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# Emerging Characteristics of Education Deans' Collaborative Leadership


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# Academic Leadership Journal

Ever increasing opportunities-and demands-for partnerships between P-12 and higher education have created the impetus for deans of education to become collaborative leaders. Deans serve a critical institutional role in charting the direction of a school or college (Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck, 2003), and there is ample research on the general roles and responsibilities and leadership behaviors of education deans that focus on the biographical, structural, and contextual factors affecting their work (e.g., Bowen, 1995; Bright & Richards, 2001; Bruess, McClean, & Sun, 2003; Clifford & Guthrie, 1988; Gardner, 1992; Gmelch, 2002; Gmelch, Wolverton, Hopkins, Merz, & Anderson, 1999; Howey & Zimpher, 1990; Huffman-Joley, 1992; Jackson, 2000; Martin, 1993; Morsink, 1987; Riggs & Huffman, 1989; Thiessen & Howey, 1998; Zimpher, 1995). However, there is scant research on the collaborative methods and approaches that education deans are finding essential to do their job.

Like most deans, those in education learn *on the job*. They might have had previous leadership experience in higher education, and may have been mentored in roles as chairpersons, assistant deans, and/or associate deans. Many have been selected to fill the role of dean because of others' perceptions of their ability to lead teacher education programs. Their position is far reaching. Education deans must be aware of the issues confronting P-12 schools and teacher education, they must be able to handle those issues, and they must be able to advance the field of education with the quality of their programs, faculty, and students. Education deans are expected to energize their faculty, work effectively with colleagues and the community, and provide outcomes that demonstrate the success of their enterprise. Thus, they recognize that they must take on ever increasing responsibility in developing effective collaborative relationships and partnerships (Bruess, McClean, & Sun, 2003).

Leaders oriented to work collaboratively reach out to work with others on tasks or initiatives over time to achieve mutually agreed upon goals for innovative educational and professional development programs (Gross, 1988; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Reeves, 2006). According to Hank Rubin (2002), collaborative leaders possess the ability to be relationship managers between people and institutions who build bridges between the two. They help others connect their personal needs with a shared public purpose, and identify ways to work together to accomplish something bigger and better than any one individual. Collaborative leaders understand how to balance individual personalities with institutional goals. The strategies that leaders use to collaborate with colleagues often parallel the strategies needed to maintain a successful personal relationship (O'Brien, 2002). These strategies are usually built on trust and honesty. Collaborative leaders somehow know how to form relationships with others that are collegial, communicative, egalitarian, respectful, and mutually beneficial.

There is no single style of leadership that works within and across cultural contexts; there are identifiable attributes that contribute to an education dean's ability to collaborate within and across these contexts. For example, Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck (2003) found that academic deans' effectiveness comes from their ability to 1) garner individual and group support; 2) conceptualize and pull ideas together; 3) provide a clear direction for the unit; 4) exemplify fairness and good judgment; and 5) perform the various functions and tasks that support the organization's mission and goals; all of which seem to be important for collaborating successfully. Case studies of collaborative partnerships

indicate that deans are pivotal in building the foundation and trust for relationships to move forward. They do this by visibly supporting the collaborative or partnership, distributing available resources, and providing an entrepreneurial spirit to the enterprise (Busching, Catoe, Medway, Shirley, & Toner, 2000; Goldring & Sims, 2005). Depending on the level of involvement of the education dean and the complexity of the partnership, some deans' roles and responsibilities actually shift because of the time required for meetings, activities, school visitations, proposal writing, and event planning (Stroble & Luka, 1999).

So what is it that deans, specifically education deans, do as collaborative leaders? What are the specific characteristics that appear to be essential to promote collaborative success?

### Theoretical Framework and Methodology

The purpose of this paper is to explore characteristics of four education deans' methods and approaches for forming collaborative initiatives and partnerships. Representing public and private institutions from different parts of the United States that have small, medium-sized, and large student populations, we have served in our positions or similar positions for 13 years or more. Each of us has focused on collaborative leadership practices and has a history of studying the practices of education deans (Authors, 1998-2008). Using Elliot W. Eisner's connoisseurship model (1991, 1998) to form our theoretical framework, we have attempted to determine emerging characteristics of education deans as collaborative leaders. We believe that our exposure over time to our own collaborative leadership experiences, and the experiences of others, enables us to have achieved the necessary experience to be able to reflect on common characteristics across our four collaborative experiences. We are able to be connoisseurs and critics of our own work.

