institutional capacity, a point discussed by Burton et al. (2020). Moreover, both Corbo (2016) and Fullan (2016) emphasized that implementing BPM strategies without also addressing cultural alignment may present additional challenges and resistance to new initiatives. Compounding these challenges further, a culture without established processes or procedures can result in a lack of clarity and increased internal confusion, which Atuahene (2024), Botha et al. (2024), and Luo et al. (2024) identified as a barrier to institutional growth and capacity. Without proper cultural acceptance or structure, introducing performance monitoring can be ineffective, leading to superficial compliance that negatively affects long-term integration, a concern echoed by Burton et al. (2020). The strength of the IPCP Framework lies in its emphasis on institution-wide integration rather than a limited project-based approach.

Table 1. *IPCP Framework: Operationalization of Components in the Conceptual Framework*

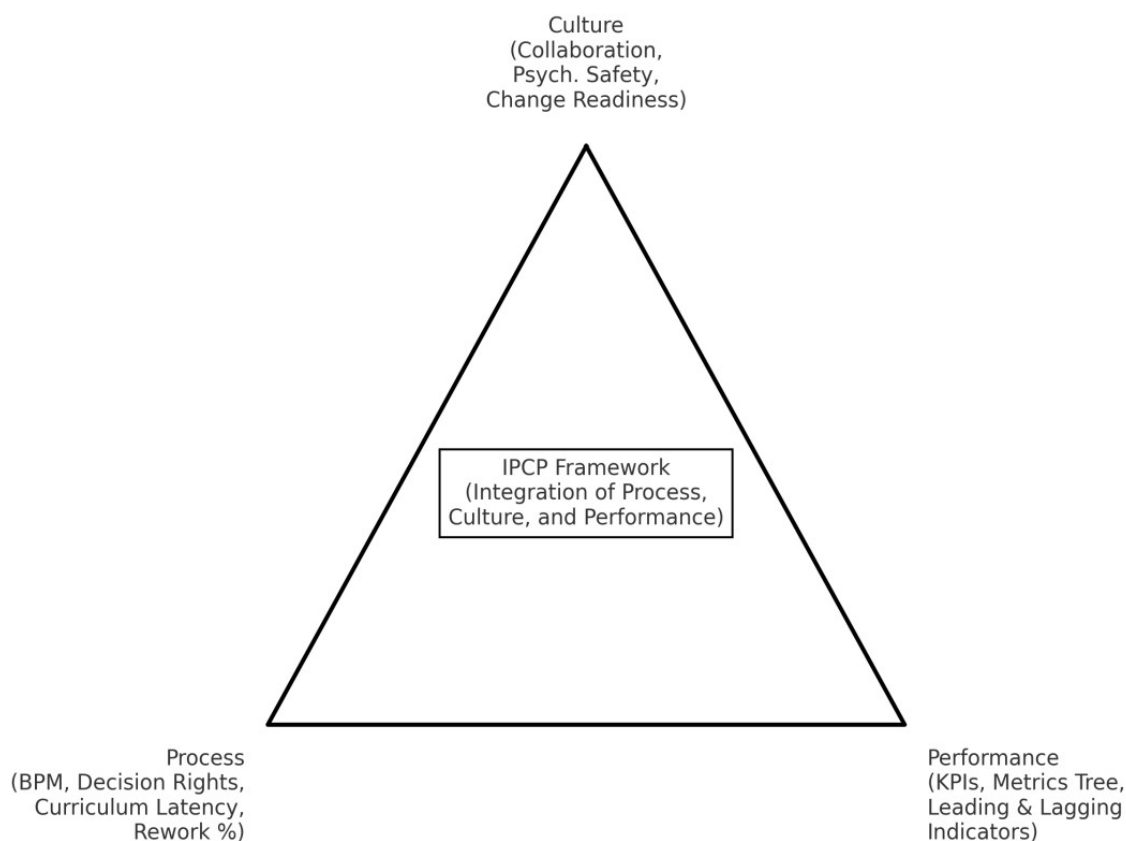
Integrated Component	Operationalization	Measurable Indicators
Process	Business Process Management (BPM) applied to academic and operational workflows	Decision rights clarity; curriculum approval latency (days); rework percentage; percentage of decisions resolved at the lowest level
Culture	Shared governance and change-readiness mechanisms that foster collaboration	Collaboration index; psychological safety survey scores; change readiness scale; participation rates in governance activities
Performance	Performance monitoring system linking strategy to outcomes	KPI and metrics tree; leading indicators (cycle time, first-pass yield); lagging indicators (compliance flags, readiness at term start; student satisfaction trends)

Note. This table connects the theoretical domains of BPM, cultural alignment, and performance management with measurable indicators that guide the study's analysis of governance and operations.

As shown in Table 1, it provides a detailed mapping of measurable indicators, highlighting that the components of Business Process Management, Culture, and Performance Benchmarking are each linked to specific quantifiable indicators that can be applied in practice.

Whereas Figure 1 builds on this operationalization by illustrating how these components integrate within the conceptual framework to support alignment, transparency, capacity, and scalability in a startup online business college.

Figure 1. *Depiction of IPCP Framework*



Note. This IPCP framework illustration depicts the interaction of BPM, Culture Change, and Performance Monitoring. The triangle indicates the interdependence of each component in supporting this model.

The IPCP Framework offers a comprehensive model that depicts process architecture, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring, all integrated to establish a comprehensive operational model applicable to early-stage online colleges and universities. By positioning these components as interdependent, rather than siloed, this framework emphasizes that governance, collaboration, and measurement must be strategically implemented at the inception to establish

legitimacy, scalability, and capacity. This integrated framework addresses the problem of practice by demonstrating how new institutions can avoid fragmented development by developing alignment across leadership, academic, and administrative areas. As a result, the IPCP Framework provides a foundation for reviewing the literature to determine how each component is supported or challenged in the context of higher education startups.

Literature Synthesis

The following literature synthesis expands on the conceptual framework defined in the IPCP Framework by examining how existing research influences each component of the model. This review is organized thematically, beginning with the challenges commonly encountered in an institution's formative phases. The synthesis continues, with a review of existing governance, BPM, competency-based education, cultural alignment, performance monitoring mechanisms, and technology integration. The objective is to both summarize prior findings and to highlight tensions, critiques, and gaps that remain insufficiently addressed in current studies on this subject. As a result, the synthesis provides the empirical and theoretical foundation to support the framework's application in resolving the absence of a BPM-led operating model that fully integrates governance, culture, and performance monitoring in a new online business college.

Challenges in Establishing New Higher Education Institutions

The establishment of a new higher education institution presents distinct challenges unique to this model, which differ from those faced by traditional universities. Add to this scenario a startup institution that will operate as an online business college delivering through a CBE-led instructional model. Conventional schools and universities have historically evolved slowly, adopting new initiatives and improving business process management, cultural change, governance procedures, and structural changes over time. Conversely, Voorhees (2001) points

out that startup colleges must become operationally ready from the outset of their operations, without the advantage of establishing customs, processes, and cultural expectations organically over time. This distinction highlights a critical gap in the literature, where a significant volume of research has been completed focusing on organizational transformation in established universities, and very little research exists addressing the challenges faced by startup institutions.

A prominent challenge is the lack of established operating models designed to support implementation at the inception of a new higher education initiative. Burton et al. (2020) argue that the importance of organizational alignment necessitates well-defined roles, decision rights, and accountability mechanisms. In the absence of such clarity, inefficiencies can quickly develop, particularly in cross-functional procedures and processes, such as academic operations, curriculum development, CBE-led instructional delivery, and student support services. These inefficiencies can subsequently impact accreditation, lead to increased compliance infractions, and negatively affect the student experience and institutional outcomes.

Historical analysis reveals examples of how institutions relied on gradual transformation and frequently experienced a breakdown in operational alignment. For instance, Corbo et al. (2016) found that when institutions experienced growth, the original operational frameworks and governance procedures did not scale easily, leading to a breakdown in decision-making and duplication of efforts. In startup institutions, the lack of a structured operational methodology framework is exacerbated, necessitating a defined strategy to address this shortcoming. This tends to be a greater challenge for online institutions because their operational model lacks traditional markers of a physical campus, in-person instruction, and a conventional student lifestyle. According to Tapia et al. (2023), process coherence is as important as technology for higher education digital transformation initiatives. When a breakdown occurs between the two

operating frameworks and governance, online colleges may face risks related to segmented decision-making, poor quality assurance, and a fragmented student experience.

The challenge is compounded in online institutions, where traditional markers of institutional identity, such as physical campuses, in-person faculty collaboration, and student life, are absent. Tapia et al. (2023) argue that digital transformation in higher education requires not only technological integration but also process coherence. Online colleges that lack integrated governance and operating systems risk producing fragmented student experiences, inconsistent quality assurance, and siloed decision-making. Another key difficulty lies in cultural readiness. Atuahene (2024) notes that startup colleges often underestimate the importance of cultural integration, assuming that operational systems alone will produce alignment. In reality, misaligned cultural expectations among faculty, administrators, and students can create resistance to change, undermine collaboration, and slow institutional development. These challenges suggest that culture must be intentionally cultivated from inception, rather than left to emerge organically.

Ultimately, the literature highlights the tension between the need for operational efficiency and the institution's instructional objectives. Although frameworks, such as BPM, place a strong emphasis on performance and transparency, some academics warn that implementing a too corporate structure without considering the unique purpose of an academic institution could undermine these principles. This can be uniquely challenging for startup online colleges, which must balance academic integrity and student-centric objectives with the need for operational efficiency and effective governance.

When considering these studies, it becomes clear that the challenge of starting a CBE-based online higher education institute involves more than just replicating traditional institutions

at a smaller scale. Instead, it presents a unique institutional challenge that necessitates a well-planned and executed structural, cultural, and governance strategy. While existing research exists in relation to traditional institutions, there is a lack of a comprehensive framework that addresses breakdowns in business process management, structural inefficiencies, cultural misalignments, and technological fragmentations often encountered in start-up colleges. This study addresses the disparity in current research by developing a BPM-led operating framework that integrates governance, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring systems.

Governance and Decision-Making in Higher Education

Governance in organizations is critical and has long been acknowledged as a key factor in determining the effectiveness of higher education institutions. Fundamentally, governance refers to the systems, processes, and decision-making procedures that guide the allocation and utilization of authority within colleges and universities. Higher education governance, as detailed by Corbo et al. (2016), has historically evolved through shared governance models, in which boards, faculty, and administration share responsibility for administrative and academic strategies (Birnbaum, 2004; Kezar and Eckel, 2004; Middlehurst, 2013; Shattock, 2006). This historical approach reflects the belief that educational and decision-making processes in higher education are critical to maintaining integrity in the sector.

However, online colleges and startup institutions experience challenges with the historical shared governance model found in traditional universities. These institutions must establish governance structures from the onset, as they often lack established norms, faculty or leadership committees, or ingrained governance traditions. This requires administration and academic leadership to develop new ones. Digital transformation in higher education, as emphasized by Tapia (2021) and Antonopoulou (2023), has highlighted the efficiency of

centralized governance, revealing a tension in the literature between the legitimacy gained through shared governance and the ability to adjust quickly in cross-functional processes that involve technology, compliance, curriculum design, and student services, which centralization provides. Furthermore, data security, digital pedagogy, and technology-enabled accountability have even greater priority in an online college, areas that traditional universities may not prioritize to the same extent, so this approach shows greater relevance.

The literature highlights the conflicts between shared governance and a more simplified and streamlined governance approach. Shared governance promotes academic validity, transparency, and inclusivity. In contrast, startup institutions face pressure to attract students, generate revenue, meet regulatory requirements, scale effectively, and maintain an agile growth strategy. This is a challenge that Burton et al. (2020) discuss, highlighting how centralized or streamlined decision-making can be more appealing to startup organizations. Organizations with unclear governance structures, as noted in research by Corbo et al. (2016), frequently encounter authority disputes, role confusion, and decision bottlenecks. However, Luo et al. (2024) note that excessive centralization may cause staff and faculty to become disaffected, leading to cultural misalignment and a negative impact on internal morale.

A growing body of research is focusing on governance in online higher education institutions, highlighting an increased interest and importance in understanding its application in this rapidly expanding educational niche. According to Feng et al. (2025), online institutions achieve the best outcomes when governance processes are incorporated across virtual platforms, supporting external collaboration and academic and administrative settings. Furthermore, to ensure governance processes are effectively integrated, they should include requirements for ensuring accountability, offer necessary flexibility, and provide clarity and transparency,

supporting institutional operational needs. This argument was expanded upon by Tapia et al. (2023), who demonstrated how business process management principles can positively impact digitalized institutions by enhancing decision-making without compromising transparency. Despite these findings, significant gaps remain within the existing literature.

Contemporary research studies focus their efforts on already established, traditional universities or departmental initiatives, with many of these studies offering limited insight into governance design within the startup stages of a new college, argues Voorhees (2001). Even fewer studies exist for online startup institutions. Moreover, the limited integration between process frameworks, such as BPM, and governance procedures creates an additional gap in understanding how to effectively incorporate governance into operating frameworks. Lastly, to support the need for greater investigation, there are still limited empirical studies on the impact of governance in new online colleges. This is despite the growing consensus among academics that governance needs to be modified to fit the increasingly prevalent online and hybrid models.

In this study, governance is viewed not in isolation but as a key element of an integrated operational framework applied in a newly established online college of higher education, which faces the challenge of being a relatively young institution. According to the research discussed in this study, newly established organizations face the challenge of maintaining a transparent, effective, and mission-aligned governance mechanism. They must balance the demands of operational efficiency with the need to develop academic legitimacy and foster shared ownership. This study proposes a hybrid, two-speed governance model. Academic matters, such as curriculum and assessment standards, will be managed through shared governance.

At the same time, operational domains, including admissions, SIS/LMS data, and compliance, will be centralized under established decision-rights frameworks, such as

RAPID/RACI models (Lee et al., 2021; Ahmad, 2024). This balance preserves academic legitimacy while enabling operational agility. These findings suggest that governance design must strike a balance between academic legitimacy and operational agility for a startup online CBE college. This study will evaluate governance effectiveness using measurable indicators, such as curriculum approval latency, the percentage of decisions resolved at the lowest level, and appeal rates.

Business Process Management (BPM) in Higher Education Contexts

Although business process management (BPM) has become a popular discipline in public and private sectors, its application in higher education remains comparatively underdeveloped. BPM is fundamentally the design, implementation, monitoring, and optimization of organizational processes by integrating methods, tools, and systems, as explained by Dumas et al. (2018). This approach prioritizes efficiency, while accountability, transparency, clarity, and operational alignment are strategic objectives and essential aspects of BPM.

When reviewing results in non-academic settings, research by vom Brocke and Mendling (2018) found that BPM has improved organizational performance, reducing redundancy and accelerating cycle times. For example, BPM has been employed by the manufacturing and service sectors, which have incorporated performance monitoring systems, implemented decision rights, and effectively identified inefficiencies in cross-departmental workflows, thereby improving operational output and contributing to growth objectives. These results suggest a potentially valuable methodology to introduce to higher education, particularly for institutions launching online platforms. Managing expectations of reduced cost, accountability, ease of access, and digital transformation is critical for institutional success.

Several studies have started to examine the impact of BPM in higher education and academic settings, including early applications of restructured administrative processes (Al-Mashari and Zairi, 2000; Rowley, 2000). Furthermore, the principles of BPM, as outlined by Tapia et al. (2023), have proven critical for institutions involved in digital transformation, particularly in fostering collaboration and alignment between academic and administrative priorities. These studies provide insight into the positive impact BPM can have in promoting cooperation and cross-functional process transparency, two elements that academic institutions struggle with.

The existing literature on institutional change in higher education is mapped by Antonopoulou et al. (2023) and Renna and Colonnese (2025), who present findings that BPM offers an encouraging yet understudied approach to direct institutional transformation. Applications of BPM in higher education have been concentrated in administrative areas, including financial aid, registration, admissions, and regulatory compliance, as detailed by Ifenthaler and Yau (2020). The processes related to these areas are ideally suited to BPM's structured approach due to the number of stakeholders involved and the requirement for a high level of accuracy. However, there is limited empirical work on startup governance design and BPM in academic environments, including curriculum development, instructional design, and faculty governance. As a result, both academic functions and institutional sustainability are closely related; this discrepancy represents a significant gap in existing research.

The literature has also identified potential advantages of the application of BPM in higher education institutions. First, as detailed by Burton et al. (2020), BPM promotes operational transparency, decision-making processes, and role responsibilities. Second, according to Burton et al. (2020), it supports the translation of institutional priorities into quantifiable actions by

promoting alignment between strategic goals and operational practices. Third, BPM has been found to facilitate scalability, which is especially important for new organizations working towards rapid expansion without compromising instructional and regulatory standards. This is directly relevant to the growth strategy of a new online institution.

However, scholars also highlight several drawbacks and challenges encountered when applying BPM in academic settings. One critique of BPM, presented by Antonopoulou et al. (2023), is its origins and historical application in corporate and industrial settings, which may introduce an overly mechanized approach towards the operations of academic institutions. Education encompasses values that may not easily fit into traditional process models, including academic independence, intellectual diversity, and student-centered instruction. Another critique from Tapia et al. (2023) is that BPM may put additional strain on a new organization's resources due to its increased investments in technology, training, and cultural integration.

Despite these challenges, it is becoming increasingly recognized that higher learning institutions can benefit from process-focused strategies to manage a competitive and highly regulated industry. According to Burton et al. (2020), organizations lacking a well-defined process architecture run the risk of fragmentation, inefficiencies, and a breakdown in accountability. These issues are exacerbated in newly established colleges that lack established operating systems. This study contributes to the argument by examining how BPM can be integrated into higher education environments as an operational framework, incorporating governance and cultural alignment while maintaining academic integrity.

In summary, while BPM has been extensively studied in commercial and industrial applications, its use in higher education environments has received limited examination, with its various applications only just beginning to be implemented. Current research acknowledges

BPM's potential value in terms of administrative efficiency, digital transformation, and operational frameworks. However, concerns remain about its over-reliance on structured systems and the potential for over-mechanization, which can lead to cultural resistance.

The gaps identified in this study, especially in the context of a newly established online college, result from the lack of comprehensive research on integrating BPM-led operational frameworks into administrative and academic areas. Further investigating this gap and addressing these gaps is the key priority of this study. In the context of a startup online college offering CBE-informed instruction, BPM integration presents both opportunity and risk. This study will evaluate BPM effectiveness using indicators such as process first-pass yield, the percentage of student service requests resolved within target timeframes, and the share of institutional processes supported by documented workflows.

Operations Models for Competency-Based Education and Curriculum Development

One of the most significant developments in higher education in recent history, especially within the online and adult learning sectors, is the introduction and expansion of competency-based education, or CBE. In contrast to traditional education, which employs an examination- and credit-based approach to instruction, as Voorhees (2001) explains, CBE emphasizes the mastery of defined skills and learning outcomes, enabling students to advance at their own pace after demonstrating specific course competencies. Since this student-centered approach relies heavily on a clear and transparent assessment model, it draws on the principles of skills mastery learning, first advanced by Bloom (1968) and later institutionalized in higher education instruction through CBE strategies by Voorhees (2001).

The literature emphasizes the importance of integrating CBE into the pedagogical model that supports its delivery, as well as the institutional operating model and pedagogical

requirements, to best position the institution for success. According to Marcellis et al. (2024), to motivate students in CBE programs, a blended learning structure that includes established feedback loops and processes for practical assessments must be aligned and operating in conjunction with each element. If these pieces are missing or delivery is disjointed, the CBE approach risks being reduced to a hollow gimmick rather than a working instructional strategy that supports the institutional operation framework and positive student outcomes.

Operationally, CBE presents distinct operational challenges to educational institutions, especially within online, newly formed colleges and universities. Faculty members' responsibilities shift from instructor to facilitator. Empirical studies by Crawford et al. (2020) confirm that this transition is often hindered by workflow, assessment design, and culture, presenting barriers to adoption. With this educational shift, Feng et al. (2025) emphasized that faculty, instructional designers, curriculum development specialists, and assessment professionals must collaborate to develop comprehensive curricula. These curricula should offer a flexible and modern modular format, aligned with clearly defined and integrated competencies informed by industry work-skill demands. In addition to this instructional shift, administrative systems, including student information systems (SIS) and learning management systems (LMS), must also evolve from tracking in-class attendance and seat time to be able to monitor and measure mastery and skills competency goals both quantitatively and qualitatively, offering real-time insights to instructors, administrators, and students. These operational challenges underscore the critical importance of interconnected systems and operational frameworks, such as BPM, in fostering institutional alignment, establishing effective operational processes, and maintaining a viable CBE program.

Scholars have identified several obstacles to the successful implementation of a CBE program. A significant challenge identified by Voorhees (2001) is the inability to link governance systems and operational frameworks with curriculum and assessment in alignment with CBE principles. This is further supported by the fact that many institutions implementing CBE programs fail to take the necessary actions to redesign foundational operations, procedures, and performance monitoring mechanisms, resulting in misalignment and an inconsistent student experience.

