ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION: Between the Campus and the Capital: A Phenomenological Exploration of the Work of In-house Higher Education Lobbyists

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Higher education institutions and interest groups have public policy priorities, including appropriations (Li, 2017) and other regulatory policy (Natow, 2017). Institutions often hire professionals known as lobbyists to help achieve their policy objectives. These lobbyists serve in a variety of roles, both on campus and at the capital. The extant literature on these in-house higher education lobbyists is often dated (e.g., King, 1975) or focused on the backgrounds (e.g., Ferrin, 2003) or tactics and strategies (e.g., Ferrin, 2005) of those lobbyists. Very little is known about the experiences of in-house higher education lobbyists as to how they experience their work or the roles they play. To address this gap, I explored the experiences of 10 in-house higher education lobbyists working for public, four-year institutions located within a single Midwestern state through semi-structured interviews. To conduct my analysis, I used the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach of Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). The findings of this study suggest that the experiences of in-house higher education lobbyists are influenced greatly by context and shaped by four central factors: (a) the roles and tasks of the lobbyist, (b) the self, (c) the campus, and (d) the capital.