Eisner's connoisseurship model (1991, 1998) promotes the use of a wide array of experiences, understandings, and information to name and appreciate the different dimensions of situations and experiences, and the way they relate to each other. His approach is interpretive, and includes two major components: connoisseurship and criticism (Willis, 2007). A connoisseur is able to identify the different dimensions of situations and experiences, and their relationships; access and analyze a wide array of information; place experiences, understandings, and information in a wider context; and connect experiences with values and commitments in order to see, not merely look, at situations. A connoisseur appreciates a situation and also critiques the same situation to help others see the same qualities because that person's experiences and skills enable him/her to understand the subtle and not-so-subtle aspects of a situation. A connoisseur has achieved enough experience to perceive patterns and make interpretations about specific interests or situations (Eisner, 1991). When a connoisseur shares his/her views with others, that person is serving as a critic by illuminating, interpreting, and appraising the qualities of situations, experiences, and phenomena.

To be both a connoisseur and critic, we need to engage in a continuing exploration of ourselves and others in our arena of practice, and make public our observations through criticism so that others can learn from our experiences and perceptions before engaging in their own work. We need to reflect about our actions, engage in feelings, and be able to make informed and committed judgments.

Although Eisner's qualitative research approach draws from the arts and humanities, and he is focused on using his approach in teacher education, we believe that his approach can apply to studying leadership characteristics when experienced education deans have a schema for understanding the

subtle and not-so-subtle aspects of their situations. His model for studying situations supports our desire to become more aware of the characteristics and qualities that lead to collaborative leadership practices. Leaders who use his model engage in a continuing exploration of self and others, use critical disclosure to enable others to learn from past experiences, reflect about actions and make informed and committed judgments, and work collaboratively with others.

To subscribe to Eisner's connoisseur model, we described, interpreted, evaluated, and identified dominant features and pervasive qualities (or "themes") of our collaborative leadership experiences (Vars, 2002). Each of us developed our own case study of the processes that we used to develop a collaborative initiative in our role as dean. We engaged in an introspective-retrospective account of the strategic evolution of a collaborative or partnership that involved faculty and administrators, school districts, local government, and/or the community.

To meet Eisner's standards of credibility, we sought to have structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy. Our structural corroboration, or support from different types of data, emanated from our individual institutions and various types of data collection. The four collaboratives occurred in institutions that were located in different parts of the United States with different Carnegie Classifications and missions. The collaboratives also had different foci in order to respond to unique institutional needs and interests. We used our own interviews, surveys, focus groups, and student work samples to collect as much information as possible. Our 13 or more years of experience as education deans or directors engaged in collaborative practices enabled us to have consensual validation, or agreement between "competent" others because of the individual and collective schemata developed through practice (Eisner, 1991, 1998).

We followed traditional routes of first serving as tenured faculty and then assuming increasingly more administrative responsibilities before becoming education deans. We were mentored by presidents, provosts, and other deans. We attended leadership in higher education institutes and continue to attend leadership seminars and institutes so that we can continue to learn from others in similar positions and reflect on our own actions, especially given that, as stated previously, we did not have any formal, standardized preparation for our positions. Our case study analyses enabled us to have referential adequacy; the ability to reveal what might otherwise be overlooked, because we saw things that we had not seen after discussing methodological and behavioral patterns across all four experiences (Vars, 2002).

### *Procedures*

We have been meeting two times each year at annual conferences for the last ten years. During one of our exchange sessions about our most recent collaborative initiatives, we realized, but were not certain, that common themes kept emerging. We decided that we should write our own case studies to see if we could identify recurring themes across the four case studies that revealed similar patterns of behavior or thought. In writing our case studies, we described the impetus for exploring the idea, ways in which we involved others, processes that we used to initiate and implement an idea, issues that emerged, and ways for sustaining the initiative.

Once we developed and exchanged our case studies through email, one of us took the lead to write and circulate a list of themes that seemed to emerge, using a combination of axial and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Through e-mail discussions of the themes, we identified 14 themes that cut

across all four case studies. During our next face-to-face meeting, we used the themes as a starting point for developing a set of characteristics that were prevalent in our collaborative initiatives. We identified seven characteristics and, then as a result of feedback from others, we consolidated them into four overarching characteristics. This process took three years.