The results reveal a mismatch between faculty objections and instructional procedures, which negatively impact student assessment results and potentially threaten regulatory and accreditation standards. When not adequately planned for and integrated, the introduction of CBE initiatives can lead to a breakdown in cultural alignment, as described by Fullan (2016). This is particularly true when making significant operational or organizational changes, as existing faculty and administrative staff may be more familiar with traditional educational models.

Some studies have shown that specific process-oriented operational frameworks can facilitate and accelerate the adoption of the CBE strategy if properly planned and executed. For example, research by Crawford et al. (2020) demonstrates that organizational change models provide a systematic approach for integrating CBE. If correctly mapped, a BPM-led operational framework may reduce the risk of fragmented implementation through a well-organized, transparent, relevant, and structured strategy. This approach provides a pathway for faculty and administrative staff to align processes across curriculum development, governance, assessment, and operational performance, enhancing cross-functional and cross-departmental priorities. Similarly, to successfully support a CBE within an institution, especially a new online business

college, Tapia et al. (2023) also argue that digital transformation initiatives and related tools must be connected to governance and process design to ensure a collaborative approach in establishing a viable operation.

Despite the insights provided by the existing literature, gaps remain that need to be addressed. For example, current literature indicates that the introduction of CBE in traditional colleges and universities has received significant attention in contemporary studies. The implementation of this model in new, startup institutions has been lacking in comprehensive research, providing CBE with an opportunity for early deployment. Furthermore, while individual studies have examined technology integration, faculty alignment, adaptability, and curriculum development, few studies integrate a comprehensive, whole-system operational framework exploring all these elements together.

This gap has a significant impact on new online business colleges and should be addressed to position these institutions for growth. The lack of an established and well-defined operating framework can cause CBE to become fragmented in its adoption, leading to inconsistent outcomes and long-term instability of the program. Studies suggest that introducing a BPM-informed operational framework, which encompasses governance, performance management, cultural alignment, and collaborative curriculum development at the early stage of an institution's establishment, prepares it for success. This study addresses the need for a system-wide framework that supports CBE through a transparent operational structure. Translating these findings into practice for a startup online CBE college reveals that operational systems must be closely integrated with instructional delivery for CBE to succeed. Key indicators will include the median time to feedback on student assessments, the percentage of competencies evaluated using a standardized rubric, and reassessment turnaround times.

Organizational Change and Cultural Alignment

Change initiatives within higher education institutions are well known for the challenges encountered and have proven to be a complicated endeavor due to existing cultural dynamics and norms. These initiatives often face resistance to change and inconsistent adoption, leading to short-term frustrations and long-term instability. In contrast to corporate or industrial settings, where change is a constant and brought about through mandates and project teams to ensure compliance and eventual alignment. In contrast, universities and colleges operate through deeply rooted traditions and cooperative governance structures. These differences are stark and, as detailed by Fullan (2016), lead to change being less of a linear activity and more reliant on a collaborative approach, necessitating shared commitment, trust, cultural alignment, and team contributions.

Change readiness is essential for new online education institutions. These newly established colleges experience constant shifts, the introduction of new technology, and evolving instructional methodologies and student expectations, making change a critical factor. Supporting this observation, Corbo et al. (2016) argue that even a well-designed change initiative may fall short when confronted by faculty disagreement and opposition to historical norms and existing departmental processes, unless the college or university prioritizes cultural change. The paradigm presented in their study for changing departmental culture emphasizes the impact of incentives, community building, buy-in, and defining an institutional vision on shaping culture in educational institutions. Leadership for newly established online colleges encounters both opportunities and risks, where there are no entrenched traditions that need to shift, they can establish a culture strategically from the initial onset of the institution, but failing to do so

correctly may result in breakdown of alignment, fragmentation, and resistance that reduces growth and negatively impacts student outcomes.

Several change management theories offer valuable insights into the different challenges and difficulties often encountered when attempting to make significant organizational shifts. These authors also provide strategies for introducing change within various types of organizations. According to Lewin's (1951) "unfreeze-change-refreeze" model, change involves making adjustments to existing routines, creating a controlled destabilization in the process, and then introducing new practices to be integrated as norms. These new norms are institutionalized through process documentation, thereby refreezing them.

By emphasizing urgency, coalition building, and achieving short-term wins, Kotter's (2012) eight-step model builds on Lewin's earlier work by providing additional structure for initiating and gaining buy-in, assuming that organizations transition through distinct stages as part of the change process. In contrast, Fullan (2016) proposes an approach that stresses consistent, iterative change, specifically applied to the educational environment, highlighting how transformation requires systemic learning, a shared moral purpose, and ongoing relationship-building activities. After reviewing these different approaches to change, Fullan's change theory was determined to be the best alignment with the direction of this study. It is directly related to startup institutions and defines the culture at the onset, providing the most suitable foundation for understanding cultural alignment.

Research has provided valuable insights into both the obstacles and enablers encountered when trying to implement change within higher education. For example, Luo et al. (2024) note that resistance can occur when cultural expectations are not aligned with those of faculty, and may be especially prevalent in institutions that adopt competency-based education or

technology-enabled models. Where cultural alignment is not addressed, the integration of change initiatives may experience resistance, as faculty concerns about new technology, workload, autonomy, and academic rigor hinder progress. Conversely, Crawford et al. (2020) outline how alignment around shared departmental and institutional goals and values promotes a culture of cooperation, collaboration, and resilience in managing institutional challenges. This aligns with preparing a startup college to integrate new processes, systems, or technology.

These dynamics are illustrated through various case studies involving the implementation of CBE and online education institutions. Early CBE integration initiatives have experienced failures, as noted in research by Voorhees (2001), because institutions historically view CBE as an instructional methodology rather than as a cultural shift that requires changes in student interaction, faculty roles, and governance. According to more recent research, Marcellis et al. (2024) found that student motivation and persistence in completing CBE-led programs depend not only on an effective curriculum but also on cultural support, including feedback loops, relationship-building, and team collaboration. The results from these findings suggest that institutional culture is a crucial element in establishing a sustainable foundation for institutional growth. However, scholars have cautioned against overemphasizing culture as the end-all solution to organizational discord.

Without establishing and reinforcing structure, Burton et al. (2020) argue that culture can devolve into ambiguity, where good intentions do not yield tangible outcomes. Similarly, Feng et al. (2025) cautioned that accountability frameworks and cultural alignment initiatives must be implemented in conjunction, using a balanced and well-planned approach. Taking this approach prevents the creation of collegiality, which can often be effective and distracting, as it draws resources and leadership time without fostering a productive and impactful team. Institutions

must merge cultural models with structural and operational frameworks that support business process management and performance management, which ensures values and behaviors are supported by processes and metrics, which in turn, can be used by an institution to make well-planned strategic decisions when implementing CBE-informed operational frameworks and technology transitions in a new online startup environment.

Overall, the literature on organizational change and cultural alignment suggests that institutional readiness is dependent on several factors to be effective and extend beyond resolutions. The findings also indicate the critical impact that cultural adoption has on an organization, especially within newly established colleges or universities that are attempting to integrate innovative approaches towards education, such as CBE through an online instructional format. While both Lewin's and Kotter's provide valuable insights into contemporary and historical approaches towards change, offering a strong foundation for understanding the subject in an organizational context, Fullan's recursive model of culture change is the most effective model and best suited for the liquid environment of online institutions and evolving demands and high expectations for delivery and outcomes of online students.

A comprehensive study presents an integrated operations framework that addresses a gap in current research and literature by strategically combining Fullan's change theory with process-oriented models, organizational architecture, and performance management. Cultural alignment is especially critical, from the perspective of a startup online CBE college, because weak collaboration or low readiness can undermine the effectiveness of structural reforms. This study will evaluate cultural health using indicators such as psychological safety scores, faculty and staff participation rates in collaborative initiatives, and survey-based measures of change readiness.

Performance Monitoring and Institutional Effectiveness

Performance monitoring in higher education governance has become a vital element, linking institutional operations to accountability, accreditation, and regulatory requirements, while also ensuring the ongoing management of academic and administrative performance. It provides insight for leadership and offers information for informed decision-making in both tactical and strategic planning. To succeed, colleges must develop strong cultures and effective structures with operational frameworks that adapt to rapidly changing educational environments and can demonstrate and utilize quantifiable information to validate their efficacy.

This is especially important in startup organizations that lack the luxury of legacy programs and long-term reputations to work with, but require rapid and tangible results that satisfy a technologically savvy student base. As noted by Burton et al. (2020), well-designed organizational systems risk deviating from their initial strategy and objectives when performance monitoring is lacking and not integrated into planning, decision-making, and business operations. Moreover, this underscores the importance of having a defined performance management mechanism in place, which is particularly critical for startup institutions to help rapidly gain the trust of regulators, accreditors, and students.

In higher education, instructional outcomes and operational data are typically included in performance monitoring, providing insight into the operational efficacy of the institution. Key performance indicators (KPIs) encompass student persistence rates, satisfaction rates, course completions, graduation rates, faculty productivity, and other important metrics that provide valuable information to leadership, faculty, and administrators, according to Williamson and Kizilcec (2022). Supporting this further, Weller (2020) argued that institutions have more recently expanded the use of KPIs to include operational metrics, such as cycle time in

admissions decisions and rework rates. In administrative processes and student responsiveness. The use of KPIs in education is particularly relevant for online colleges, as institutional processes largely shape their experience. Interaction occurs rapidly and in real-time, making monitoring critical to both the institution's and its students' success.

For institutions implementing a CBE-led curriculum, performance monitoring becomes even more critical in managing instruction and the administrative tasks associated with this contemporary academic strategy. CBE requires comprehensive and transparent metrics, as emphasized by Marcellis et al. (2024), to facilitate the tracking of student skill mastery, the effectiveness of proactive instruction, and the provision of feedback to ensure consistent instruction across faculty and various programs. Without a well-defined and robust monitoring system, CBE risks fragmented instruction and inconsistent assessments, vital aspects of a CBE program. The lack of consistent quality and student outcomes can lead to a breakdown in trust among potential student employers, regulators, and accreditors, potentially affecting the institution's long-term viability and growth and negatively impacting students' post-academic opportunities. To ensure consistent results, Dumas et al. (2018) argue that BPM and performance monitoring mechanisms should be employed to measure and use them in fostering continuous, systematic institutional and academic improvement.

The literature reveals conflicts between the use of quantitative and qualitative indicators, as well as their application in monitoring organizational performance and outputs. As detailed by Feng et al. (2025), there is often an overemphasis on the use of quantitative KPIs, which may result in institutional objectives shifting from student learning experiences and quality outcomes to a greater emphasis on superficial compliance and performance requirements, thereby disregarding or downplaying the importance of effective learning. Supporting these findings,

Crawford et al. (2020) argue that standard performance measurements may sometimes struggle to capture the cultural and relational dimensions of learning, such as faculty-student relationships, academic interactions, and the sense of belonging, which have proven crucial for student retention and satisfaction rates. These criticisms of using quantitative metrics underscore the need to develop and integrate a comprehensive performance monitoring mechanism that combines quantitative data and qualitative assessments, ensuring that faculty, administration, and leadership have access to the necessary information to operate the institution effectively.

In startup institutions, performance monitoring serves several purposes and is an effective tool for advancing an institution forward when used appropriately. First, metrics provide insight and accountability, confirming to regulators and accreditors that the institution is operational and meeting the minimum quality, compliance, and production standards outlined by Luo et al. (2024). Second, using performance monitoring enables capacity building, supports leadership decision-making, and, according to Burton et al. (2020), helps identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and areas that require further attention, as well as those that are performing well and need additional support and resources as institutions grow. Third, it fosters a culture of evidence-based decision-making, aligning with Fullan's (2016) emphasis on continuous learning and professional development, which enhances cooperation and improves alignment. In this sense, performance systems serve not only to ensure compliance with institutional vision and regulatory requirements, but they also act to reinforce and align academic and administrative functions cross-departmentally.

The literature also highlights the growing importance of technology in integrating and implementing performance management strategies, as detailed by Ifenthaler and Yau (2020) and Gašević et al. (2022), who point out that this can be directly observed in the shift from the use of

quarterly or annual reports, institutions are shifting to continuous monitoring of operations, academics, and administrative outputs, using LMS or SIS provided dashboard, data-mining and real-time analytics. The introduction of these technology-supported tools has proven particularly critical in new online colleges or universities. They enable administrators to quickly identify issues that indicate the need for modifications to strategies and processes, allowing the institution to address and resolve challenges promptly. As discussed in the Technology section, BPM integration into governance requires careful alignment with institutional objectives. Moreover, if not implemented strategically, performance monitoring risks fragmentation, with data being siloed and negatively impacting institutional alignment and the decision-making process necessary for achieving institutional goals.

In summary, contemporary studies tend to focus on established legacy institutions and offer limited advice for implementation within new colleges, indicating an opportunity to expand research specific to these environments. Recognizing this need for further research, this study proposes a BPM-led operations framework that incorporates a defined performance mechanism as a critical component, alongside institutional architecture, governance, and culture, to support a CBE-informed online startup institution. When viewed through the lens of a startup online CBE college, technology adoption becomes both a driver of scalability and a potential obstacle if systems are not operating correctly. Effectiveness in this area will be evaluated using indicators such as the percentage of processes automated through SIS/LMS platforms, the accuracy of compliance and performance reporting dashboards, and the escalation rate of unresolved IT or service tickets.

Technology, Systems, and Academic Operations

Higher education operations and governance are inextricably linked and dependent upon technology, which is especially true for online colleges and universities. Online colleges are almost exclusively operating on digital systems that offer asynchronous access to instruction, manage student information, and track performance. At the same time, traditional universities continue to rely heavily on physical instruction to support academic and administrative tasks, as well as student services. This is supported by Ifenthaler and Yau (2020) and Gašević et al. (2022), who describe how technology is now the foundation of educational operations, consistent with broader analyses of digital learning and the adoption of technology in education (Bates, 2019; Anderson & Dron, 2017; Dede, 2014). Recent studies caution that AI and technology innovations in education may introduce both opportunities and risks (Weller, 2020). Additionally, workforce models, as highlighted by Weise (2020), emphasize the importance of lifelong learning opportunities.

The literature identifies three primary components of technology in higher education operations: the learning management system (LMS), the student information system (SIS), and analytics platforms. Analytics platforms typically gather data from both the LMS and SIS and present it in a user-friendly dashboard to monitor academic and administrative data. LMS platforms, including Canvas, Cypher, and Brightspace, serve as the primary point for communication, instruction, and assessment, where students and faculty spend most of their time. The SIS handles admissions, enrollment, track grades, transcript information, and regulatory compliance. The analytics combine data collected from the LMS and present information in a user-friendly dashboard, providing valuable insights to leadership for decision-making and operational strategies, according to Tapia et al. (2023). The extent to which these systems are integrated into the governance and operational framework determines their

effectiveness and technological capacity. From a BPM perspective, technology systems are crucial for process alignment and transparency.

BPM requires continuous monitoring and improvement efforts, which, according to Dumas et al. (2018), can only be effectively carried out in larger organizations through the use of technology. Process mining tools, workflow automation, and data dashboards enable online college leadership to identify inefficiencies in real-time, according to van der Aalst (2016), building on the broader discipline of process mining as a data management approach in higher education. If properly used, this approach provides an opportunity to take remedial action before situations negatively impact student experience. Furthermore, these technologies support performance monitoring, compliance reports, and accreditation audits, delivering robust information that can be tailored to meet specific requirements and purposes. Access to this data is crucial for emerging institutions seeking to establish their legitimacy.

The literature emphasizes the significance of digital transformation in the governance and operational structures of higher education, encompassing both academic and administrative functions. Colleges that implement BPM in conjunction with digital technology initiatives, according to Tapia et al. (2023), were better prepared to manage the demands on higher education during external challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The results demonstrate how interconnected systems promote agility by enabling institutions to respond quickly with necessary process reconfiguration in reaction to external shocks that are outside the immediate control of these institutions. This has even greater importance in the face of rapidly changing technology, fluctuating enrollment markets, and the changing regulatory and accreditation requirements; startup institutions must be designed for adaptability. However, scholars caution

against the dangers of relying too heavily on technology, as its known shortcomings are a concern.

According to Renna and Colonnese (2025), who detail how digital systems have the potential to increase productivity, they also risk creating data silos, preventing the sharing of vital information across departments if the technology is not aligned with the organization's governance framework. Without a carefully planned implementation strategy, technology may perpetuate operational inefficiencies rather than fully resolving them, and in some cases, may even exacerbate them. Furthermore, Feng et al. (2025) note that an over-reliance on dashboards may oversimplify complex educational information and results by reducing complex academic information to numbers, graphs, and charts, thereby losing its significance and value due to oversimplification.

These critiques underscore the need for educational institutions to integrate technology into a more comprehensive conceptual framework that balances application and the online college's academic mission. Technology is significant in supporting educational institutions in delivering competency-based education (CBE). Mastery-based learning requires accurate tracking of progress and achievement of competencies at a granular level, as emphasized by Marcellis et al. (2024), who highlight its frequency across multiple courses and assessment evaluators. This necessitates the implementation of effective LMS and analytics systems designed to manage tailored skills development pathways and support clear records of mastery for each student. With a CBE-led curriculum, these programs may face challenges in scaling quickly enough to manage mastery levels without the necessary technology and support systems.

Notwithstanding these observations, significant studies in the existing literature support the integration of technology in startup institutions. At the same time, there is limited guidance

for institutions to develop a digital infrastructure from the ground up, as most of these studies focus on digital transformation in well-established legacy institutions transitioning to online modalities. This disparity is significant because new colleges have the unique opportunity to incorporate BPM concepts and technology at the onset of institutional formation, thereby avoiding the issues often faced by legacy institutions. This study enhances the understanding of digital transformation in relation to business process management and higher education governance by examining technology as a crucial component of institutional architecture, rather than as an afterthought or add-on. Moreover, the effectiveness of educational technology integration will be evaluated using the percentage of processes automated through SIS/LMS workflows, the accuracy of compliance and performance dashboards, and the escalation rate of unresolved IT or service tickets.

Summary

While the literature on higher education is rich in research on organizational design, instructional innovation, and higher education governance, several gaps remain concerning practical issues. This study addresses the lack of a BPM-led operating framework for new online business college startups, as most prior studies focus on legacy institutions and the gradual introduction of change initiatives. First, research on establishing new institutions, as described by Burton et al. (2020), highlights the significance of organizational alignment. Meanwhile, Voorhees (2001) emphasizes the need for a CBE-informed instructional framework in the future. However, these insights have not been widely applied to the development of startup institutions, leaving gaps in how governance, processes, and cultural integration are intentionally designed from the inception of new colleges.

Second, there is a lack of literature on the connection between higher education governance and process management frameworks. While Tapia et al. (2023) demonstrate the value of BPM-informed strategies during digital transformation, and Corbo et al. (2016) highlight the cultural and organizational barriers that complicate departmental reforms, there are limited studies that provide insight into how BPM can formalize governance at the institutional level. The lack of such integration can be particularly problematic for online colleges and universities, where governance must span virtual instruction, digital technologies, and virtual academic communities, as it impacts adaptability, capacity, and sustainable growth.

Third, the literature on competency-based education (CBE) has grown considerably in higher education, but operational studies are largely program-level and rarely institution-level in startup scenarios. The conceptual foundation for CBE, as per Voorhees (2001) and echoed by Marcellis et al. (2024), emphasizes that blended learning design is essential for motivating students. Nevertheless, most studies focused on program-level implementations in legacy institutions rather than institutional-level adoption for startups. Furthermore, limited studies specifically link CBE to BPM operational frameworks that integrate performance monitoring in higher education online institutions, which leaves a gap in how organizations may sustainably operationalize CBE.

Fourth, while organizational change theories are plentiful, there are still gaps in connections between structures, process-oriented models, and cultural change strategies. Fullan (2016) emphasizes the importance of recursive cultural change, while most of these studies focus on departmental or K-12 contexts. Other scholars present change as more linear, where Lewin (1951) and Kotter (2012) propose stage-based models, which creates tension in the literature between iterative and event-driven methodologies. Although studies by Botha et al. (2024) and

Luo et al. (2024) identify internal impediments in higher education, they do not offer integrated frameworks that incorporate process design, performance monitoring, and cultural alignment.

Finally, research on technology integration in startup institutions is limited. Research by Ifenthaler and Yau (2020) and Gašević et al. (2022) demonstrated how analytics assist institutional operations, while Tapia (2023) highlighted the digital transformation in established universities. However, there is limited empirical work on startup governance structures and BPM at inception, specifically on how new colleges can avoid challenges associated with legacy organizations by adopting BPM principles and integrating SIS, LMS, and analytics platforms from the start.

Collectively, these gaps underscore the originality and significance of this study. The literature is generally examined separately, and the findings recognize the importance of governance, performance monitoring, and cultural alignment in a CBE-informed academic strategy. It was also determined that there is a gap in research on a comprehensive operational model that incorporates these components within a BPM framework, designed to address the unique challenges of establishing an online startup institution. This study advances theory and practice by providing a replicable model that addresses this vacuum, promoting cultural adoption, institutional capacity, and sustainable growth.

Table 2 links each gap to a design decision and the KPI(s) used to evaluate it, illustrating how these gaps shape the design of this study.

Table 2. *Links Between Literature Gaps, Design Decisions, and KPIs*

Literature gap	Design move in this capstone	KPI(s) to evaluate
Startup governance design at inception is under-specified	Hybrid governance: shared academic governance and centralized operational decision rights (RAPID/RACI)	Curriculum approval latency (days); % decisions resolved at lowest level; appeal rate
BPM evidence is mostly program-level, not institution-level for startups	Institution-wide BPM with process architecture and decision handshakes across units	First-pass yield; handoff defects per 100 cases; idea-to-launch cycle time
CBE operations measurement is uneven	Standardized assessment ops (common rubrics, and reassessments service levels)	Median time-to-feedback (hrs); reassessment turnaround (days); % competencies using common rubric
Culture/change adoption often treated generically	Culture-aware rollout with collaboration and psych-safety checkpoints	Psychological safety score; collaboration participation rate; change readiness index
Tech/data support for operations lacks clear targets	Workflow automation and data quality baselines	% processes with workflow automation; dashboard accuracy rate; escalation rate of unresolved tickets

Note. This table links each documented gap to a specific design response and a corresponding measurable indicator that will be tracked during implementation of the IPCP Framework.

The variables previewed here include approval latency, idea-to-launch cycle time, time to feedback, reassessment turnaround, escalation rate, and psychological safety. They are operationalized in Chapter Three to ensure continuity between the literature review and the methodological design. The overall purpose of this chapter was to provide clarity by clearly identifying the theoretical and conceptual principles of this study, synthesizing the most relevant literature, and identifying the gaps that warrant further examination. The study was guided by three complementary frameworks: Organizational Design and Performance Monitoring, Culture Change Theory, and Business Process Management, which provided valuable insights and direction throughout this study.

Furthermore, when combined, these individual frameworks offer a multifaceted perspective on examining the operational, cultural, and structural challenges recently established

online business colleges face. Fullan's culture change model emphasizes the human and relational dynamics that have proven crucial to adopting new initiatives and technology. Meanwhile, BPM provides the methodology for process design and governance mechanisms essential for operational alignment, while organizational design theory highlights the role of performance monitoring in maintaining efficacy. The IPCP Framework incorporates all these theories to support the CBE-informed academic strategy.

The literature synthesis examined seven interconnected domains. The first domain examines the challenges and difficulties faced in starting a new college, such as the absence of established operational frameworks, underdeveloped and ineffective cross-functional processes, and a lack of or misalignment with cultural foundations. The second domain, the literature on decision-making and governance, emphasizes the conflicts between streamlined and shared governance. It highlights the need for creative and innovative governance frameworks that balance agility and inclusion, particularly for online or technologically dependent institutions. Scholars such as Birnbaum (2004) and Kezar and Eckel (2024) emphasize the legitimacy gained through shared governance, while more recent research by Tapia et al. (2023) and Antonopoulou et al. (2023) highlights the efficiency of centralized decision-making during technological transformations.

The third domain, research on BPM in higher education, suggests that it can potentially improve operational performance, alignment, and transparency. However, its current use has been mainly confined to corporate or manufacturing environments, with minimal integration into academic settings. Fourth, while the majority of research on CBE has focused on curriculum development at the program level, studies indicate that skills mastery programs require strong operational and technological support to be successful. The fifth domain, studies on

organizational change and cultural alignment, suggest that structural modifications alone are insufficient, and improvements will be ineffectual without a well-planned and deliberate cultural change strategy to overcome team resistance.

The sixth domain, performance monitoring research, emphasizes the importance of KPIs and analytics in promoting accountability and progress. However, studies caution against overreliance on quantitative facts without considering qualitative information in decision-making and operational management. The seventh and final domain of the study, research on academic operations and technology integration, highlights the vital role that efficient learning management systems, student information systems, and analytics dashboards play in facilitating educational and administrative alignment, supporting leadership decision-making, and promoting positive student outcomes. In contrast, studies indicate that newer schools still face challenges in achieving effective integration, as they lack the legacy foundation to support these initiatives.

Across these different domains, several gaps were identified, presenting a significant opportunity for this study to make a meaningful contribution to the field. Existing research has primarily focused on examining governance, culture, CBE, performance monitoring, and technology as separate and isolated components, rather than adopting an integrated whole-system approach towards institutional readiness and operations. Most studies have focused on how established institutions can incrementally adjust to change, leveraging their existing infrastructure and legacy systems to support day-to-day operations while introducing new initiatives. In contrast, startup institutions face greater challenges, as they often lack the necessary systems and structure to support new initiatives and must contend with the pressure of growth while simultaneously building confidence and legitimacy. Few studies have linked performance monitoring to CBE in operating models, integrated BPM frameworks, and cultural

change models. Moreover, research on technology integration in startup colleges remains limited, despite the clear and vital importance to institutional sustainability.

The study addresses these gaps by presenting the Integrated Process, Culture, and Performance Framework, which combines performance monitoring, cultural alignment, and governance to guide a new business college offering a competency-based education curriculum. This model integrates governance design at inception, BPM application in academic domains, and performance monitoring anchored in proactive KPIs. The approach outlined in this chapter for resolving the challenges faced by new online startup colleges involves integrating BPM as the operational framework foundation, utilizing Fullan's culture change theory to guide adoption, and incorporating organizational design principles to foster accountability in the operations of the newly established institutions. This synthesis reinforces the study's problem of practice, defined as the absence of a BPM-led operating framework that integrates governance, culture, and performance monitoring to support CBE in startup online business colleges, and grounds the study's approach in the conceptual framework developed in this chapter, which directly aligns with the methods of data collection and analysis described in Chapter Three.

CHAPTER THREE: DATA COLLECTION PLAN

Overview

This chapter outlines the research design developed to address the absence of a business process management (BPM)-led operating framework in a newly established online business college. It explains why a convergent mixed-methods design is the most appropriate approach for examining this problem. As detailed in Chapter One, this problem reflects structural and cultural challenges impacting institutional readiness, governance, and long-term sustainability. Chapter Two situates this problem within the existing research landscape, with Creswell (2018) outlining the need for methodological rigor in organizational studies, and Dumas et al. (2018) outlining the role of BPM in process integration. The IPCP Framework is a comprehensive model integrating governance, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring into a unified and concurrently implemented operating system.

Translating the theoretical foundation into a detailed methodology guides the comprehensive research. First, it provides a systematic means of investigating how BPM frameworks can be adapted to the unique conditions of startup institutions, which, as Burton et al. (2020) explain, lack the historical data and established processes available in legacy universities. Second, it combines qualitative and quantitative data to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of the IPCP Framework, with a focus on process, culture alignment, and performance monitoring. Third, it upholds ethical integrity and feasibility, recognizing the difficulties and limitations of studying a newly established institution while maintaining regulatory standards and adhering to academic best practices.

Institutions in the early establishment stage often present a challenging environment, with shifting priorities and a lack of established procedures. According to reports from the National

Center for Education Statistics (2023a), established colleges and universities benefit from established data archives, performance benchmarks, and institutional records. In contrast, a new college typically begins with limited governance records, faculty evaluation histories, and instructional results. The absence of institutional records can complicate traditional research designs that rely heavily on large datasets. Given the limited data, a convergent mixed-methods design enables the triangulation of empirical evidence with contextual narratives, enhancing the credibility of findings derived from secondary data.

However, this lack of information also allows the study of process, culture, and performance monitoring in the early development stages without the constraints of entrenched customs. Dumas et al. (2018) contend that BPM is most effective when processes are designed from inception, and Lou (2024) confirms that the formative stage of an organization offers a more precise observation of how frameworks are operationalized. Given these data limitations, a convergent mixed-method design allows for the triangulation of limited empirical evidence with contextual narratives. This strengthens the credibility of findings compiled from secondary data.

To address these conditions, this study employs a convergent mixed-methods design that integrates secondary quantitative and qualitative data, with the option of limited primary data collection. As described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), convergent mixed-methods designs are particularly effective in integrating diverse sets of information. Secondary data sources include national datasets such as the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data Systems (IPEDS), as well as case studies of online business colleges documented in scholarly literature, governance documents from similar institutions, and accreditation reports issued by DEAC. These sources provide quantifiable metrics that can be compared with the case institution being examined and supply thematic

context. The unit of analysis is a single bounded case, a newly established online business college located in Florida, benchmarked against comparable institutions from secondary data (Yin 2018).

This chapter is organized into multiple sections, offering detailed insights into the steps taken to thoroughly investigate the problem of practice, provide related information, and identify potential resolutions. The research design is initially presented, as outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018), along with the rationale for adopting a convergent mixed-methods approach. The research questions provide direction, which is linked to the development of the IPCP framework. The description of the setting and participants is detailed, followed by an explanation of the researcher's positionality and the interpretive approach, which provides essential context for this study. The chapter then details the methods used for data gathering and analysis, including the integration of qualitative and quantitative datasets. Issues of trustworthiness, validity, and ethical considerations are reviewed in the conclusion, providing relevant information and workable solutions to address the practice problem.

Research Design

This study employs a convergent mixed-methods design, which utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data strands to analyze the results separately and then combine them to identify areas of convergence and divergence. This approach suits this scenario and offers the most comprehensive approach to achieve the study's objective. The Convergent mixed method is particularly effective when used to validate findings from multiple data types, providing a thorough understanding of a complex phenomenon, as noted by Creswell and Creswell (2018).

The analysis of secondary sources, including reports from case studies of newly established educational institutions, regulatory agencies, accreditors, and empirical research on

performance monitoring, culture change studies, and the use of BPM in similar settings, is the primary focus of the qualitative component of this study. The cultural, organizational, and governance aspects influenced by adopting BPM can also be examined through this approach. Existing datasets, including IPEDS, NCES, and DEAC performance reports, are reviewed and analyzed through the quantitative component. These datasets provide quantifiable markers of a practical approach that integrates complex performance metrics with the softer aspects of organizational culture, combining cultural insights with structural performance measures.

Rationale for Mixed-Methods in a Startup Context

The use of the mixed-methods design is necessary due to the multidimensional nature of the problem of practice. The absence of a BPM-led operational model affects not only the efficiency of the newly established college but also negatively impacts its culture and governance. This situation creates multiple challenges that require coordinated action across processes, people, and outcomes. Recent educational research by Watkins and Johnson (2022), echoed by Costa (2024), confirms that combining secondary qualitative and quantitative information can strengthen the validity and accelerate the analytic timelines of studies within higher education institutions. Furthermore, convergence across data strands may yield greater insights into institutional change than either strand considered in isolation, as demonstrated by studies, including an intervention-based mixed-methods study conducted by Fàbregues et al. (2023). Convergence will be operationalized through (1) a strand-specific analysis, (2) a joint display aligning qualitative themes to quantitative benchmarks, and (3) triangulation to compare areas of agreement, complementarity, and divergence (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Fàbregues et al., 2023).

Qualitative Strands

Quantitative benchmarking will be used to complement these insights by providing performance benchmarks and specific metrics that indicate whether cultural and governance practices result in measurable outcomes. The study will use NCES and IPEDS data, for example, to provide evidence-based information on institutional effectiveness in areas such as student retention, satisfaction rates, retention-related financial stability, curriculum development time, administrative efficiency, and institutional health, an approach supported by both NCES (2022) studies and further research by Williamson & Kizilcec (2022). Lacking defined benchmarks, cultural narratives risk becoming anecdotal, while quantitative measurements, without context, risk dehumanizing institutional outcomes to mere numbers, according to Zhao and Xu (2024). Without benchmarks, Zhao and Xu (2024) argue that the convergent design approach towards research guarantees that both perspectives are informed and validated by one another.

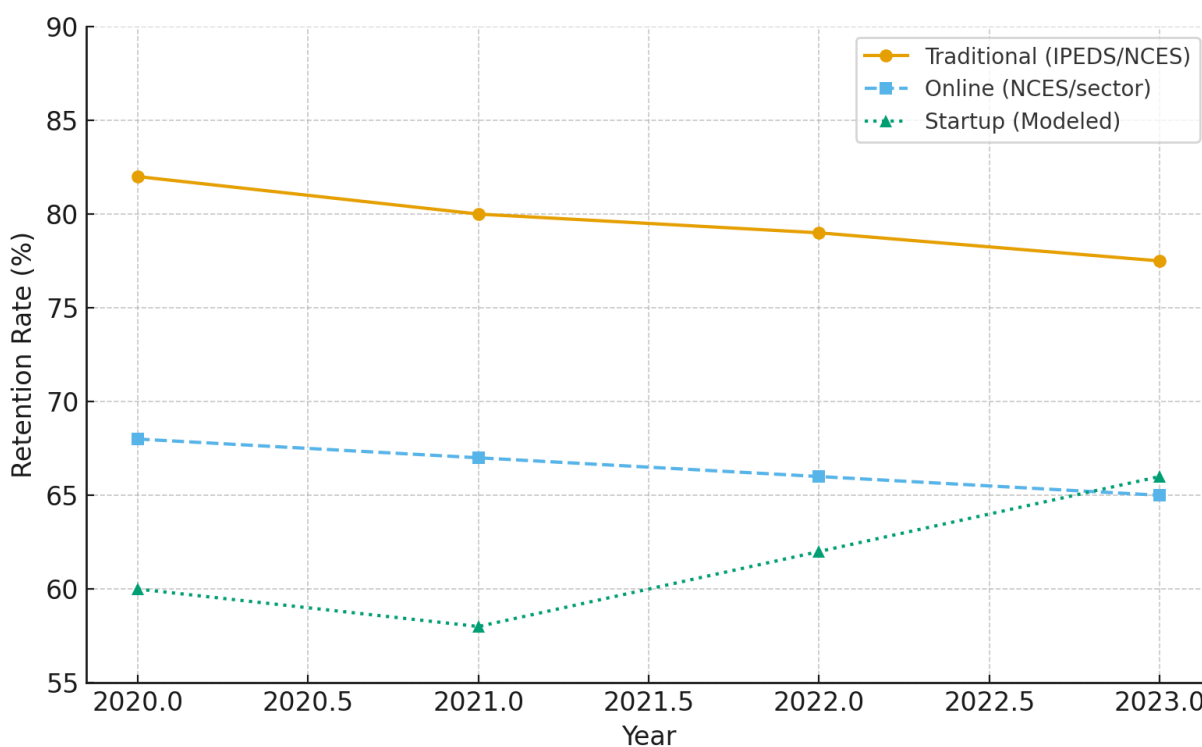
Furthermore, this approach facilitates practical application in a startup setting. Leadership in startup institutions must prioritize developing long-term cultural alignment and instructional performance while ensuring regulatory compliance. These multifaceted, concurrent priorities, if not adequately planned for, can create increased pressure on college leadership, faculty, and administration. This study will blend both qualitative findings and quantitative benchmarks, offering several recommendations that are immediately applicable and academically sound. For example, if document analysis reveals that transparent governance accelerates BPM adoption, and benchmarking confirms that colleges and universities with strong governance processes in place have improved retention outcomes, institutional leaders have evidence-based support to prioritize its integration (Tapia et al., 2023; Luo et al., 2024). In this way, Costa (2024) and Atanaw (2025) both offer insight into how this methodology connects scholarship and practice,

as well as the total body of knowledge on BPM in higher education, and provide institutional leaders with information to help support the decision-making process necessary for operating a new or established college, making this research methodology and effective research design strategy in this study.

The quantitative strand consists of benchmarking against publicly available datasets, including IPEDS, NCES, DEAC performance reports, and Department of Education statistics. Indicators include Student retention and graduation rates, Faculty-to-student ratios, Program approval timelines, Institutional financial stability measures, and Student satisfaction surveys, where available. These benchmarks are analyzed descriptively and comparatively. For example, the retention rate of the startup institution can be compared against sector averages reported in IPEDS. Similarly, graduation rates can be benchmarked against DEAC-accredited institutions of similar size and scope.

Retention is a critical early benchmark for institutional effectiveness, as it reflects a college's ability to maintain student enrollment across academic years. National benchmarks from NCES/IPEDS consistently demonstrate higher retention rates in traditional institutions compared to online colleges. Startup institutions, however, often start with lower rates as they establish governance and support systems for students. Figure 2 illustrates these differences, with the modeled startup trajectory gradually approaching sector norms.

Figure 2. Retention rate comparison: Traditional, online, and startup (2020–2023)

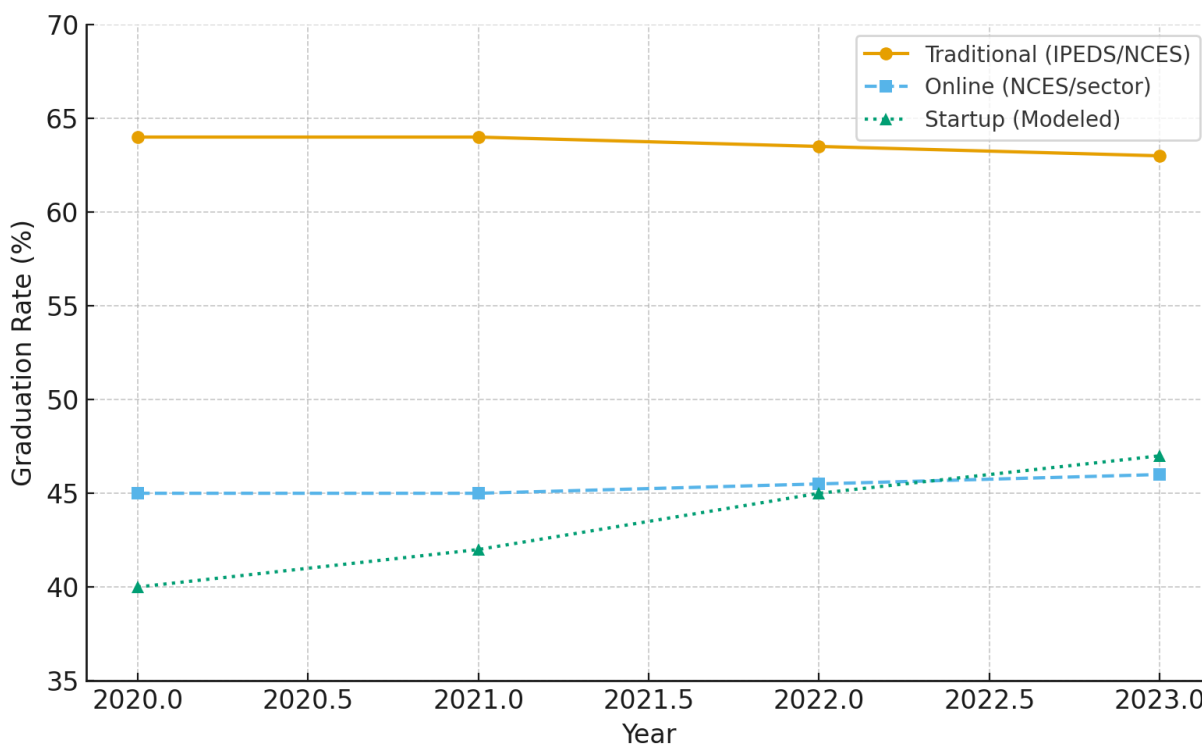


Note. Traditional rates reflect NCES/IPEDS data (~82% to ~77.5%). Online rates (~65–68%) reflect NCES distance-education sector estimates. Startup benchmarks are modeled for illustrative purposes to highlight potential early-stage trends.

Graduation rates provide a long-term measure of institutional performance, integrating retention, progression, and completion. Traditional institutions maintain higher completion rates, with NCES/IPEDS data showing approximately 63 to 64 percent graduation rates for first-time, full-time students who complete within 150 percent of the normal time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a). By contrast, online programs often report lower outcomes, averaging around 45–46 percent, a difference partly attributed to variations in student populations and instructional delivery models (NCES, 2023b; EDUCAUSE, 2022). For startup colleges, projecting graduation outcomes is particularly challenging; however, prior research on organizational development suggests that early performance may initially lag behind traditional

and online norms until governance and cultural processes mature (Burton et al., 2020; Luo, 2024). Figure 3 displays this comparison.