## **Our Four Case Studies**

The four case studies below include the development of a Changing Suburbs Institute® to help with the education of Hispanic youth, an early college high school, an assistive technology laboratory, and a doctoral program in education. Each of these collaborative initiatives took at least two years to begin implementation and continue today. We wrote our case studies after our collaborative initiatives were launched.

### *Case Study 1*

Sharon (names of deans and institutions are not included for anonymous peer review) works at a small, independent liberal arts college that is surrounded by suburban school districts and small cities, many of which have seen the achievement gap grow because of an influx of Hispanic students. An alumna of the college offered a small grant opportunity to those who developed innovative ideas for the college. Encouraged by the then Interim Provost to write a proposal, Sharon brought together a small group of faculty and administrators from the School of Education to write a proposal. With urging from the donor, the group's grant proposal focused on the changing suburbs because of the college's location and its ability to form potential partnerships with neighboring school districts. The grant was eventually funded.

While our idea sounded doable on paper, we did not really know where it would lead. We spent six months studying our county's changing demographics, and used our findings to work with our then-president to develop a working definition of the changing suburbs. We eventually named this initiative the Changing Suburbs Institute®. CSI is designed to work with nine school districts that have had the largest influx of Hispanic students.

With support from the upper-level administration, we tested our idea with the school district superintendents and influential members of the Hispanic community. While the Hispanic community group was enthusiastic, the school district superintendents were somewhat skeptical about the idea because they had seen so many initiatives pass through their districts, and thought of this as just another underfunded, underdeveloped project by a group of ivy-tower-types. Somewhat discouraged, yet still determined, we moved forward with our plan to host an all-day educational forum that included keynote addresses and an opportunity for college, school district, and community representatives to meet in teams to identify and suggest ideas for addressing challenges specific to the Hispanic population. While costly and under-subscribed, the forum proved to be helpful because we learned that our vision for CSI had merit, yet needed to be expanded to include the parent community. We also learned from our newly established CSI consortium—a group of P-12 teachers and administrators, government officials, and members of community organizations—that, while not interested in driving the agenda for CSI, as originally intended, this group was committed to attending bimonthly meetings if they could use the time to exchange ideas.

For our college vision to become a shared vision with the school districts and community, we needed

to reformulate our original ideas and plans to reflect their needs and interests. We could then cultivate collaborative partners to help promote our goals. By revisiting our vision for CSI, we established four goals: collaboration, teacher development and school leadership development, parent education, and dissemination of information. For collaboration, we established five collaborative groups over time: the Manhattanville Faculty Committee, comprised of education and college faculty to develop, implement, and assess mission, goals, and action plans; the CSI Consortium, comprised of representatives from nine participating school districts and their local community groups to exchange ideas and find solutions for educating Hispanic students; the PDS Advisory Group, comprised of PDS principals and liaisons to develop and implement goals for the PDS network; the PDS Liaison Working Group, comprised of PDS liaisons to work on specific initiatives and challenges within and across PDSs; and the Parent Advisory Group, comprised of school district representatives to plan the annual conference and workshops for parents

To address teacher development and school leadership development, we began to establish professional development schools in each CSI district to promote professional and program development. Each PDS has a faculty liaison who spends two days each week in the school working with teachers and supervising student teachers. Additional full-time faculty work in the schools on, for example, literacy development through multicultural literature and storytelling; science, social studies, and mathematics instruction; the use of the visual arts to develop the writing of poetry; classroom management; and teacher mentoring. To date, eight professional development schools exist in nine school districts. Each PDS has a leadership team that establishes goals and implements and monitors action plans related to the goals in the form of attitudinal surveys, journals, reports, and self-reflective statements. Data collected from the PDSs is indicating growth in teacher development, teacher candidate development, research and inquiry, and student learning. We also continued with our annual educational forum, which included workshops given by teachers and administrators from our PDS schools.

For parent education, we established a Parent Leadership Institute. Parents from the nine CSI districts come to the college for an annual, all-day conference, spoken in Spanish, to learn how to help themselves and others work effectively with the schools. Some of the PDSs also conduct their own parent workshops; also in Spanish. For dissemination of information, we are in the process of creating an online clearinghouse of information about the composition and complexity of the changing suburbs, and challenges and successes in meeting the needs of Hispanic students.

Critical collaborations have included individual conversations and group meetings with upper administration, departmental chairpersons, faculty, PDS liaisons, school district superintendents and principals, and community representatives at different times and in different forums. Also critical has been the collaborative coordination of the director of CSI (appointed under the former upper administration) with the many facets of CSI.