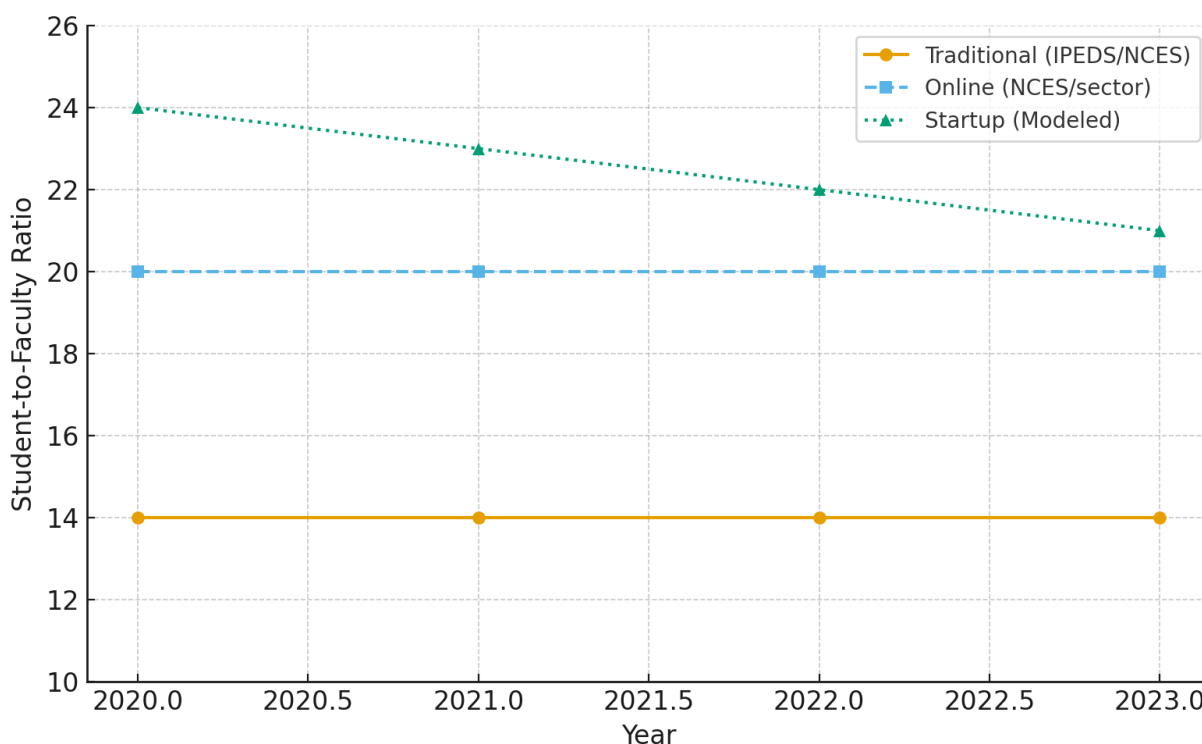
Figure 3. *Graduation rate comparison: Traditional vs. online vs. startup (2020–2023)*



Note. Traditional averages (~63–64%) are based on NCES/IPEDS benchmarks. Online averages (~45–46%) reflect NCES/sector summaries. Startup graduation trajectories are presented for illustrative purposes only and do not represent empirical results.

Faculty-to-student ratios reflect an institution's investment in teaching resources and academic support. National averages from NCES/IPEDS indicate that traditional colleges typically maintain a ratio of about 14:1 (NCES, 2023a). By contrast, online institutions often operate at higher ratios, averaging around 20:1, due to their scalability and reliance on distance learning delivery models (NCES, 2023b; BestColleges, 2021). Startup colleges may launch with even leaner staffing profiles, gradually reducing ratios as enrollment stabilizes and accreditation expectations are addressed (Burton et al., 2020; Luo, 2024). This dynamic is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. *Faculty-to-student ratio: Traditional vs. online vs. startup (2020–2023)*



Note. Traditional benchmarks (~14:1) and online averages (~20:1) are based on NCES/IPEDS data. Startup ratios are modeled to reflect lean initial staffing followed by gradual alignment with sector norms.

The three benchmarks, retention, graduation, and faculty-to-student ratios, illustrate the structural and cultural challenges faced by startup online colleges relative to traditional and established online institutions. Lower retention and graduation outcomes, coupled with leaner staffing ratios, highlight the need for intentional governance practices, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring, as emphasized in the IPCP Framework (Burton et al., 2020; Dumas et al., 2018; Luo, 2024). By situating the modeled startup trajectories against national benchmarks, the figures provide a realistic context for understanding the vulnerabilities and opportunities of new institutions. These insights inform the methodological choice to integrate both qualitative and quantitative strands, ensuring that the study addresses not only structural indicators but also the underlying cultural and governance dynamics that shape long-term sustainability.

Integration: Convergence and Divergence

Qualitative and quantitative strands are integrated through joint display analysis (Zhao & Xu, 2024). Joint displays align themes identified in the qualitative strand with benchmarks from the quantitative strand. This method enables the researcher to determine whether qualitative narratives are supported, contradicted, or supplemented by quantitative benchmarks. When discrepancies occur, they will be analyzed to identify contextual explanations, such as implementation stages, data lags, or measurement differences, rather than treated as contradictions. The resulting implications, in alignment with Creswell & Creswell (2018) and Fàbregues et al. (2023), will be documented for institutional decision-making purposes.

Table 3. *Qualitative Themes and Quantitative Benchmarks Joint Display*

Qualitative theme	Supporting quantitative indicator (source)	Factual benchmark	Interpretation / convergence
Transparent governance (process)	First-time, full-time undergraduate retention rate (IPEDS/NCES; NCES, 2023a, 2023b).	U.S. postsecondary full-time retention 77.5% in Fall 2023 (4,827 institutions).	Institutions with clear decision pathways and coordinated student-support processes are positioned to maintain or exceed national retention benchmarks; retention is used here as a governance-sensitive indicator in IPEDS/NCES reporting
Cultural alignment / resistance	Faculty job satisfaction & intent-to-stay measures from the COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey (COACHE, n.d.)	COACHE provides validated faculty-experience benchmarks (e.g., departmental collegiality, leadership, shared governance, and intent to leave) used by hundreds of institutions for national comparison.	Where COACHE results show lower satisfaction or higher intent to leave, qualitative themes of cultural resistance typically surface in interviews and documents; the survey offers a standardized, national yardstick to triangulate such themes.
Performance monitoring	Graduation Rates (GR/GR200) and Outcome Measures (OM) in IPEDS/NCES (NCES, 2023c, 2023d, 2023e).	NCES/IPEDS uses GR, GR200, and OM as the federal standards for institutional completion reporting (national 4-year completion commonly ~63–64% in	Consistent, dash boarded use of GR/GR200/OM enables leaders to monitor progression/completion and align interventions; qualitative references to “strong performance monitoring” should converge with

Qualitative theme	Supporting quantitative indicator (source)	Factual benchmark	Interpretation / convergence
		recent cycles; see GR/OM component documentation).	stable or improving completion indicators over time.

Note. This table synthesizes qualitative themes with federal benchmarks. Retention and completion indicators are drawn from IPEDS/NCES (GR/GR200/OM); faculty culture is benchmarked with the COACHE Faculty Job Satisfaction Survey. These indicators are used for triangulation within a convergent mixed-methods design.

Interpretive Approach

This study is guided by a pragmatic interpretive approach, which emphasizes research used to resolve real-world problems and produce practical solutions, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018). A sensible and well-thought-out approach aligns with the purpose of this study, addressing the problem of practice by prioritizing actionable insights over purely theoretical approaches. The model supports the integration of qualitative and quantitative evidence, ensuring that findings are valuable and applicable in addressing the gap of a BPM-led operational model in a newly established online business college. This stance acknowledges that stakeholders have multiple perspectives and strategic approaches, including administrators, faculty, regulators, and students. This highlights how knowledge is constructed through empirical observation and interpretive analysis, as detailed by Creswell & Poth (2018). The researcher also acknowledges that values and professional experience influence interpretation; therefore, reflexivity and transparency will be employed throughout the study to minimize bias and enhance credibility.

Addressing Validity and Reliability

Mixed-methods research faces potential validity challenges, including bias in coding, inconsistencies among data strands, and limitations in generalization. These challenges are managed through various strategies, including triangulation to compare findings across multiple

sources, which reduces reliance on any single perspective. Reflexivity will be employed by the use of a reflexive journal to document decision-making processes and potential biases.

Transparency will be a critical factor, achieved through coding procedures and documentation, enabling easy replication. External benchmarks will be achieved through published IPEDS, NCES, and DEAC datasets, ensuring reliability and replicability.

Integration validity will be achieved by synthesizing qualitative and quantitative strands, which produces insights greater than those from either strand alone (Onwuegbuzie & Johnson, 2006). The convergent mixed-methods design provides the methodological rigor to investigate the IPCP Framework within a startup institutional context. It balances the need for breadth through quantitative benchmarking with depth through qualitative thematic analysis, ensuring that findings are valid, reliable, and applicable to scholarship and practice.

Research Questions

Supporting the research design, the following research questions guide the direction of this study, addressing the practice problem of the absence of BPM-led operational frameworks in newly established online business institutions. Furthermore, the questions are structured to ensure alignment with the IPCP Framework, integrating governance, decision-making, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring into a comprehensive operating model. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) noted, well-formulated research questions are critical to the success of a study's methodology design, connecting the problem of practice, theoretical framework, and the methods into a comprehensive and well-structured research strategy.

Each question in this study offers insight into specific components of the IPCP framework and provides practical guidance for institutional leaders responsible for establishing operational systems and governance. Together, the questions balance breadth and depth,

capturing external benchmarks and framing the information from an internal perspective, thus presenting a more complete picture. The questions also reflect the practical interpretive approach guiding the study, which Morgan (2014) emphasized and recommended.

Table 4. *Research Questions and Rationale*

Research Question (RQ)	Rationale
RQ1. How do existing BPM frameworks and organizational design models, as described in secondary sources, inform the development of an operating model for newly established online business colleges?	Situates the study within BPM and organizational design literature. Draws from Dumas et al. (2018) and Burton et al. (2020) to adapt established principles to startup institutions, ensuring the IPCP Framework is grounded in prior research rather than reinvented in isolation.
RQ2. What themes emerge from secondary qualitative analysis of accreditation reports, case studies, and peer-reviewed literature regarding cultural alignment, governance, and performance monitoring in startup institutions?	Highlights the qualitative strand of the study. Cultural misalignment and governance resistance are common in startups (Corbo et al., 2016; Fullan, 2016). Accreditation and case studies provide rich data on these challenges and strategies for alignment.
RQ3. How do quantitative benchmarks from national datasets such as IPEDS, NCES, DEAC, and DOE compare to qualitative themes, and what do these findings suggest about institutional readiness, sustainability, and performance?	Explicitly links qualitative and quantitative strands. Benchmarks (retention, graduation, faculty ratios) are contextualized through cultural/governance narratives, providing a holistic view of readiness and sustainability within the IPCP Framework.
RQ4. If feasible, how do faculty, administrators, or early stakeholders within the institution perceive the challenges and opportunities of BPM-led operating models, and how do these perceptions align with external benchmarks and literature?	Allows for limited primary data collection. Practitioner perspectives enhance relevance and applicability, reinforcing Atanaw's (2025) argument that integrating stakeholder insights ensures both scholarly rigor and practical utility.

Note. Research questions align with the IPCP Framework's domains of governance, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring. Rationales are provided to clarify the applied and theoretical significance of each question.

These four questions comprehensively address the three domains of the IPCP Framework. Question one establishes the study within the BPM and regionalization design literature, ensuring the correct application of process principles. Question two emphasizes cultural alignment and the use of governance, focusing on the human and organizational dynamics of emerging institutions. Question three addresses using performance monitoring through benchmarking, ensuring that cultural and governance strategies are validated against measurable results. Question four connects external and internal perspectives, aligning stakeholder perceptions with external evidence.

Aligning each question with a specific component of the IPCP Framework, this research provides a clear methodological understanding and maintains conceptual integrity by offering confirmation through the data collection process. The convergent mixed-methods design employed in this study systematically guides the process, addressing each question through collecting and analyzing facts. The results of these questions and the study provide a rigorous, practical, and action-oriented approach for new institutions addressing process, culture, and performance monitoring challenges.

Setting and Participants

This section describes the study's setting and participants in the context of investigating BPM-led frameworks in early-stage higher education institutions, situating the case with the convergent design detailed above. Understanding the setting and participants provides essential context for this study, framing the investigation of the problem of practice. Early-stage colleges and universities operate under conditions distinct from established institutions, shaping the type of evidence available and how it can be interpreted. In this study, the setting is defined by the environment of a new online business college, while participants are understood broadly to

include both institutional stakeholders and data sources. This section establishes how these elements contribute to examining governance, culture, and performance within the IPCP Framework.

Site (or Setting)

The setting for this study is a newly established online startup business college in Florida, licensed by the Florida Commission for Independent Education (FL CIE), and actively working toward accreditation from the Distance Education Accrediting Commission (DEAC). This new college offers associate, bachelor's, and master's degree programs in business administration, based on the CBE model. As higher education institutions look to connect academic programs with modern workforce needs, along with flexible learning pathways, the CBE model prioritizes skills-based mastery of clearly defined learning outcomes over seat time. This approach has gained popularity, with increased integration within online colleges and universities, as noted by Voorhees (2001) and Alt et al. (2023). Embedding CBE into the institution's design demonstrates a clear innovation strategy from the college's onset, even as the college develops its broader operating and governance systems. This Florida-based college serves as the primary case in a comparative benchmarking analysis of similar situations identified through secondary data.

As a startup institution, the college is building its core infrastructure, including faculty governance, curriculum development, instructional strategy, student services, and performance management mechanisms. A frequent challenge for new colleges, as detailed by Burton et al. (2020) and further supported by Atuahene (2024), is the lack of long-term evidence, including information on student outcomes, faculty performance, and financial sustainability, in contrast to long-term institutions with greater records and often decades of performance data. There are

advantages and disadvantages of a lack of institutional historical information. On the one hand, it creates challenges and barriers to conventional institutional evaluation strategies that compliance and accreditation initiatives often depend on (NCES, 2023). On the other hand, as described by Dumas et al. (2018) and echoed by Luo (2024), it offers a unique opportunity to examine how a BPM-led operational model, such as the IPCP Framework, is developed in an institution's initial establishment, without the burden of ingrained behaviors, systems, or processes.

To establish the setting and provide a foundation for analysis, this study highlights using external secondary data sources, including published case studies, accreditation and regulatory documents, and reports from similar colleges and universities. The inclusion criteria focus on papers published between 2020 and 2025 that address BPM, accreditation readiness, or CBE in a startup or online college context. All sources must provide institutional details and clearly outline their transparency methods. For a new startup institution, benchmarking against external standards is particularly important, enabling institutional leadership to assess performance against best practices and regulatory requirements. Atuahene (2024) highlighted the impact that accountability and compliance management have in bolstering confidence that the institution meets the minimum quality standards, which is especially important for new institutions. Similarly, Williamson and Kizilcec (2022) emphasize the importance of benchmarking and its role in allowing institutional leadership to analyze and compare progress with higher education norms and integrate best practices from peer institutions.

The primary institution being examined benefits from understanding best practices and integrating benchmarking, which supports proactive management throughout the institution's operational stages. Furthermore, accreditation organizations, such as DEAC, not only enforce compliance but also provide structured frameworks for assessing curriculum quality, governance,

and instructional outcomes. By situating the primary institution's development within this comparative context, the study can examine how the IPCP Framework can foster cultural alignment, improve institutional capacity, and encourage sustainable performance in ways that are both innovative and compliant with external quality and educational standards.

Understanding the differences between startup and mature institutions is crucial for situating this study within the broader landscape of higher education and fully comprehending its setting. According to research by Burton et al. (2020) and Atuahene (2024), startup institutions face various and unique challenges, constraints, and obstacles, including limited historical data, a lack of full accreditation, recognition, and often no established governance systems. However, Dumas et al. (2018) and Lou (2024) emphasize that these colleges and universities benefit from agility and adaptability, enabling them to innovate without the constraints of legacy systems.

In contrast, developed institutions have decades of accumulated data, codified governance structures, and established cultural norms that provide stability (NCES, 2023). At the same time, as Burton et al. (2020) explain, these legacy systems can also inhibit adaptability and hinder innovation. Further highlighting the value of benchmarking when analyzing the differences between Williamson and Kizilcec (2022) underscores the importance of using benchmarking to compare and contrast newer institutions with established institutions, stressing that careful attention should be given to institutional context. To highlight these dynamics, Table 3 contrasts the characteristics of startup institutions with those of mature institutions.

Table 5. *Comparison of startup and legacy institutional characteristics.*

Dimension	Startup Institution	Mature Institution
Historical Data	Minimal to none	Decades of student outcomes and financial records
Governance Structures	Emerging, in development	Established, often codified in bylaws
Faculty Evaluation	Informal, limited evidence	Long-term performance review systems

Dimension	Startup Institution	Mature Institution
Accreditation Standing	Provisional, applicant, or candidacy status	Full accreditation with periodic reaffirmation
Performance Monitoring	Developing KPIs and dashboards	Established reporting mechanisms (IPEDS, NCES)
Cultural Alignment	In formation, subject to resistance or flux	Generally stable, with ingrained traditions
Resource Availability	Limited, dependent on external funding and tuition	Diversified, often with endowments and reserves

Note. This table compares key organizational characteristics of startup institutions with those of legacy institutions. Components such as process, governance, accreditation, performance monitoring, and cultural alignment highlight the structural and operational contrasts between institutions in their formative stage and those with decades of established practices.

As this comparison illustrates, startup institutions operate in a fundamentally different setting than their more established counterparts, as the chart displays. These variations influence governance and cultural development, highlighting areas for performance monitoring and underscoring the relevance of the IPCP Framework. These factors also directly relate to the institution's viability and progress toward accreditation, a key objective of any new institution. To ensure that this study considers both the opportunities and limitations specific to emerging colleges, it stresses external standards and incorporates qualitative findings. This paradigm situates the results within the context of higher education process governance, cultural change, and performance monitoring, thereby placing the findings within the scope of the IPCP Framework.

Participants

To establish a clear foundation, the study first defines participants not only as individuals but also as data sources that provide insight and institutional context. The participants in this study are primarily secondary data sources rather than individual human subjects. This strategy is being approached intentionally, as it addresses the reality of a newly established institution that has not yet accumulated viable, long-term data on faculty performance, student outcomes,

operational activities, and institutional effectiveness. Through the use and prioritization of secondary data, this study establishes its foundation in analysis, supporting benchmarks and best practices in higher education (Alt et al., 2023). This will help to ensure findings are not limited to the primary institution's lack of historical records. However, this dependence on external sources highlights the importance of comparative analysis in understanding how a new college can position itself within the broader frameworks of higher education and accreditation, aligning with Burton et al. (2020).

This study identifies qualitative and quantitative data sources to capture the full range of institutional practices and benchmarks in the higher education sector. Qualitative sources include published case studies of online higher education startups, accreditation reports from DEAC and other related organizations, institutional governance documents, and peer-reviewed research on BPM, change management, performance measurement, and CBE implementation. These materials provide insight into best practices, common challenges, and the cultural and organizational factors that influence the sustainability of higher education institutions. Furthermore, quantitative sources include publicly available datasets, such as IPEDS and the NCES, and accreditation performance reports and benchmarking data provided by the U.S. Department of Education and similar organizations. These datasets offer measurable indicators of institutional capacity, student outcomes, and compliance trends, making this information critical in defining norms against which the startup institution can be evaluated.

Where feasible, this foundation is supplemented with limited primary data, ensuring that insider perspectives enhance external secondary institutional findings. Contributions come from the existing staff of five to ten, including administrators, limited faculty, and institutional leadership. Participants will be selected through purposive sampling based on direct involvement

in governance, curriculum development, or operations relevant to the research focus. These staff members are directly involved in the institution's establishment, initial governance, instructional methodologies, curriculum development, and operational frameworks. They may offer insights into the newly established online college, as described by Burton et al. (2020) and Alzahmi et al. (2025), providing internal perspectives, real-time feedback, and relevant suggestions regarding current operations and the impact of integrating the IPCP Framework, consistent with the principles outlined by Dumas et al. (2018). These individuals, per the research standards described by Creswell and Creswell (2018), would be invited to participate in the study through formal invitations. Informed consent and confidentiality procedures would guide participants, ensuring that confidentiality is protected and the study's ethical integrity is maintained.

While leveraging the limited primary data available, this combination of secondary data strikes a balance in the study's approach, as emphasized by Creswell and Creswell (2018), between practicality, feasibility, and methodological rigor. This method ensures the research is completed in a practical and achievable manner within the startup institution's scenario, while still meeting the necessary scholarly standards and credibility, consistent with Roberts and Hyatt (2019).

The blended design research approach provides both breadth and depth, enabling the study to identify sector-wide trends and patterns by drawing on existing, larger, and more comprehensive reports and comparative information, a strategy aligned with Wildermuth (2017). At the same time, this approach offers a thorough view, contextualizing findings through institutional-specific insight. By adopting this approach, the participants and data strands provide a comprehensive analysis that directly aligns with and strengthens the study's research questions.

Researcher Positionality

Motivation and Role

As the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer, the researcher's positionality is particularly relevant in this study. With the dual roles of Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer at the institution under study, this individual has a unique insider's perspective that presents both strengths and challenges. The researcher has relevant and hands-on experience and a nuanced understanding of the operational and governance challenges faced by the college; this individual also has insider access to the institution, providing valuable context. Conversely, this relationship and the closeness to the institution increase the risks of introducing bias in data evaluation. To preserve analytic independence, the researcher will:

- Conduct an external bracketing interview prior to data collection. The transcripts will be stored in the complete audit documentation as part of this.
- Conduct a code-recode review on a subset after a two-week interval to determine stability.
- Maintain a version audit trail that includes documents, decisions, memos, processes, and revisions to the codebook.
- Conduct a negative-case analysis to test disconfirming evidence actively.

Ontological Assumption

This study assumes that multiple realities exist, as each stakeholder group interprets governance, culture, and performance through its own lived experiences. The researcher acknowledges that institutional reality is not singular but constructed through the diverse viewpoints of administrators, faculty, regulators, and students.

Insider Advantages

One advantage of the researcher's internal position is its unique access to institutional contexts that might otherwise be difficult to understand in terms of their history and operations. The researcher has firsthand knowledge of the college's governance processes, faculty hiring and onboarding strategies, regulatory and accreditation requirements, and operational challenges. As a result, data interpretation can be improved by developing a deeper and more comprehensive understanding through lived experiences in managing early-stage higher education institutions. Furthermore, insider positionality adds credibility and authenticity when presenting institutional information, providing greater depth. Familiarity with different stakeholder groups may also increase willingness to be transparent and boost engagement in discussions about complex topics, such as resistance to changes during governance transitions or skepticism toward a BPM-led model, including the IPCP Framework, which might not be revealed by someone unfamiliar with the existing culture.

Insider Risks

Simultaneously, insider positionality can pose risks and conflicts in role responsibilities. Consequently, the researcher has a personal interest in the health and well-being of the organization in its initial launch, instructional delivery, and the accreditation process. At the same time, there is a danger in the data interpretation process, where findings may be overly biased toward positive aspects or overlook potential weaknesses. This could harm the research's credibility if not correctly managed and executed. If not properly managed, this could damage the research's credibility and value to the institution. For example, when analyzing process documents or reports, there may be a tendency to emphasize particular strengths while downplaying specific weaknesses, often due to biases. Similarly, if primary data collection

involves faculty or administrative staff, participants may feel pressured to alter their responses due to perceived power dynamics, thereby compromising the authenticity of the data.

Axiological Assumption

Reflexivity serves as a clear strategy to help reduce these risks. Reflexivity guides the researcher to regularly and continuously evaluate themselves, thereby clarifying how personal values, experiences, and the researcher's role influence the research process, as noted by Berger (2015). A reflection log will be maintained throughout the study, tracking decisions, interpretations, ideas, opinions, and instances of identified personal biases that may influence or impact the analysis outcomes. This journal will provide both a tool for self-awareness and an audit trail for future review and transparency. Axiologically, the researcher acknowledges that values and professional experience shape interpretation. Reflexive journaling and openness will be employed to bracket these values, ensuring that findings are grounded in data rather than personal influence.

Epistemological Assumption

Epistemologically, knowledge in this study is gained through the combination of empirical evidence and interpretive analysis, consistent with Creswell and Poth (2018). Claims of knowledge about different aspects of the college are justified by triangulating across multiple data sources, ensuring that insights are credible even when they originate from subjective perspectives. The potential of bias is also decreased, following the work of Creswell and Creswell (2018), by using multiple data sources to help ensure a triangulated view of the research process, including the use of external benchmarks, such as IPEDS, NCES, DEAC reports, and published secondary sources. The study ensures that the results are not only based on insider interpretations. According to Denzin (1978), triangulation allows themes emerging

from institutional documents or stakeholder perspectives to be cross-validated against external evidence. Transparency in coding procedures, including detailed documentation of how themes are identified and validated, also enhances the trustworthiness of the results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Insider–Outsider Dynamics

Although the researcher is an insider within the institution, the doctoral role requires a certain level of outsider positionality. As a scholar who must adhere to the standards of South College and external review standards, a researcher must maintain a critical distance from institutional interests. Far from being a disadvantage, this potential conflict between insider and outsider perspectives adds depth to the research process. Herr and Anderson (2015) argue that such “hybrid positionalities” can enhance research by allowing the scholar-practitioner to transition smoothly between roles, using insider knowledge while exercising outsider critique. For example, the researcher might use information gathered about DEAC standards from familiarity with internal operations, while also assessing how well those processes that follow BPM principles outlined in a model like the IPCP framework, using external perspectives. Similarly, when reviewing governance documents, the researcher can draw on their insider experience of implementation while critically analyzing them against best practices identified in the literature.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical implications of the researcher's positionality are also acknowledged. If primary participants are engaged, informed consent and confidentiality will be prioritized, and all required documentation will be signed to limit any insecurity or potential power imbalances (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Any survey used in this research will use third-party links with IP

address masking to protect data security. Interviews will be scheduled outside regular work hours, with optional virtual or off-site sessions. Participants may choose a neutral interviewer instead of the researcher. Participants will be assured that every effort will be made to ensure their responses do not affect their professional standing within the institution. To reinforce this assurance, any data collected from primary participants will be anonymized in reporting. This approach aligns with the principles of ethical research outlined by the Office for Human Research Protections (2018).

Summary of Positionality

In summary, the researcher's position should be seen as both a strength and a potential weakness. Insider familiarity and access offer depth, context, trust, and authenticity, while outsider scholarly accountability maintains necessary rigor and critical distance. The study addresses these two dynamics through employing reflexivity, triangulation, and transparency, enabling positionality to strengthen rather than weaken the research process. By adopting this balanced approach, the study is well-positioned to establish the credibility of its findings and help ensure that the research makes a meaningful contribution to both academic work and institutional practices.

Procedures

The procedures described in this study provide direction for systematic planning, approval, and implementation of research activities. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasize, procedures provide structure, transparency, and the means for replication, which are critical to the success of the IPCP Framework. Because the design integrates both ethically sound and thorough methods, the procedures are organized into three phases: (1) planning and approvals, (2) recruitment, and (3) step-by-step implementation. While the IPCP Framework

provides a practical lens for analyzing research findings, it is not a research procedure in itself. Instead, it provides direction in how data is sorted, analyzed, and evaluated across the components of process, culture, and performance monitoring.

Permissions

The first phase involves securing the necessary authorizations and approvals before starting any data collection and analysis. Although limited primary data will be used, this study will primarily rely on secondary, publicly available, and identifiable information that has been removed. However, there remains the possibility of limited primary data collection from leadership, administrators, or other institutional stakeholders. An application will be submitted to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at South College. The application will provide the necessary details confirming that most sources are exempt under federal guidelines, as outlined by the Office for Human Research Protections in 2018. Should interviews or surveys be conducted, additional provisions will be made to ensure informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, thereby providing the security and confidentiality of all potential participants.

If institutional, regulatory, or accreditation documents are required to complete this study, permission will be obtained before analyzing any data. Publicly available datasets, such as IPEDS and NCES, require no special authorization, provided they are used ethically and transparently. However, access to internal institutional and compliance documents requires approval from authorized individuals. Additionally, institutional leaders or accrediting agencies must approve access to these documents. These steps ensure compliance and uphold ethical safeguards, while also reflecting the principles of credibility and dependability described by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Step-by-Step Procedures

The study's execution will proceed through the following steps:

1. Submit an IRB application documenting the use of secondary data and any potential primary data collection, in accordance with OHRP (2018) guidelines.
2. Secure permissions for institutional and accreditation documents, while focusing on records that capture process, culture, and performance monitoring.
3. Categorize relevant secondary sources into qualitative categories, such as accreditation reports, institutional documents, case studies, and scholarly articles, and into quantitative groups, including IPEDS, NCES, DEAC reports, and U.S. Department of Education benchmarks.
4. Prepare secondary data for analysis by importing qualitative documents into NVivo and quantitative datasets into Excel and SPSS.
5. If primary data is collected, distribute consent forms, conduct interviews or surveys, and transcribe the results. Interview protocols will be designed to gather insights into institutional processes, culture, and performance monitoring.
6. Code qualitative materials following Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework, published in 2006.
7. Organize and analyze quantitative data using descriptive statistics and benchmarking strategies that Creswell and Poth (2018) describe as essential for mixed-methods inquiry.
8. Integrate qualitative and quantitative data by creating joint displays and using Denzin's (1978) principle of triangulation to identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

9. Document all steps through an audit trail to improve transparency and reliability, consistent with the standards proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Recruitment Plan

For the secondary data strand, no participant recruitment is required. If primary data collection is feasible, purposive sampling will be employed by recruiting a small group of approximately five to ten institutional leaders, administrators, or stakeholders involved in the college's operations and development. Participants will be introduced to the study through a brief recruitment message outlining the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and how their perspectives may contribute to understanding governance, culture, and performance in startup institutions. Invitations will be sent via secure email, accompanied by an informed consent form that outlines the study's purpose, the expectations for each participant, and the participant's right to withdraw at will.

The sample will be drawn from the broader population of individuals directly engaged in the institution's governance and program development, ensuring alignment with the study's focus on startup operations. As Herr and Anderson (2015) note, clarity of expectations and voluntary participation are essential to ethical engagement in practitioner research. Confidentiality will also be prioritized by anonymizing participant responses, consistent with Berger's (2015) recommendations on reflexivity and ethical transparency in qualitative inquiry. Participants will indicate their agreement to participate by signing and returning the informed consent form electronically before contributing any data. If a participant mentions or highlights a personnel-sensitive issue, the interviewer will redirect to non-identifying process descriptions. A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix A.

Detailed instruments, coding strategies, and analytic techniques are addressed in the

subsequent Data Collection section, which expands on how qualitative and quantitative strands will be managed.

Contingency Planning

Given the uncertainties involved in studying at a new higher education institution during the establishment stage, several contingencies are incorporated into the procedures. At this early stage, it is expected that primary data collection may not be feasible or sufficient so that the study will shift to secondary data from similar new online business colleges exclusively. This will ensure comprehensiveness and feasibility without compromising rigor. If access to certain institutional or accreditation documents is limited or not approved, similar substitute reports or published case studies will be used. If data contain missing variables, supplementary benchmarks from professional organizations, such as EDUCAUSE or BestColleges, will be incorporated.

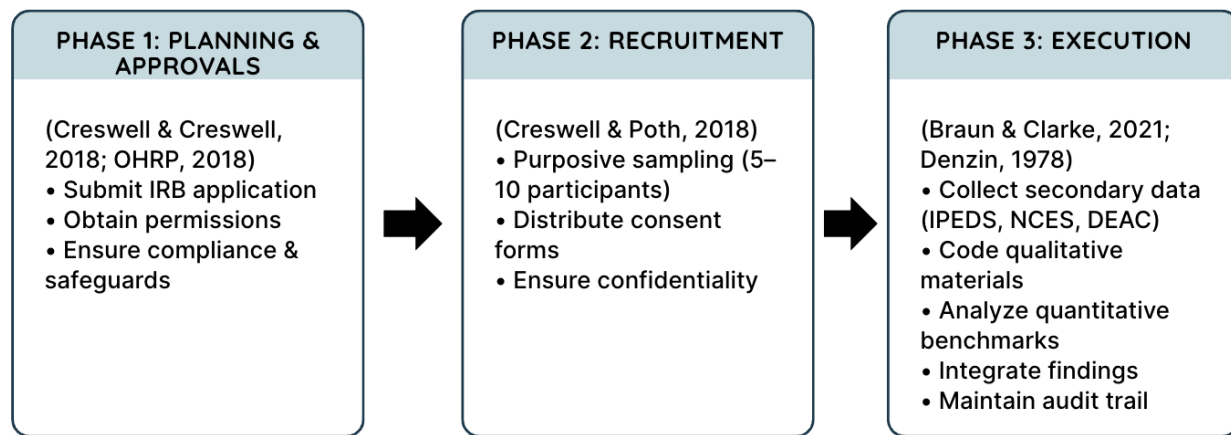
Flow of Procedures

The research process follows a sequential, but also convergent, design. Phase One includes planning and approvals, Phase Two involves recruitment (if applicable), and Phase Three executes data preparation and integration. At the analysis stage, the IPCP Framework provides the organizing lens for interpreting results, connecting themes and benchmarks to institutional process, culture, and performance monitoring. This approach ensures that the study remains feasible, ethically sound, and aligned with both its pragmatic and interpretive frameworks, as well as its applied problem of practice. A flowchart (Figure 4) will be included to illustrate the process visually.

All qualitative data will be coded and stored in NVivo program. Quantitative data sets will be kept in encrypted, version-controlled folders, using Excel or SPSS. Access will be limited to the researcher and chair. All files will be retained for a period of three years and then securely

destroyed.

Figure 5. *Procedures Flowchart for the Study*



Note. This flowchart illustrates the three phases of the research procedures, including planning and approvals, recruitment, and execution. Each phase includes clearly defined actions, and the design ensures ethical rigor, transparency, and methodological alignment with Creswell and Creswell (2018), Creswell and Poth (2018), Braun and Clarke (2006), and Denzin (1978).

Data Collection

Data collection is a central component of this study because it provides the evidence base necessary to answer the research questions and address the problem of practice. For practitioner research in higher education, Creswell and Creswell (2018) emphasize that transparency in the data collection process is critical to ensure rigor, replicability, and trustworthiness. For a newly established online business college, the absence of long-term institutional data poses a significant challenge, making it strategically important to gather data from multiple sources. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that credibility depends on well-defined, systematic, and transparent procedures, while Denzin (1978) presented triangulation in research as a way to reduce dependence on a single perspective. By defining the sources, methods, and procedures for data collection with clarity, this study enables findings that can be replicated, validated, and applied in practice.

Aligned with a convergent mixed-methods design, the data collection strategy combines both qualitative and quantitative data. Creswell and Poth (2018) explain that mixed-methods research is effective when each element contributes to the study, offering complementary insights and relevant information. In this study, qualitative sources highlight the real-world experiences of governance, culture, and BPM adoption, while quantitative benchmarks provide measurable indicators of institutional effectiveness. This study is designed to produce practical results in integrating a BPM-led model, such as the IPCP Framework, consistent with Morgan's (2014) discussion of pragmatism. The study's collection process emphasizes problem-centered inquiry and functional outcomes, thereby supporting the integration of diverse evidence into a single, comprehensive dataset.

Data Collection Approach #1: Secondary qualitative data (process & cultural alignment)

The initial dataset in this study includes qualitative sources. As observed by Burton and colleagues (2020), startup institutions often lack the extensive historical data typically available to legacy universities. This lack of historical data increases the importance of published case studies, accreditation reports, and institutional governance documents. This is especially true for the primary institution being examined; therefore, this study will use available case studies of online higher education startups, accreditation reports from the DEAC and other regulatory bodies, and peer-reviewed literature on BPM and competency-based education.

These types of secondary sources, as further explained by Alt et al. (2023), can help identify patterns in cultural alignment, governance, and performance monitoring that can be applied across different institutional contexts. Documents will be systematically collected and recorded from library databases, accreditation websites, and regulatory agencies. To accelerate

the process, each source will be imported into NVivo software for uniform coding and thematic analysis.

Data Analysis Plan #1

The six-phase process for thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), involves familiarization, initial coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and final narrative production. This structured approach ensures consistent documentation of processes, cultural resistance, and performance monitoring. To support the reliability of this plan, all qualitative documents will be imported into NVivo software for coding. Following Braun and Clarke's framework, coding will proceed through initial open coding, axial coding, and thematic refinement. To further support this process, an audit trail will be established and maintained to ensure proper documentation of coding-related decisions. Triangulation across multiple case studies, accreditation reports, and governance documents will provide further validation of any emerging themes and will help expedite alignment with the study's research questions.

Data Collection Approach #2: Secondary quantitative data (performance monitoring)

The second dataset collection includes quantitative benchmarks. National data, including IPEDS and NCES, DEAC performance reports, and U.S. Department of Education statistics, provide verified and consistent measurements of institutional outcomes, including student enrollment, retention, graduation rates, satisfaction rates, faculty-to-student ratios, and financial sustainability. The NCES (2023) has emphasized that this type of data offers reliable information that can be compared across similar higher education institutions. Benchmarking against national metrics enables institutions to evaluate their capacity, particularly when BPM-led models are employed, as demonstrated by Williamson and Kizilcec (2022). Data will be collected from official sources to ensure accuracy and dependability. Quantitative analysis will include

descriptive statistics and comparative trend analysis using Excel and SPSS to assess alignment with sector benchmarks.

Data Analysis Plan #2

Descriptive and comparative statistical methods will be applied to calculate averages, identify trends, and benchmark across institutions. Where feasible, relationships between BPM-related practices and institutional performance will be examined, providing further insight into the quantitative analysis and supporting the application of the IPCP Framework in higher education.

Data Collection Approach #3: Proposed Primary Data Collection

While the study primarily relies on secondary sources, limited primary data collection may be necessary, and preparation for this scenario should be made. Highlighted by Herr and Anderson (2015), the value of practitioner research lies in its insider perspectives, which take into consideration and address issues of power and bias. In this study, semi-structured interviews or surveys may be conducted with administrators, faculty, or stakeholders involved in governance and program development.

To maintain high data standards in the research process, interview protocols will be designed to encourage open dialogue and feedback about BPM-led models, governance, and cultural alignment. Surveys may also be used to capture broader information on institutional readiness. All primary data collection will follow established ethical standards and safeguards outlined by the Office for Human Research Protections (2018), including obtaining signed informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring voluntary participation by all participants.

Interview Questions Used

1. From your perspective, what challenges do you see in implementing BPM-led operating models at this institution?
2. What opportunities do you believe BPM or the IPCP Framework might provide for improving governance, culture, or performance monitoring?
3. How do you feel these approaches align or conflict with existing institutional practices?
4. In what ways might BPM-led models support accreditation readiness and long-term sustainability for this institution?
5. What recommendations would you make for adapting BPM or the IPCP Framework to fit the culture and goals of this college?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share about BPM-led models or institutional processes that we have not covered?

These questions align with Research Question 4 (RQ4), focusing on stakeholders' perceptions of BPM-led models being integrated into a newly established online business college. The information gathered will provide insight into how faculty, administrators, and other stakeholders perceive the challenges and opportunities associated with BMP-led operation models, in relation to process, governance, culture, and performance, in alignment with the IPCP Framework. A full interview protocol, including the structured questions and blank template, is provided in Appendix B.

Data Analysis Plan #3

If primary data are collected, interview transcripts will be coded thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process. This will ensure the systematic identification of patterns

that recur in relation to processes, culture, and performance monitoring. The use of NVivo software to organize and track codes, along with reflexive journaling and an audit trail, helps document analytic decisions, thereby strengthening data dependability. Survey data, if collected, will be tabulated using descriptive statistics to identify trends and frequency of occurrences. These different quantitative findings will be reviewed and compared with related qualitative results to highlight areas of convergence and divergence. Triangulation across qualitative themes, survey results, and secondary benchmarks will enhance the credibility of the study's findings. This plan will also give a deeper insight into stakeholder perceptions of the IPCP Framework.

Data Synthesis

Each data strand will be analyzed separately before being integrated into the comprehensive research. Integration of these strands will occur through creating a joint display that aligns qualitative with quantitative benchmarks. The joint display will be developed after strand-specific analyses to support sequential integration. Furthermore, this analysis is guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, in which qualitative data are coded and organized using NVivo software to develop codes and themes. Quantitative data from IPEDS, NCES, DEAC, and DOE will be reviewed and compared, following the research approach described by Costa (2024). Employing the convergent mixed-methods design will be synthesized, rather than viewed in isolation. Joint display tables, as defined by Shao and Xu (2024), will be used to identify convergence and divergence in datasets by matching qualitative themes with quantitative benchmarks.

For example, retention outcomes or compliance benchmarks from quantitative databases will be contrasted against process issues identified in qualitative data. This synthesis provides a

comprehensive understanding of a BPM-led framework in startup institutions by grounding conclusions in both interpretive and empirically validated evidence. Where discrepancies in data persist, results will be reported clearly and transparently, including contextual rationale and implications for decision-making at the institutional level.

Table 6. *Comparison of startup and legacy institutional characteristics.*

Data Source	Type	Purpose in Study	Example Indicators/Insights
IPEDS (Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System)	Quantitative	Benchmark institutional performance against national averages	Retention, graduation rates, faculty–student ratios
NCES (National Center for Education Statistics)	Quantitative	Provide sector-wide data on online and traditional institutions	Enrollment trends, completion data, financial stability
DEAC Accreditation Reports	Qualitative/Quantitative	Identify accreditation expectations and performance standards	Program approval timelines, compliance measures
Case Studies of Online Colleges (peer-reviewed)	Qualitative	Explore governance, culture, and BPM adoption in comparable institutions	Cultural alignment, decision-making processes
Institutional Governance Documents	Qualitative	Assess internal structures and alignment with best practices	Procedures, policies, decision-rights frameworks
DOE Benchmarks/Reports	Quantitative	Provide regulatory performance metrics for comparison	Outcome measures, compliance statistics
(If feasible) Primary Data: Faculty/Admin Interviews/Surveys	Qualitative/Quantitative	Capture insider perspectives to contextualize secondary findings	Perceptions of BPM-led governance, cultural challenges

Note. This table summarizes the primary data sources used in the study, the type of evidence they provide, and the purpose they serve in addressing the problem of practice. Sources are aligned with the convergent mixed-methods design to ensure both qualitative and quantitative strands contribute to a comprehensive analysis.