To date, School of Education faculty are involved and committed to the PDSs and CSI, with documentation of success now coming through action research projects. School district faculty and administrators are coming to the college to participate in a wide variety of conferences, workshops, symposia, and meetings. The theme of a newly approved doctoral program in educational leadership is the changing suburbs and small cities with new partnerships established with local educational agencies, and CSI has become the signature community outreach initiative for School of Education.

## Case Study 2

Bill Gates, and others of like mind, find our high schools obsolete. Darlene's previous state has been an active participant in many initiatives seeking to improve high schools to boost graduation rates and increase the number of high school students prepared for postsecondary success. Dedicated funds from the state combined with the contributions of several philanthropic partners, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, resulted in a \$260 million collaboration dedicated to improving the state's high schools.

One outcome of this alliance is a collaboration between an urban, Hispanic-serving master's comprehensive university and a local independent school district that resulted in an early college high school. It began when Darlene was approached by the Gates Foundation to see if her college would consider working with a school district to establish an early college high school. Agreeing to pursue the project, Darlene's college received a \$400,000 grant (\$100,000 per year for four years) from the Gates and Dell Foundations to use for planning and the initial establishment of a school. Criteria for funding required that the school be autonomous, that it remain small with no more than 100 students per grade level, and that student selection give priority to first generation college attendees, representatives of underrepresented peoples, English language learners, and members of low socio-economic families. The goal for students would be completion of the equivalent of an associate's degree, i.e., two years of core university courses, while finishing high school. Since these high school students would be on campus in regular university classrooms, collaboration across campus-especially in the arts and sciences-would be essential.

After the call from the Gates Foundation, Darlene immediately visited with upper administration expecting them to jump at the opportunity to reach out to the very students targeted by the mission of the university. However, Darlene had to meet with them several times before they accepted the collaboration as worthwhile. Once upper administration was supportive enough, Darlene had to convince everyone else on campus that the early college high school would be a good thing. Student Affairs had to trust that having high school students on campus in classes would not lead to graffiti, teen pregnancy, or childish behavior. Arts and Sciences faculties had to be convinced that having the high school students in their classes would not force them to dumb down the curriculum. Faculty Senate had to agree that the university would not be compromised in any way by allowing younger students to share the space.

Once upper administration and campus constituents gave the collaboration their cautious blessing, Darlene began the search for a school district that met the Gates Foundation criteria and was willing to join in this venture. The largest qualified district in the community turned down Darlene's proposal because they had already agreed to partner with a local community college that was also supported by the Gates Foundation. Another district's superintendent said no because he felt Darlene would skim his best students and leave his district with minimal high achievers.

Finally, Darlene found a visionary superintendent and district school board anxious to partner. Once they were on board, the collaboration quickly gathered momentum. True partners, Darlene and the superintendent met regularly and worked together to interview and hire a principal, decide on a curriculum, find space, encourage and explain to parents and students what the school would entail, enroll students, and arrange campus experiences.

Since the president of the university was reluctant to allow the early college students on the campus until they were high school juniors, freshmen and sophomores stay on their high school campus. Their high school teachers focus on college preparation during ninth grade while teaching required curriculum. In 10<sup>th</sup> grade, university faculty teach university core classes on site at the early college high school. Once in 11<sup>th</sup> grade, students attend the university almost full time and take core courses along with other college undergraduates in university classes taught by university faculty. A primary difference between the early college students and other undergraduates at the university is the staff support they receive simultaneously at the high school. When their university classes are over for the day, they return to the early college high school for study, reinforcement, and assistance.

All parties benefit by this collaboration. The school district continues to receive the Average Daily Attendance (ADA) from the state for each child attending school in that district. The district then uses those funds to pay the university tuition for each child in the early college high school. The university benefits through constant enrollment growth of targeted populations, thus, earning formula funded dollars from the state for their campus. Parents benefit because their children receive the equivalent of two years of college tuition free. And, students benefit because they obtain the knowledge and skills they will need to continue their education and/or employment after high school.

The Gates Foundation funding did what it was intended to do-got the university to collaborate with a local school district and across campus to get the program started. Now, however, working together, the local school district and the university have made it possible for the early college high school to continue without outside funding.