Trustworthiness

Ensuring trustworthiness is a critical aspect of the research design and is prioritized throughout the study. This study uses data triangulation (employing multiple sources), methodological triangulation (combining qualitative and quantitative methods), and investigator triangulation through external peer review. Following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework, the study includes measures that enhance dependability, credibility, and repeatability in its methodology. The integration of these requirements ensures that the results are rigorous and practical, as they meet and implement established standards of validity and reliability for quantitative research are met and implemented in practice. This systematic approach fosters trustworthiness by strengthening credibility, establishing transferability, enhancing dependability, ensuring confirmability, and promoting ethical considerations.

Credibility

Triangulation of multiple data sources, including case studies, accreditation reports, and national education datasets. These specific databases will include IPEDS, NCES, and may consist of other applicable databases. Comparing data from different sources can help reduce bias that may impact research outcomes. To ensure that the results accurately represent stakeholder inputs, participants will also be asked to verify the interpretations of their responses, a process known as member checking, if primary institutional data is collected (Ezzeddine et al., 2023). Together, triangulation and member checking ensure that results represent authentic institutional realities.

Transferability

Transferability is supported through the thorough, detailed use of linked general benchmarks and an institutional framework. Although this study focuses on an institution in the startup stage, NCES, DEAC, and IPEDS sources will be utilized to place the data within the broader context of higher education, making this study a valuable contribution to the field. By including comparable data and comprehensive contextual integration, readers can assess whether the ideas and concepts of the IPCP Framework apply to their own institution. The researcher's job is to provide sufficient information and context for others to assess the relevance to higher education, not just to assert a generalized opinion, as stressed by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Dependability

Dependability is maintained through the strict enforcement of a systematic documentation of the research process. To make this process as transparent as possible, defined coding procedures, data selection standards, and analytical strategies will be used and available for review. Reflexive journaling will be used to supplement this record-keeping initiative, documenting decisions, observations, and reflections throughout the study. These practices ensure consistency throughout the research, allowing outputs to be evaluated or replicated by others, thereby reinforcing the stability of the findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability is achieved, according to Nowell et al. (2017), when a systematic and transparent analysis process allows findings to be verified independently, with a critical standard being applied to this study. All findings will be grounded in verifiable data, including official datasets, accreditation reports, and published case studies, to prevent personal interpretation and minimize bias. Given the researcher's dual role within the institution, reflexivity is essential. To improve this process, reflexive journals will be used to monitor potential influences, and

triangulation across qualitative and quantitative data sources will ensure that all results are derived directly from the actual data.

Ethical Considerations

All four criteria of trustworthiness are based on ethical practice, as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Secondary data will be sourced from publicly available, de-identified datasets, ensuring responsible use, institutional review board approval, informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, which will guide any primary data collection at the institution. Furthermore, all information related to this study will be securely stored in password-protected files with restricted access to the researcher, in accordance with the protections outlined by the Office for Human Research Protections (2018). These safeguards not only protect participants but also reinforce the study's credibility, dependability, and confirmability.

Summary

This chapter outlines the methodology developed to investigate the problem of practice, specifically, the absence of a BPM-led operating model in newly established online business colleges. The research design, employing a mixed-method approach, was developed primarily using secondary qualitative and quantitative data, with strategies to address the limited primary data available for collection. This chapter provides a detailed description of the research design, the questions used, the institutional setting, the participants involved, the researcher's position, and the exact step-by-step procedures that provide direction for this study. It also offers details of the strategies for collection, analysis, and synthesis, as well as the actions being taken to establish trustworthiness and ethical rigor. These elements provide a detailed, structured, and transparent strategy for resolving the problem of practice. Moreover, the research design, data

collection strategies, analysis procedures, and synthesis within the IPCP Framework demonstrate clear alignment, ensuring methodological rigor and practical applicability.

By integrating qualitative insights into process and culture with quantitative benchmarks of institutional performance, the methodology positions the study to produce findings that are both scholarly and actionable. Specifically, these findings will be synthesized within the IPCP Framework, which incorporates business process management, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring as interconnected components. Using the IPCP Framework as a lens to view the study's findings helps ensure that the recommendations extend beyond merely descriptive analysis, providing an organized and systematic approach for institutional improvements. The next chapter will present the results of this analysis, integrating evidence across strands to directly address the research questions and inform both theory and practice. This design advances understanding of how BPM-led models, such as the IPCP Framework, can enhance governance, sustainability, and institutional capacity in newly established higher education settings.

CHAPTER FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Overview

This study investigated the lack of a defined Business Process Management (BPM)-led operating model within a newly established online business college. Based on this, the Integrated Process, Change, and Performance (IPCP) Framework was developed as a structured solution for institutions of this kind. The IPCP Framework integrates institutional processes, cultural change, and performance monitoring into a systematic and coherent model, strengthening governance, enhancing capacity, and preparing the institution for accreditation. This approach builds on integrated BPM principles (Dumas et al., 2018; Burton et al., 2020; Eaton, 2020). The unique feature of the IPCP Framework is that it integrates components that have historically operated independently into a coordinated system, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in supporting and achieving institutional objectives. By implementing the IPCP Framework, early-stage institutions can achieve measurable alignment among strategic goals, process efficiency, and accreditation standards within 12 to 18 months of operationalization. Specifically, the framework integrates governance routines, process mapping, change-management cadences, and performance analytics into a single operating model.

Chapter One established the problem of practice and advanced the IPCP concepts using BPM scholarship and principles of organizational design introduced by Dumas et al. (2018) and Burton et al. (2020), while Chapter Two places the framework within the scholarship of change leadership, competency-based education (CBE), and preparing an institution for accreditation (Voorhees, 2001; Fullan, 2016; Eaton, 2020). Chapter Three then outlined the application of a convergent mixed-methods research design, emphasizing the use of secondary data sources, including the Postsecondary Education Data System (PSEDS) and data from the National Center

for Education Statistics. These data sources were supplemented with information from accreditation and regulatory organizations, including the Florida Commission for Independent Education and the Distance Education Accrediting Commission, which added depth and context. Due to the institution's newness, limited information was available; however, input was gathered from institutional staff and existing datasets.

This chapter shifts from examination and analysis to action and implementation. It outlines how the IPCP Framework can be implemented in early-stage online higher education institutions. It details the conditions for feasibility, models potential challenges, and provides strategies to mitigate them, along with possible implications for practice and policy development. Furthermore, it gives projections for short-term and long-term outcomes and proposes a dissemination plan tailored for internal decision-makers, key stakeholders, regulators, accreditors, and the higher education sector. The guiding premise is that BPM, as presented by Dumas et al. (2018) and further advanced for specific application in higher education by Burton et al. (2020), provides a foundation for aligning institutional processes. Combined with practical change management principles drawn from Kotter (1996) and Fullan (2016), this integrated approach fosters the necessary cultural and behavioral capacity for organizational transformation. Furthermore, by implementing disciplined performance monitoring and continuous feedback loops, institutions can accelerate institutional capacity-building, improve academic and operational efficiency, and strengthen readiness for accreditation.

Implementation and Feasibility Plan

The IPCP Framework is organized into three interdependent phases that progress in a defined sequence: Phase One (Process) focuses on mapping workflows and defining performance metrics; Phase Two (Change) centers on professional development and engaging

faculty in new governance routines, and Phase Three (Performance) emphasizes monitoring key performance indicators and compiling relicensing and accreditation evidence.

This section operationalizes the IPCP Framework for a startup online business college. This includes specifying what must be developed, in what exact sequence, and with what existing resources or resources that need to be acquired. An important step is to assess the feasibility of this model across the college, with emphasis on governance and leadership, administration and faculty development, technology and data governance, policy development, budgeting, calendar alignment, and institutional capacity building. This is a wide-ranging initiative, and understanding the impact of the IPCP Framework is a crucial first step.

This approach is supported by workstreams focused on governance, technology, and talent; it also encompasses instruction and administration when applied in a higher education setting. Each phase includes stage gates, early process gains, and evidence of continuous improvement (Fullan, 2016; Dumas et al., 2018; Burton et al., 2020). The assumptions in this study reflect the integration of this framework within the context of a startup institution, with limited historical data, minimal staffing, and compliance demands from both FLCIE and DEAC.

Therefore, the plan emphasizes low-cost, high-impact actions and incorporates evidence production into daily operations, aligning with Fullan's (2016) approach. The method for tracking progress will first involve measuring secondary data, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018) and further supported by Dumas et al. (2018). This approach uses external benchmarks, supplemented by targeted primary tools and dashboards. This approach enables timely decision-making, risk mitigation, and resequencing, consistent with the stage-gate and governance-review principles described by Burton et al. (2020). Some of the expected outputs will include standard operating procedures (SOPs), governance documents, internal and external

calendars, faculty development milestones, integrated LMS–SIS configurations, a defined instructional methodology and standards, baseline performance profiles, self-assessment, and an accompanying accreditation evidence packet for the Distance Education Accrediting Commission standards.

Table 7. *Condensed Risk Matrix for IPCP Framework Implementation*

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Owner	Early-Warning Indicators	Mitigation Strategy
Timeline slippage	Medium	High	Provost / Implementation Lead	Missed milestone dates, backlog of deliverables	Monthly review of critical path and re-sequencing of dependent tasks
Faculty adoption delays	Medium	Medium	Chief Academic Officer	Low training completion rates, negative feedback from pilot sessions	Peer-mentor support, targeted training refreshers, and incentives for early adopters
Data-quality gaps	Medium	High	CIO / Data Governance Team	Incomplete datasets, inconsistent KPI reporting	Data-validation checks, catalog updates, and quarterly data-quality audits
Resource constraints	High	Medium	CFO / Operations Director	Budget variances, delayed resource acquisition	Prioritize critical path items, phased funding release, and external resource sourcing
Compliance timeline risk	Low	High	Accreditation Liaison	Missed submission deadlines, pending document reviews	Pre-submission audits and shared accreditation calendar

Note. The matrix outlines key implementation risks for the IPCP Framework, showing each risk’s likelihood, impact, owner, early-warning indicators, and mitigation strategy to guide proactive oversight.

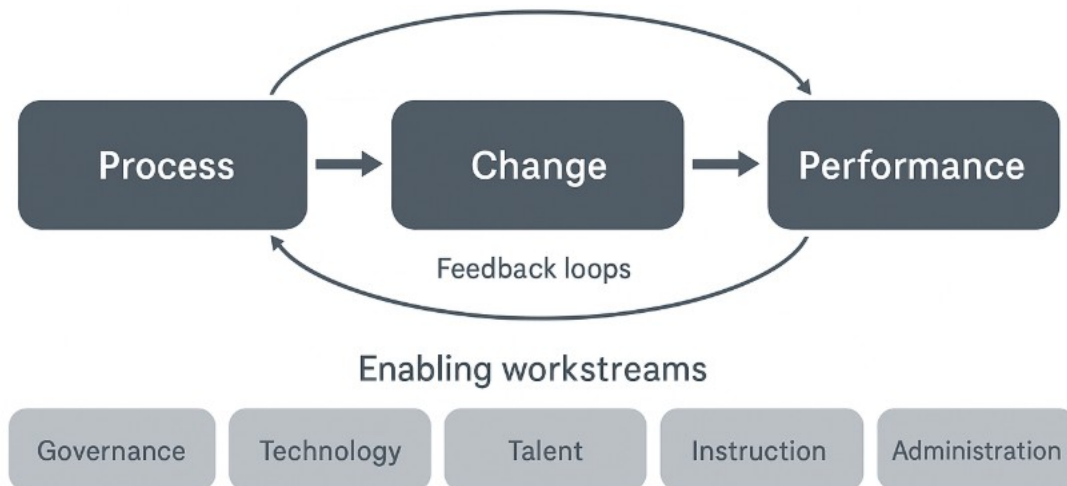
Implementation roadmap

The IPCP Framework advances through three interconnected dimensions: Process, Change, and Performance, where each component reinforces the next to create an integrated implementation methodology. This model is informed by the process lifecycle principles described by Dumas et al. (2018) and the governance alignment model developed by Burton et al. (2020), both of which provide a foundation for creating the IPCP Framework. Supporting

workstreams emphasize governance processes, aligned technological systems, and human capital development, reflecting Fullan's (2016) view that sustainable cultural transformation depends on the concurrent development of people and systems.

Designed for adaptability in many higher education institutions and business settings, the IPCP Framework emphasizes iterative integration and refinement. It uses defined feedback loops from one phase to inform the next, providing a model that constantly adapts to institutional needs. This approach is also consistent with the Distance Education Accrediting Commission's continuous improvement standards, making this Framework a valuable BPM-led operational model that supports institutional teaching outcomes, licensing requirements, and the accreditation process for both newly established and legacy colleges and universities. Given the unique challenges of startup institutions, the framework provides a methodology for focusing on early, high-impact outcomes that demonstrate institutional capability and lay the foundation for effective governance structures.

Figure 6. *IPCP Framework Implementation Flow*



Note. This figure illustrates the phased implementation of the IPCP Framework, demonstrating how process alignment, cultural change, and performance monitoring interact to establish sustainable governance in a startup online business college.

Phase One: Process mapping and alignment

The first phase clarifies how work is performed across departments and within individual departments within the institution. Implementing BPM-led practices emphasizes developing core organizational and operational processes to reduce confusion, identify bottlenecks, and enable structural and process improvements. Using visualization end-to-end workflows, as Dumas et al. (2018) argue, is essential for designing improvements and ensuring compliance with existing institutional and regulatory standards. For a startup online college, this BPM-led initiative should begin by defining processes related to admissions and onboarding, financial aid and scholarship administration, curriculum development and revision cycles, course scheduling and faculty load assignment, learning design and quality review, student success workflows and case management, assessment and capstone evaluation, registrar and records, and regulatory and accreditation reporting.

Implementing cross-functional teams, comprising faculty, student services, academic leadership, compliance, and technology team leads, provides a comprehensive view of the

institution and improves the scoping process. The mapping process must identify inputs and outputs, roles and decision rights, handoffs, systems used, cycle times, and failure scenarios. Through this process, the final outputs of this stage should be a collection of SOPs with clear ownership and defined performance metrics and KPIs. Taking this approach early in the process is beneficial for the institution in both the short and long term. In this early-stage online college, focusing on the registrar, assessment, and reporting workflows enhances the student experience while reducing risk in the regulatory and accreditation areas. Guidance from Eaton (2020) on accreditation emphasizes that documented, consistently executed processes are a primary source of evidence for reviewers.

To improve the first stages of integration, the implementation team should incorporate maps into the systems that people currently use. This strategy can help eliminate the risk of “paper processes” that are often stored away and unused. For example, version-controlled policies and procedures can be stored on a shared governance site. In contrast, checklists for specific tasks and procedures with built-in triggers can be housed on learning management systems, student information systems, and task management software, automating these resources and enhancing their institutional use. According to Antonopoulou et al. (2021), studying the adoption of BPM in higher education, including alignment between roles, process maps, and daily duties, may increase acceptance and reduce internal doubts often associated with BPM-led models in higher education, which are sometimes viewed as too corporate and do not align with higher education.

Phase Two: Cultural alignment and change leadership

When transitioning from Phase One to Phase Two, according to Schein (2010), it is essential to recognize that the process does not operate in a vacuum but rather depends on the cultures involved. According to Fullan (2016), change management emphasizes that sustainable improvement is achieved by cultivating an aligned purpose, building individual and departmental capacity, and using transparent and open communication, along with collaborative procedures that support the normalization of change. In a startup institution, culture has not been fully established. It is still in the formative stages, creating challenges and opportunities. Early approaches to decision-making and engagement establish norms that will have long-term implications. Therefore, being intentional in this phase is crucial, as noted by Burton et al. (2020).

Three specific routines will be implemented to support the change management necessary for the implementation of the IPCP Framework within the newly established online college. The first of these routines involves a shared governance process, a structure recognized in organizational and higher education literature as critical in achieving engagement and collective ownership of change (Fullan, 2016; Burton et al., 2020). This process involves administrative staff and faculty, who contribute to key decision-making through cross-functional working groups assigned to process improvement initiatives. This aligns with the participatory leadership and process outlined by Dumas et al. (2018). This quarterly formal policy review group evaluates and recommends policy changes specific to academic and operational policies and procedures. Moreover, based on available datasets, a monthly academic committee assesses curriculum updates, course improvements, changes to assessment methodologies, and strategies to improve student outcomes.

The second routine focuses on the discipline of leadership practice, highlighting how institutional leaders translate vision and the intentions behind policy into actionable, consistent, and repeatable behaviors that represent desired organizational standards. In this routine, leadership will institute bi-weekly one-on-one meetings with team members in a structured format. During these meetings, feedback and reviews will be provided on adherence to established processes, institutional policies, and procedures, as well as on ideas for improvement. Furthermore, monthly structured course learning observations will be conducted to review existing course structures, gather and analyze student and instructor feedback, and ensure that instructional materials meet the college's stated objectives.

There will also be quarterly institutional cross-departmental team meetings to review progress, celebrate improvements, and address cultural challenges, thereby establishing a systematic process for change. Research by Ezzeddine et al. (2022) suggests that employees' views of reform and change are significantly more positive when change is inclusive and experienced as participatory, thereby creating a sense of psychological safety. Furthermore, research on psychological safety by Atuahene (2024) and Yaqoob et al. (2023) suggests that when leadership behaviors are inclusive, along with explicit organizational support, they are directly related to improved outcomes, as evidenced by increased satisfaction among faculty and administrative staff and enhanced innovation in online learning environments.

The third routine includes a well-planned faculty development aligned with a CBE instructional framework. This model will build an instructional foundation that aligns with and supports the IPCP framework. Competency models were described by Voorhees (2001) as a necessary shift in the future of higher education. More recent CBE practice has been observed in medical education, as summarized by Chou et al. (2022), demonstrating that this transition to

professional activities and performance-based assessment structures is becoming increasingly accepted and can guide curriculum and skills assessment. The institution will strengthen instructional consistency and capacity by implementing workshops for faculty and curriculum development team members that cover competency mapping and alignment, assessment strategies and rubrics, feedback processes, protocols for resubmission, and the use of analytics for instructional improvement.

Phase Three: Performance monitoring and continuous improvement

Shifting from change management, we now move to the performance component of the IPCP Framework. This framework phase determines the mechanisms to assess whether the college's processes and culture are producing the desired results. A three-tier structure aligns institutional, program, and course indicators, offering a comprehensive overview of the newly established institution. At the institutional level, initial benchmarks should include first-term retention rates for first-time students, term-to-term persistence rates for adult and returning learners, program completion rates, faculty-to-student ratios, time-to-decision for key workflows, and satisfaction rates for both students and faculty. The National Center for Education Statistics Digest (2023) provides sector-specific benchmarks for many of these metrics. This is especially useful for startup colleges and universities seeking reliable external reference points for comparable analysis.

Indicators at the institutional and program levels include course completion rates, assessed mastery of skills, capstone assignments, and progress toward competencies. At the course level, indicators include on-time feedback rates, participation in formative assessments, utilization of student support services, service speed, and assessment review turnaround time. A review of learning analytics dashboards in higher education by Williamson and Kizilcec (2022)

cautioned that analytics should be designed with transparency, consistency, and fairness. They explain that dashboards should display leading indicators alongside outcomes, and present disaggregated information to help pinpoint gaps at the program level. This approach provides a more in-depth, contextually grounded insight into and explanation of academic performance, helping to avoid stigmatizing students or instructors.

Due to the lack of long-term, historical information available to the online new institution, performance monitoring will adopt the “secondary-first, primary-light” approach described by Costa (2024) and Watkins and Johnson (2022). By utilizing secondary datasets and published benchmarks, the institution can establish external comparisons, set trend expectations, and establish benchmarks against which to manage. Furthermore, while the institution is still small, well-designed primary data collection can be achieved through short pulse surveys, targeted interviews, and structured after-action reviews, which provide context and valuable insights. As highlighted by Zhao and Xu (2024), a summary of mixed-methods trends in education underscores the importance of integrating qualitative perspectives into secondary analyses to support sense-making and informed decision-making.

Table 8. *Implementation Timeline for IPCP Framework*

Year/Term	Milestones	Key Deliverables	Responsible Stakeholders
Year 1 (Months 1–6)	Process scoping; admissions, curriculum, and support workflows mapped	Standard operating procedures (SOPs)	Academic Committee, Registrar, Faculty Leads
Year 2 (Months 7–18)	Assessment policy rollout, dashboards launched, accreditation preparation	Baseline performance report	Institutional Effectiveness Team, Faculty, Committee
Year 3 (Months 19–36)	Mature analytics, full program reviews, accreditation submission	Licensing and Accreditation evidence packet	Leadership, Compliance, Faculty

Note. This table outlines a three-year implementation plan for IPCP, aligning milestones with deliverables and stakeholder responsibilities.

The IPCP Framework is a phased roadmap that integrates processes, cultural alignment, and performance monitoring. As shown in Figure 8, the roadmap unfolds in three interconnected phases, each supported by governance, technology, talent, and, when applied in a higher education setting, instruction and administration. Each component is implemented iteratively, with established feedback loops informing the development of subsequent components. The IPCP Framework, used during the early phase of an institution's establishment, will enhance capacity and instructional outcomes over time through a systematic approach, guiding the early-stage business college from the start-up phase to an established institution.

Resource requirements

After reviewing the various foundational stages comprising the IPCP Framework, examining the people, systems, policies, and funding required to implement the framework within a timeline suitable for a startup institution actively scaling is essential. The identified critical resources are organized into four domains: governance and leadership, faculty and academic staff, technology and data, and policy and compliance. Organizing these domains into specific groupings helps ensure accountability, with every process change having a clearly defined owner. This process further enables the establishment of a tool and a documented ruleset for each key function.

The guiding principles for resource allocation and use are based on a lean operating model, in which critical roles determine staffing decisions. This approach leverages, reuses, and automates standard procedures, creating an efficient operating strategy that supports well-planned staffing needs. It involves a phased resource-investment strategy aligned with readiness triggers, institutional objectives, and accreditation benchmarks. Due to the newly established institutions operating with minimal staffing, limited data, and important deadlines, the

implementation strategy emphasizes cross-training, shared services, and contracted support where needed. It also prioritizes the early-stage integration of technology platforms, including the LMS and SIS, with basic integrated reporting capabilities. Each component includes clear deliverables, defined committees and role descriptions, a hiring and onboarding plan, a CBE implementation strategy and instruction framework, and a document and SOP library, with version control in place. Detailed effort, cost estimate, budgeting plan, and a defined decision-making process are also necessary to support these components.

Governance and Leadership

Governance and leadership are the first components established, as they will guide the institution from its startup phase to becoming an established college. More specifically, establishing IPCP requires a President to establish the initial direction and structure of the institution. A provost or chief academic officer is then necessary to chair the Academic Committee, serving as a director-level lead for institutional instructional effectiveness and owning performance monitoring. Moreover, this role will also function as a lead for curriculum development, student success, the registrar, and compliance. According to Burton et al. (2020), organizational design work emphasizes that clearly defined roles and spheres of control, as well as well-defined collaboration among units, matter more than size in the early stages of development. This highlights the importance of establishing these key leadership roles from the institution's inception.

Faculty and Academic Staff

With governance and leadership now established, the plan focuses on faculty and academic talent to ensure the newly established college has the necessary resources for instruction. The hiring process should support potential faculty and staff who have a

demonstrated history or capacity to provide CBE-informed instruction environments. These new faculty and administrative staff should also have experience with formative and summative assessment models and knowledge of analytics and feedback mechanisms. To support talent acquisition, a structured onboarding process will be developed to introduce the CBE-led instruction model, along with IPCP processes, the change management processes noted earlier, the performance indicators the institution will track, and those assigned to the specific team member.

Technology Infrastructure

Concurrently, as new faculty and staff are hired, the technology infrastructure needs to be established to support instruction. This begins with developing the learning management system (LMS), the foundational instructional delivery and assessment mechanism. Following this, the student information system (SIS) build-out needs to be completed, providing enrollment, scheduling, and records management capabilities. Once both systems are in place, an analytics layer connects them, making these systems the foundation of institutional delivery. Within the LMS, a dashboard will be developed to provide instructional insights, compliance, and regulatory information necessary for institutional operations. Analytic tools and supporting dashboards require transparent governance and training to ensure proper use of the information (Williamson & Kizilcec, 2022). This includes alignment with the institution's data governance policies, which define data management, access protocols, and ethical standards for use.

Policy Framework.

Having established the institution's technology infrastructure, the focus shifts to developing policy and procedure documents. Each document must be handled using a structured version-controlled process-mapped approach. Moreover, this structured approach should be

directly linked to evidence sources used in accreditation self-studies, as accreditors evaluate policy content and the effectiveness of policy implementation (Eaton, 2020). This process must be systematically approached, with all foundational policies for each department aligned with institutional objectives. The proper implementation of the IPCP Framework, along with all necessary supporting policies and procedures, enables the application to be observable through visible, verifiable outcomes, which align with the model's monitoring aspect.

Timeline Feasibility

With the institution's policies in place, the next step involved evaluating whether the IPCP Framework deployment could be completed within 36 months (Dumas et al., 2018; Burton et al., 2020). Given the constraints associated with startup institutions and fixed external deadlines that must be met, as discussed by Eaton (2020), it is crucial to understand these targets in their various deliverables. These key milestones are scheduled against set calendar dates, including admissions deadlines, term starts, state reporting windows, relicensing, and DEAC filing dates. In alignment with Burton et al. (2020), internal operational readiness checkpoints, including maps approved, policies ratified, faculty trained, and data links tested, are timed to coincide with these institutional deadlines, ensuring a controlled implementation sequence.

The work plan spans a thirty-, sixty-, and ninety-day cycle, starting with high-impact, low-cost wins, in line with studies by Dumas et al. (2018). Investments in significant enhancements will be delayed until the institution's core capabilities are stable and it is operating efficiently with its existing resources. Targets and timelines are clearly documented on an official and shared critical path document to help establish clarity and transparency. Furthermore, buffers will be established to support a standard review process, facilitate change management efforts, and initiate the analysis of existing data to validate process performance. The following

timeline outlines the phased rollout, from pre-launch to month thirty-six, including target ownership, required resources, and key decision points to ensure the successful implementation of the IPCP Framework in the new institution.

Pre-launch to Month

During the pre-launch period, the IPCP Framework Implementation Group and Academic Committee. The team will examine the current institutional scene within the new institution and complete process scoping, selecting the first three end-to-end processes for mapping. A data governance charter will be finalized and documented for distribution and future reference, along with the development of the initial core LMS and SIS configuration for implementation. This phase also includes designing the CBE-led instructional methodologies framework. In addition, faculty development on CBE alignment and feedback procedures will be implemented throughout this initiative. An initial internal governance calendar and an aligned external calendar will also be published for transparency and cooperation.

Months 4–9

From months four through nine, the focus will shift to process building and integrating the framework. Teams will complete process maps, documentation, and SOPs for admissions-to-enrollment, curriculum development-to-delivery, and student support case management. Two improvement initiatives per process will be implemented and monitored. The development and launch of the initial dashboards to monitor institutional and course-level data indicators will be completed. A monthly review process and a quarterly policy committee will be established to review and provide recommendations for policy updates, which will then be submitted and approved by institutional and board leadership. Pulse surveys will be conducted with faculty and

staff to gain insight into their experience with change. The academic committee and curriculum design will review the survey results and map improvement initiatives based on these findings.

Months 10–18

Between months ten and eighteen, the mapping process will be expanded to include the registrar area and the assessment-to-capstone workflows. In alignment with the CBE-led instructional methodologies framework, implement an assessment policy that clearly defines instruction review and turnaround times, re-submission procedures, and record-keeping standards. Baseline retention and satisfaction standards will be established and distributed to applicable roles. Progress reports for licensing and accreditation will be prepared, including evidence packets aligned with published standards. Based on the outcomes and pulse surveys, Adjustments will be made to improve the IPCP Framework.

Months 19–36

The final phase focuses on full integration and sustained improvement activities. The IPCP Framework will be fully embedded into institutional routines and standards. Analytic processes will be enhanced through integrating predictive elements and regularly using information in operational planning. Program reviews will triangulate NCES benchmarks and internal performance for comparison and use in academic and administrative planning. Improvements and outcomes will be documented, ensuring that feedback loops between reviews, policy updates, and SOPs are fully closed. The process owners and licensing team will prepare formal accreditation milestone documentation for future use.

This timeline presents a balance between ambition and reality. Early targets are clearly defined and aligned with high-impact processes and visible routines necessary for establishing the new institution, as outlined by Dumas et al. (2018). Later initiatives are designed to integrate

the IPCP Framework across functions, aligning with Burton et al. (2020) and Fullan (2016) by establishing the institution's processes, implementing essential change activities to support the model, and deepening performance monitoring. This plan, its associated timeline, and aligned targets represent a practical, institution-wide approach for a newly established higher education institution to establish itself and build capacity for both short-term and long-term viability. Together, the phases of implementation, feasibility assessment, and resource planning create a comprehensive operational plan for adapting the IPCP Framework from theory into institutional practice. This shift from conceptual design to practical implementation establishes the foundation for understanding the challenges and constraints that might impact early success.

Potential Challenges

Even with a well-planned strategy for implementing the IPCP Framework, challenges and constraints must be addressed to ensure the initiative's success. In a startup environment, a prominent challenge centers on the lack of primary institution-specific data and analytics, operational systems and norms, resistance to change, pressure from regulatory, licensing, and accreditation requirements, as well as new initiatives. Constraints on resources further compound these, the implementation sequence, conflicts with existing critical calendar dates, and ethical considerations regarding data management and use. This examination has found that many of these challenges are interrelated. For example, minimal primary data can increase regulatory compliance tasks and fuel concern among faculty and administrative staff.

Meanwhile, limited staff resources can lead to more missed timeline milestones, which in turn affect other parts of the IPCP Framework's implementation. The subsection highlights the most significant risks, explaining why and how each affects a newly established online college or university. It also suggests practical actions to help resolve or mitigate these risks, turning them

into manageable work tasks. Furthermore, Table 5 summarizes the different challenges and corresponding mitigation initiatives, along with key details of the embedded actions included in the implementation roadmap. These activities will be examined during the monthly reviews described earlier in this plan.

Data Limitations and Operational Understanding

Startup colleges often lack historical performance metrics, long-term records, and limited robust datasets. According to Costa (2024), researchers mitigate these issues by incorporating qualitative insights to interpret external benchmarks when using mixed methods with secondary data. Similarly, Johnson (2020) and Watkins (2021) demonstrate that secondary data provides a theoretical foundation for research and decision-making when managing limited primary data. Regarding a new Florida-based online business college, the practical outcome is to combine IPEDS and NCES metrics with targeted internal reports and relevant available data. These may include assessments of shifts in culture, structured interviews, and document analysis to provide current insight, context, and perspective on the new institution. However, because of limited data, decisions may be made with incomplete information. At this early stage, the institution should document such decisions to ensure transparent record-keeping for future review and potential accreditation analysis.

Cultural resistance and change fatigue

There is an inherent risk in introducing any structural model to a college or university. These models are often perceived as too corporate and as encroaching on academic life, freedoms, and cultural norms. Fullan's (2016; 2014) writings on the moral purpose of educational change offer valuable lessons. Institutional leadership should use these theories to guide and connect processes, procedures, and policy to the institution's mission. This approach

should aid in the acceptance and cultural integration of BPM-led models, including the IPCP Framework, by involving faculty as co-designers rather than implementers of externally led strategies. This approach increases ownership, acceptance, and collaboration while accelerating cultural alignment.

Furthermore, employees' perceptions of new reform initiatives improved when leaders managed change strategically, using a sequential, participatory process, as described by Ezzeddine et al. (2021), which included transparent communication, listening mechanisms, and feedback loops. This approach is further supported by the psychological safety research by Yaqoob et al. (2020) and Atuahene (2023), which shows that people are more open to introducing new ideas, experimenting, sharing concerns, and learning when leadership works to include team members and secure their support. The IPCP Framework should be introduced cross-departmentally through shared governance channels and supported by leader behaviors that demonstrate alignment and integration. It should also normalize feedback loops and acknowledge contributions to strategy improvements and implementation successes.

Regulatory and accreditation pressures

The existing regulatory requirements from FLCIE and accreditation standards set by DEAC outline compliance expectations and workload demands as the new institution establishes its foundation and initial operational capacity. According to Eaton (2020), accreditors expect comprehensive and transparent documentation, fulfilling application requirements, and evidence that all standards have been met and any deficiencies addressed. A new institution can view these tasks as obstacles or challenges to institutional innovation. To address these challenges, the IPCP Framework will enhance regulatory compliance by integrating these requirements into a comprehensive operations model, rather than treating them as an add-on task. Established policy

groups will support the development of version-controlled policy documents. Academic committees will generate minutes that support the development of instructional frameworks, courses, and program modifications. Newly created dashboards will track performance trends for self-monitoring and display purposes.

Resource constraints and sequencing

A potential risk involves staffing and budgeting limitations, which are common in startup organizations and could hinder the implementation of the IPCP Framework. It is essential to analyze and plan strategically to minimize the impact. To address this, Burton (2021) proposes an organizational design strategy that emphasizes developing interfaces and establishing decision rights, as this approach enables leverage within smaller teams. Adopting this approach prioritizes the sequence of actions by defining the institution's critical functions and operations. It then involves completing end-to-end process mapping for each, starting with the most vital, and ensuring these are complete. In this process, automation should be applied to high-volume, error-prone steps, such as collecting admissions documents, reviewing assessments, and tracking progress. Developing faculty also produces a compounding return because of the direct link between instruction quality, assessment practices, and student outcomes. These factors directly impact institutional capacity and provide the necessary evidence of regulatory compliance and accreditation for a newly established college or university.

Timeline risk and competing priorities

Established admissions cycles, new course launches, term schedules, and regulatory reporting requirements in higher education institutions create fixed and interdependent deadlines. Within the IPCP Framework, milestones must be coordinated and synchronized with these calendar dates to ensure institutional operations remain efficient and compliant with regulatory

standards. Institutional leadership should maintain a published unified master calendar integrating process mapping, faculty training, procedural updates, and policy reviews concerning academic terms and reporting windows. Coordinating both the external and internal schedules is essential so that all departments understand expectations, interdependencies, and timing triggers. This approach promotes a coordinated, transparent institutional culture, enabling successful cultural change (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Regular monthly reviews will help identify issues with the institution's schedules and eliminate potential obstacles.

Table 9. Operationalized Risk Register for IPCP Implementation

Risk	Root Cause	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Impact (H/M/L)	Owner	Indicators	Mitigation	Contingency	Stage-Gate Trigger
Data Limitations	Limited historical data from new institutional operations	M	H	Director of Institutional Research	Missing or incomplete baseline datasets	Use NCES/IPED S benchmarks and pulse surveys to supplement limited data (Costa, 2024)	Commission external validation audit if metrics remain incomplete after two quarters	<80% KPI data availability by Quarter 2
Cultural Resistance	Faculty unfamiliar with BPM and continuous improvement practices	M	H	Chief Academic Officer	Low participation in change meetings or surveys	Establish governance councils and participatory redesign processes to build ownership (Fullan, 2016)	Add peer champions and targeted workshops if resistance persists	<70% faculty engagement after Phase 1
Accreditation Pressures	New compliance processes and documentation standards	L	H	Accreditation Liaison / Provost	Delays in report submission or document accuracy issues	Embed compliance evidence into daily outputs to reduce reporting burden (Eaton, 2020)	Initiate early review with accreditor support if schedule slips	Any missed semiannual evidence deadline
Resource Constraints	Limited budget and staffing during	H	M	CFO / Operations Director	Budget overages or task backlogs	Prioritize high-impact process mapping and	Temporary resource reallocation or	Cost variance >10% of implementation

Risk	Root Cause	Likelihood (H/M/L)	Impact (H/M/L)	Owner	Indicators	Mitigation	Contingency	Stage-Gate Trigger
	initial launch					automate routine workflows	external contracting	n plan
Timeline Pressures	Overlapping project milestones and academic calendar cycles	M	H	Project Manager	Missed internal deadlines or milestone drift	Synchronize IPCP milestones with academic calendar and hold monthly retrospectives	Extend timeline with adjusted phase sequencing	Two or more missed milestones per quarter

Note. The table operationalizes significant IPCP implementation challenges by identifying root causes, likelihood, impact, ownership, indicators, and planned mitigation and contingency actions with defined stage-gate triggers.

Equity and analytics ethics

Learning analytics dashboards can inadvertently reinforce bias if not designed with equity and transparency, warned Williamson & Kizilcec (2023). To address this challenge, design principles can be implemented to differentiate student groups, identify inequities, and connect metrics with the relevant contextual narratives. Furthermore, faculty and advisors should be trained to use analytics to determine when students need help, rather than solely for surveillance purposes. A key part of the IPCP Framework is developing a data governance charter that outlines the proper and ethical use of data, access permissions, and how students are informed about analytics.

Implications for Practice and Policy

This section translates the IPCP Framework into practical benchmarks for day-to-day implementation. It offers a structured approach to policy development, ensuring the process is sustainable and repeatable across a newly established college or university. From the application perspective, BPM theories link an institution's operational strategy, organizational structure, and process execution by clearly defining decision rights, integrations, and metrics, as noted by

Burton et al. (2020) and reinforced by Dumas et al. (2018). Faculty and instructional practices within the IPCP Framework are grounded in a CBE-aligned model that emphasizes competency mapping, standardized assessment, and structured feedback loops to verify learning outcomes (Voorhees, 2001).

At the institutional level, these practices are reinforced through policy documentation that ensures transparent governance, version control, and evidence-based improvement cycles, aligning with accreditation and regulatory expectations (Eaton, 2020). To maintain fairness and instructional integrity, learning analytics are applied with equity safeguards and clear communication protocols so that dashboards function as formative tools rather than surveillance mechanisms for faculty and students (Williamson & Kizilcec, 2022). Together, these practice-level behaviors and policy-level systems strengthen accountability and demonstrate measurable institutional learning effectiveness.

Implications for practice

The IPCP framework applies the theory of process culture and performance to the practical methods used by institutional management to guide the newly established college. Through structured processes and governance, leaders can more effectively demonstrate how the framework operationalizes theory into practical systems and institutional processes. This subsection provides insights into how principles from the IPCP Framework improve collaboration and alignment across academic and administrative functions. These practices will enable colleges to execute more effective strategic actions with greater consistency, engagement, and improved student outcomes.

Ensuring operating model coherence is a central function of the IPCP Framework, providing a pathway for leaders to link strategy, structure, process, and people, which is crucial

in higher education institutions. This method clarifies key workflows and connects decision rights and performance indicators. Institutional leaders can reduce confusion and accelerate team buy-in and integration. Burton et al. (2020) offer a comprehensive approach to organizational design that aligns with this study's emphasis on practicality, clarity, and fit. This level of alignment enables institutions to translate governance principles into consistent daily operations and long-term institutional stability.

The IPCP Framework also informs faculty work and instructional quality as colleges and universities introducing a CBE-aligned curriculum require competency mapping, assessment processes, and established feedback procedures. As argued by Voorhees (2001), competency-based educational models would become a necessary and leading method of instruction in the future. He supported his argument with contemporary examples from competency-based medical education, as documented by Chou et al. (2017), who demonstrated that practices such as entrustable professional activities and longitudinal performance evidence can be applied across different areas. Based on this, faculty training and professional development should view assessments not only as a grading tool but, more importantly, as the primary driver of student learning through feedback that guides competency improvement. Assessments also provide institutional evidence, offering the necessary artifacts that accreditors rely on for verification of institutional evaluation.

Student support integration within the IPCP Framework focuses on using process mapping to identify management strategies for at-risk students, escalation procedures, and set expectations for service levels regarding student outreach and follow-up. Resolved service issues are also monitored to ensure that identified situations are fully addressed to the student's and the institution's satisfaction. Dashboards designed with caution from Williamson and Kizilcec (2022)

help advisors and faculty detect disengagement early while avoiding stigmatization. By implementing these systems into routine operations, the newly established college fosters a proactive, data-driven support culture that enhances student retention, responsiveness, and trust.

The IPCP Framework enhances institutional effectiveness routines by establishing a consistent cycle for collecting evidence. This will include defined indicators, data collection and validation, documentation of governance forum discussions, improvement decisions, implementation, and documentation. Guidance from Eaton (2020) suggests that these established evidence cycles provide information and artifacts, such as improvements that licensing and accreditors prefer when reviewing new institutions. In doing so, the framework enables institutional leaders to demonstrate accountability and continuous improvement, thereby meeting the expectations of regulatory and accreditation standards.

Implications for policy

At the institutional level, improvements are sustainable when codified into policy. The IPCP framework supports this strategy by linking the components of governance, assessment, data systems, evidence standards, and decision-making pathways. This strategy demonstrates how procedures become enforceable procedures for instructional processes, quality assurance, licensing, and accreditation readiness. These policies ensure accountability, transparency, and institutional development when implemented strategically and systematically.

Developing a transparent governance policy is essential for establishing clear decision-making structures and institutional accountability. Such policies codify decision rights, quorum rules, documentation standards, and a defined process for making changes, applicable to both academics and operations. All meeting minutes should be linked to decisions and related evidence, with clearly defined follow-up responsibilities noted. This policy control structure

ensures that processes remain aligned with institutional objectives, compliance, and accreditation standards.

An assessment and CBE policy provides the foundation for defining skills and competencies, as well as aligned assessment strategies, across courses and programs. The development of these policies should outline the process for establishing clear competencies, mapping them to course outcomes, and detailing the assessment strategy. Additionally, these policies will specify how rubrics are created and used in the grading process, the feedback and instructor response times, the process for resubmitting submissions, and how student work will be archived and potentially used for review and accreditation purposes. These components align with the literature on CBE, and when implemented, will make the assessment process auditable.

A comprehensive data governance and analytics policy, once implemented, should define ownership, establish accuracy standards, outline data usage rules, and provide clear protection protocols. Recommendations by Williamson and Kizilcec (2022) suggest that institutions should help students and faculty understand how it is used for analytical purposes. Explanation documents and support resources should be made readily available for training purposes. A faculty qualifications and development policy establishes the academic and professional standards necessary for instructional quality and institutional capacity. Policies should specify qualifications regarding degree level, subject experience, familiarity with CBE, and professional development requirements. All policies will be created in accordance with state licensing and accreditor requirements to ensure relevance and applicability. By aligning with Fullan's (2016) studies on capacity building, the institution can ensure that professional development remains ongoing and supports its institutional goals and objectives.

An accreditation policy serves as a structural link between institutional processes and evidence for external examination and validation. Policies that connect processes and procedures to evidence artifacts can help to accelerate the self-study part of accreditation. For example, assessment policies might include collecting sample assessments and reviewing records. Another example could be a governance policy accompanied by a library of minutes and decision outcomes, or a policy for the registrar's area that includes transcripts and credit evaluation documents. This archived information can be used for future analysis and as evidence for accreditation purposes. Implementing this policy is crucial for a new institution to transition into a legacy college or university. According to Eaton (2020), such a clear line from policy to evidence is well-received by reviewers and increases confidence in the institution.

Expected Outcomes

Implementing the components of the IPCP Framework's practice and policies enables accurate short-term (Process) projections, including cycle-time reduction and workflow clarity. Medium-term (Change) outcomes focus on faculty engagement and shared governance, while long-term (Performance) outcomes emphasize data-driven reviews and accreditation maturity. A BPM-driven approach can provide clarity, better process alignment, and improved handoff discipline in the short term. This is expected to shorten cycle times and reduce the need for rework, leading to the earlier identification of potential production bottlenecks, enabling quick resolutions and improving student operational and instructional delivery, in line with Dumas et al. (2018) and further supported by Burton et al. (2020). With a CBE-aligned instructional model, assessments become the primary method for tracking student outcomes. As a result, we anticipate more accurate rubrics, more timely feedback, and better mastery of assignments and competency development.

According to Voorhees' (2001) research, these steps improve student persistence and satisfaction rates. By mid-term, we begin to see consistent evidence of governance integration, leading to more routine readiness for relicensing and accreditation, with relevant self-study artifacts and evidence aligning with Eaton's (2020) research. Results will be benchmarked against historical benchmarks, including student retention, course completion rates, satisfaction rates, and faculty-student ratios. According to Williamson & Kizilcec (2022) and reinforced by NCES standards, these would be monitored through equitably designed dashboards to ensure gains are both genuine and fairly distributed. Because evidence from startup institutions is initially limited, these are considered contribution claims, which are supported by triangulated indicators rather than causal assertions (Eaton, 2020; Williamson & Kizilcec, 2022).

Short-term outcomes (0–12 months)

Improving process visibility and reducing cycle time are key short-term outcomes of the initial implementation of the IPCP Framework. Mapping will be completed for admissions-to-enrollment, curriculum development-to-instructional delivery, and student support issues-to-case management and resolution, which should reduce rework and decision timeline. College leadership should expect to quickly identify stuck cases and streamline workflows, resulting in early reductions in cycle times for admissions decisions, transfer credit evaluations, course design to deployment, and the resolution of reported student issues. These gains reflect the immediate benefits of integrating a BPM-led operational model, achieved by removing ambiguity from handoffs and adding clarity to processes and procedures (Dumas et al., 2018; Harmon, 2019; Burton et al., 2020).

Enhancing instructional alignment and feedback quality is another key early outcome expected from the introduction of the IPCP Framework. Training will start with the faculty on

competency mapping and the design of practical assessments. This will be implemented alongside the development assessment policy, which is expected to increase the number of assignments with clearly defined rubrics and also lead to faster feedback. This enhances clarity for students and promotes better engagement, aligning with Voorhees’s (2001) work on CBE and Atuahen’s (2020) findings on the connection between psychological safety research and inclusive, feedback-oriented environments that foster satisfaction and performance.

Establishing baseline performance profiles is a foundational short-term objective that enables the institution to measure its early progress and validate the systems and processes being introduced. By triangulating NCES (2023) benchmarks with institutional dashboards, institutional leaders can establish first-year baselines for key metrics, including retention, course completion success, student satisfaction rates, and faculty workload balance. As emphasized by Johnson (2021) and Watkins (2021), using external data to frame baseline expectations strengthens its legitimacy in building early performance narratives when long-term internal records are unavailable.

Table 10. *IPCP Framework Projected Institutional Outcomes Compared to National Benchmarks*

Indicator	National Benchmark (NCES/IPEDS)	Projected IPCP Year 1	Projected IPCP Year 3
Equity (Retention Gap)	4–5 pp demographic gap (2023)	2–3 pp reduction	≤ 1–2 pp gap maintained
Retention Rate	77.5% (U.S. avg., NCES 2023)	70% baseline	78% target
Graduation Rate	60% average	50% baseline	65% target
Faculty-to-Student Ratio	1:18 average	1:20 baseline	1:17 target
Student Satisfaction	75% average	68% baseline	80% target

Note. This table compares projected outcomes for IPCP implementation with national benchmarks from NCES.

Medium-term outcomes (12–24 months)

Improving student retention and persistence is a key medium-term outcome expected as processes become more standardized and student support procedures are introduced earlier (Eaton, 2020). While the NCES Digest (2023) provides reference data, its primary focus is on initial metrics to establish a baseline and on grouped views to ensure equity improvements across all individual groups and overall gains.

Developing accreditation-readiness evidence is another essential outcome of the IPCP Framework. The routines created through the framework generate artifacts and evidence that licensing authorities and accreditors find valuable. This includes proof of assessments linked to outcomes, governance minutes that show decisions grounded in data, and policy implementation that can be traced through SOPs and dashboards. Aligning policy, practice, and evidence enhances readiness and increases the potential for relicensing and accreditation (Eaton, 2020).

Alongside these structural developments, faculty engagement and innovation are equally critical to medium-term outcomes fostered by the IPCP Framework's emphasis on governance and stakeholder engagement. Establishing faculty committees, review boards, and recognizing process improvement initiatives should increase student engagement. Research by Ezzeddine et al. (2023) indicates that reform acceptance is improved when employees experience structured, predictable, transparent, and participatory change. Similarly, Atuahene (2020) emphasizes the importance of psychological safety in strengthening institutional integration and collaboration between academic and administrative functions, thereby increasing engagement throughout the change initiative and improving mid-term outcomes.

Longer-term outcomes (24–36 months and beyond)

Looking ahead, in the longer term, the maturity of program review and continuous improvement indicates the IPCP Framework's transition from implementation to standardization.

With multiple data cycles, a key will be to shift program reviews beyond compliance to strategic improvement. This will be achieved by using the collected and reviewed data to update course sequences, revise competencies and assessments, and reallocate staff and technology resources to high-volume or high-impact areas. Drawing on Zhao & Xu's (2024) work on a mixed-methods practice approach that combines qualitative insights and quantitative trends will drive design changes.

As institutional capacity and scalability mature, growth is achieved without impacting quality or alignment. Defined processes, aligned culture, and disciplined performance monitoring increase the institution's capacity to scale. Results will be evident in increased enrollments and program offerings, without compromising instructional and administrative quality. Applying organizational design principles, as outlined by Burton (2020), to improve clarity enables scaling with fewer organizational growing pains within new institutions that lack existing infrastructure.

By this stage, evidence-rich accreditation submissions become routine for the institution, demonstrating maturity and growth as a direct result of integrating the IPCP Framework into the college's operating culture. As Eaton (2020) observed, when quality systems are fully integrated, the self-study required for accreditation becomes an exercise in compiling existing evidence. This transition, following Fullan's (2016) emphasis on integrated improvement cycles, reduces staff workload, decreases the need for surprise documentation, and assures reviewers that quality assurance is integrated into the organization rather than being episodic or temporary.

Finally, a note on causality, it is essential to clarify that these projected outcomes, while supported by literature and institutional logic, remain dependent on institutional context and on the quality of integration. A carefully planned implementation of the IPCP Framework is expected to yield improvements across academic and administrative departments, ultimately

leading to positive student outcomes. Every college and university is unique and faces different challenges. Therefore, it is worth noting that results may vary depending on the effectiveness with which this framework is integrated. While these outcomes are plausible, supported by cited literature, and based on projections, the startup institution should refrain from making definitive claims. Instead, leaders should demonstrate contribution and triangulate improvements with qualitative feedback from faculty, staff, and students.

Dissemination of the Project

After outlining the implementation plan and timeline, we now focus on how the IPCP Framework results will be packaged and shared. This information will be used to inform decisions, build trust, and meet evidence expectations for relicensing and accreditation. Internally, quarterly board and executive briefings will review metrics and feedback trends using data-driven dashboards and higher education benchmarks specific to online business colleges. These data reviews will support oversight by governance and decision-making processes, as well as resource planning and allocation (Eaton, 2020; NCES, 2023; Williamson & Kizilcec, 2022). Faculty and staff will be engaged through updates from the Academic Committee, newsletters, and documented reviews highlighting optimal outcomes. This approach will enhance the CBE-led learning culture while remaining aligned with Fullan's (2016) guidance on change leadership, transparency, and celebration.

Externally, semiannual evidence packets will be produced, demonstrating compliance with FLCIE and DEAC standards. These packets will link institutional policies, SOPs, and performance indicators to support process monitoring and identify any necessary refinements, as emphasized by Eaton (2020). All reports will incorporate secondary benchmarks and primary insights in a secondary-first mixed-methods approach, aligned with Costa (2024) and reinforced

by Zhao & Xu, who argue that this approach will ensure claims are credible while remaining appropriately cautious. Finally, dissemination artifacts will follow equity-by-design analytics practices, as outlined by Williamson and Kizilcec (2022), so dashboards explain context, enable grouping, and support improvement rather than serve only surveillance purposes.

Internal audiences and mechanisms

For the board of directors and executive leadership, quarterly IPCP Framework reviews and reports should detail performance, identify risks, and note improvements. Adding an appendix to the dashboard can provide indicator trends and explain data variances. Including a glossary to define key terms, along with explanations of performance indicators and datasets, can help improve understanding and consistency in how data is interpreted and utilized. Any reports generated should cite governance minutes, and policy updates should demonstrate the link between evidence and decision-making.

For faculty and academic staff, monthly Academic Committee meetings should connect the IPCP Framework academic performance improvements, highlight successful courses and programs, review outcomes and adjustments, and discuss student success case studies and opportunities for improvement. Faculty newsletters can spotlight process improvement initiatives by sharing updates on progress or completion, discussing results, and celebrating successful areas or programs, drawing on Fullan's (2016) encouragement to celebrate learning and improvements.

Administrative units, including registrar, admissions, advising, and compliance teams, should receive targeted briefings that connect IPCP Framework improvements to their daily tools and metrics. Cross-functional reviews should surface inter-team dependencies and improvement strategies. To reinforce coordination, a quarterly administrative staff meeting will be established

to discuss institutional priorities, review challenges and proposed resolutions, review divisional statistics, and align quarterly planning. In line with Fullan’s (2016) focus on a collaborative culture, Burton et al. (2020) highlight how structured governance improves communication and accountability, while Eaton (2020) emphasizes that transparent coordination improves institutional alignment and regulatory readiness.

Table 11. *IPCP Dissemination Matrix: Stakeholders, Methods, Frequency, Deliverables, and Purpose*

Audience	Dissemination Method	Frequency	Artifact / Deliverable	Purpose / Expected Outcome
Board of Directors	Quarterly reports and dashboards	Quarterly	Performance reports, governance summaries	Ensure compliance oversight and strategic alignment
Faculty and Staff	Academic Committee updates, newsletters, reviews	Monthly / Quarterly	Meeting minutes, process updates, recognition highlights	Build engagement, transparency, and shared accountability
Administrative Units	Cross-functional briefings and coordination meetings	Quarterly	Division reports, improvement summaries	Improve coordination and operational consistency
Accreditors / Regulators	Evidence packets, policy updates	Semi-annual	Accreditation evidence binder, policy compendium	Demonstrate compliance and readiness for review
External Academic and Professional Community	Conference presentations, practitioner workshops, peer-reviewed publications	Annual / Ongoing	Presentation decks, proceedings, journal articles	Disseminate best practices and contribute to professional scholarship

Note. This table illustrates the dissemination strategy for IPCP results, aligning each stakeholder audience with communication methods, timelines, deliverables, and intended outcomes.

External audiences and mechanisms

For regulators and accreditors, the IPCP Framework will support the development of evidence packets aligned to FLCIE and DEAC expectations. These document packages should be updated semi-annually and include policy documents, process maps, data dashboards, and

examples of how to implement the findings. Through established processes and procedures outlined in BPM-led models, such as the IPCP Framework, routine evidence is more persuasive than hastily compiled documentation.

For the professional practice community, the IPCP Framework will be presented at conferences focused on BPM in education and on learning analytics. Some of these events may include the BPM Conference Series, the upcoming LAK26 Conference, the Online Learning Consortium Innovate Conference, and the QS Reimagine Education Conference & Awards. The diverse selection of conferences will be attended to discuss the IPCP Framework and dashboard design principles for equity and transparency (Dumas et al., 2018; Williamson & Kizilcec, 2022).

For scholarly outlets, practitioner-oriented documents should be developed and designed for peer-reviewed publications, including Educational Management Administration & Leadership (EMAL) and Quality in Higher Education (QHE). Drawing on Costa (2024) and Zhao and Xu (2024), these papers should document the implementation narrative, mixed-methods approach, and early outcomes, providing insight into the methodological structure and integration strategy to contribute to the literature on secondary-first mixed methods in startup institutions. Feedback from these dissemination activities will inform iterative updates to the IPCP Framework, ensuring continuous improvement. In this way, dissemination functions will not only serve as a means of communication but also as a systematic learning process. Insights from the presentations, discussions, and reviews will be synthesized into periodic framework reviews, closing the loop between implementation, evaluation, and refinement. This collaborative process ensures that stakeholders' practical experiences directly influence future revisions, integrating practice with emerging evidence and standards.

Timeline and artifacts

Within three months, publish the IPCP Framework, calendar of key dates for governance, and first process maps. Within six to nine months, deliver the first institutional performance report with a baseline dashboard layout complete and a qualitative context defined. Within twelve to eighteen months, produce an annual quality report for public consumption that summarizes improvements achieved, challenges encountered, and next steps based on institutional objectives. Artifacts and evidence should include process maps, SOPs, checklists, policy updates, example assessments, modification records, dashboard screenshots with explanatory notes, related glossaries, and summaries of faculty development plans and participation.

These dissemination strategies ensure that the IPCP Framework is not only implemented effectively but also maintains transparency and is regarded as a comprehensive approach by internal and external stakeholders. By incorporating feedback loops, reporting, and engagement into standard practices, the new institution positions dissemination as a continuous improvement process that links IPCP Framework implementation outcomes with organizational learning. To assess the impact of these efforts, the effectiveness of the dissemination strategy will be monitored and evaluated through meeting attendance ($\geq 80\%$), implementation of governance recommendations ($\geq 70\%$), and peer-review feedback ratings from conferences or journals.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the IPCP Framework from concept to operational implementation plan. The feasibility and implementation plan outlined a phased approach with transparent processes, governance, and leadership routines. It aimed to foster cultural alignment and establish comprehensive performance-monitoring mechanisms through discipline and

professional development practices. Identified challenges in integrating this plan into a newly established online business college, including data limitations, cultural resistance to change, regulatory pressures, resource shortages, and risks related to schedules and the ethical use of data analytics. These obstacles were managed through mitigation strategies grounded in mixed-methods research using secondary data, organizational design, change leadership, CBE-led instruction, relicensing, and accreditation.

Implications for practice emphasize the integration of the operating model, faculty work, instructional quality, integrated student support, and institutional effectiveness routines, all supported by clear evidence. Policy implications encompass transparent governance, assessment, CBE-instructional policy, data governance and analytics ethics, faculty qualifications and professional development, and alignment with licensing and accreditation standards. Expected outcomes are planned across short-, medium-, and long-term stages, focusing on proven contributions rather than the strength of causal inference. A dissemination plan was developed to detail how internal and external stakeholders will be informed of the initial implementation and how they will receive updates on findings. Details on how evidence and artifacts will be collected and archived to support decision-making and accreditation were also outlined, offering a comprehensive plan for institutional implementation.

This study's design and implementation analysis suggest that adopting the IPCP Framework is likely to improve governance clarity, promote cultural alignment, and strengthen performance monitoring. These improvements have a positive impact on instruction and student outcomes, enhancing accreditation readiness in the startup context examined herein. By integrating processes, change, and performance into a practical operating model, the IPCP Framework offers a replicable strategy for other emerging online institutions to accelerate

institutional capacity while meeting regulatory and accreditation expectations. This contribution presents a theoretical framework that unifies BPM, change leadership, and performance monitoring. It is also practical, providing leaders with a systematic plan, routines, and evidence-based strategies that turn analysis into ongoing institutional improvements.

Overall, this capstone illustrates the development from conceptual design to implementation readiness using the IPCP Framework. Chapter One established the strategic foundation for developing a process-led governance model designed for implementation with new colleges and universities. Chapter Two provided the theoretical and empirical foundation by blending business processes, business process management, change leadership, and performance monitoring. This framework supports the implementation of a competency-based education-led instructional strategy and prepares for institutional accreditation readiness. Chapter Three presents an overview of the mixed-methods approach used to test and guide the development of the new, confirming its workability for implementation. Chapter Four operationalized the IPCP Framework into a feasible implementation plan, improving institutional capacity and alignment with the FLCIE and DEAC standards. The evaluation and implementation plan identifies short-term, medium-term, and longer-term outcomes while addressing feasibility, risk, and dissemination. Together, these chapters demonstrate how structured governance, data-driven improvements, and faculty engagement can establish a sustainable, evidence-rich institution aligned with the FLCIE and DEAC.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Study Title: Integrating a BPM-Led Operating Model in a Newly Established Online Business College

Researcher: Jonathan Lo Bue, Doctor of Business Administration Candidate, South College

Faculty Chair: Michael Brizek, PhD, South College

Purpose of the Study

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines how governance, culture, and performance monitoring can be supported by a Business Process Management (BPM)-led framework, referred to as the IPCP Framework, in newly established online higher education institutions. The purpose of this study is to generate insights that can inform both academic scholarship and practical approaches to accreditation readiness and institutional sustainability.

Procedures

If you agree to participate, you may be asked to take part in a semi-structured interview or complete a short survey. These activities will focus on your experiences and perspectives related to institutional governance, culture, and performance processes. Participation is expected to take approximately 30–45 minutes.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Risks and Benefits

There are minimal risks associated with participation in this study. Some questions may feel reflective or sensitive if they touch on institutional challenges. However, no physical, psychological, legal, or social risks are anticipated. The benefits of participation include contributing to research that may improve institutional practices, governance structures, and accreditation readiness for new online colleges.

Confidentiality

All responses will remain confidential. Data will be anonymized and reported in aggregate form without identifying individual participants. Any quotes used in reporting will be de-identified. All records will be stored securely on password-protected files accessible only to the researcher.

Right to Withdraw

You may discontinue your participation at any point without providing a reason. If you withdraw, any data you have provided will be destroyed and not included in the study.

Questions

If you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher at [your email address]. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the South College Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Dr. Michelle Barnett, IRB Chair, 865-288-8219 or vmengland@south.edu.

Consent Statement

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood this consent form, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to participate in this study voluntarily.

Participant Name (print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for completing this consent form.

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Study Title: Integrating a BPM-Led Operating Model in a Newly Established Online Business College

Researcher: Jonathan Lo Bue, Doctor of Business Administration Candidate, South College

Faculty Chair: Michael Brizek, South College

Introduction Script: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. The purpose of this interview is to explore your perceptions of the challenges and opportunities related to Business Process Management (BPM) and the IPCP Framework in the context of a newly established online business college. Your participation is voluntary, and you may skip any question or withdraw at any time. All responses will be kept confidential and de-identified in the reporting.

Interview Questions (aligned to RQ4):

1. From your perspective, what challenges do you see in implementing BPM-led operating models at this institution?
2. What opportunities do you believe BPM or the IPCP Framework might provide for improving governance, culture, or performance monitoring?
3. How do you feel these approaches align or conflict with existing institutional practices?
4. In what ways might BPM-led models support accreditation readiness and long-term sustainability for this institution?
5. What recommendations would you make for adapting BPM or the IPCP Framework to fit the culture and goals of this college?

6. Is there anything else you would like to share about BPM-led models or institutional processes that we haven't covered?

Protocol Notes: Interviews will be conducted virtually using a secure platform such as Google Meet. Each session will last approximately 30–45 minutes. With participant consent, interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. The researcher will keep written notes during each interview. Questions will be piloted with one colleague before formal administration to ensure clarity and alignment

Researcher Signature: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for completing this interview.