### *Case Study 3*

Susan works at a large state research university in a small town surrounded by small and mid-sized communities. Her college houses a program in rehabilitation counseling, which trains master and doctoral level professionals to work with individuals in agencies such as vocational rehabilitation, substance abuse clinics, veterans' hospitals, juvenile detention centers, and other components of the criminal justice system. Many of the clients of these agencies have some form of learning disability. And, since the advent of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA, 1990), which prohibited "discrimination against people with disabilities," schools and universities have been attentive to the need to provide services to those with learning disabilities whether physical or mental. Susan's college, including the Rehabilitation Counseling Program (RCP), is highly committed to living up to the ideals of the ADA.

One component in the training of professionals in rehabilitation counseling is familiarity with assistive technology (AT) computers, software, and principles of universal design. Until the late 1990's, the University's Office of Instructional Technologies oversaw the AT equipped computers on campus, and this office did not make it easy for students to use the equipment; resulting in infrequent usage. Susan was finally able to place the computers at the rear of the College's Educational Technology Center. While these computers provided students with ready access to a Braille reader, a screen enlarger, and voice recognition software, no one was readily available to help students learn to use these machines. Graduate students in the RCP tried to provide assistance, but this help was not consistent or predictable. AT languished until Susan was able to direct some funds into equipment upgrades and hire a graduate student part-time to oversee their usage.



Susan's new provost then issued a call for proposals for new initiatives. Susan thought that this would be an opportunity to build on what they had and develop a model assistive technology program that could provide all teacher education, counseling, and administration students with experiences with assistive technology devices and programs. Further, Susan believed that her college could offer programs for K-12 teachers and administrators, be a resource for parents and university students, *and* conduct research on effective practices. A condition for receiving new monies from the Provost was that colleges had to be willing to come up with an additional 50% of requested dollars. Since this condition meant that a substantial amount of the college's discretionary budget would be directed toward one program, and thus away from others, it was essential that there be wide buy-in across the college.

Susan began with conversations with the department chairs, and was able to build support from all of them for an assistive technology center. Susan then had to pull together individuals to brainstorm what the AT center would look like, how it would be incorporated into all of their programs, how it should be run, *and* how to build support across the campus and community. They wanted to secure this support prior to submitting a proposal to the provost, believing that a broadly endorsed effort had a greater chance of being selected for funding.

It was essential for the college's success that representatives of different groups be involved in early discussions of the proposal. These groups include the student service programs for students with disabilities, the university hospital's programs for the disabled, the community legal aid program, the vocational rehabilitation program, and the Veterans' Hospital. When Susan and the RCP department chair submitted the proposal, they were able to attach a list of the names of individuals and their agencies that supported the effort.

Once successful in their bid, Susan and her department chair established a center for assistive technology education and research along with a statewide advisory board. Using resources provided initially by the provost, they remodeled the center space, upgraded computers and software, installed computer tables that could adjust in height to accommodate those in wheelchairs, and most importantly, conducted a national search for a program coordinator.

All teacher education students now graduate with knowledge and hands-on experience using assistive technology devices for student learning. Students enrolled in counseling and administration programs get similar experiences. There is now an on-line course (Introduction to Assistive Technology) aimed at anyone in the rehabilitation or education fields. The center has been a major attraction at the last three state fairs, is a member of the Department of Education's statewide advisory board on disabilities, has presented at the state school administrators annual meeting, and been a presence at the campuses Disability Awareness Day presentations. The latest addition is a MAT lab – a Mobile Assistive Technology lab. These are a set of specially equipped laptop computers that can be checked out for use in classrooms on campus or offsite for AT training at schools. Student teachers report that they have taken equipment to their schools to work with special needs students and even demonstrate to teachers how to use equipment already available at the school. The MAT lab won the President's Technology in Instruction Award, and the center received its first large grant from the US Office of Education.

Viola works at a land-grant university that is located in an urban center surrounded by farms, ranches, and small towns. The university has recently experienced tremendous growth, with increased emphasis on graduate study and research. Viola was given the charge of working with faculty to develop a doctoral program in education that could contribute to the economic development in the community and state, while not duplicating established programs at other state institutions. It was also important to identify a program that would remain relevant and attractive to students over time. Although the impetus for this program began with a directive from upper administration, collaboration was essential at each stage of the development, approval, and implementation of the program.

Collaboration with faculty was the critical first step because of their role in curriculum/program development and their need for ownership of the idea. Viola's school had begun discussions about the need for a doctoral program, but had decided that proposing such a program was a few years in the future. With the request from upper administration to submit a proposal, collaboration with faculty was necessary for success.

The idea of a doctoral program was presented to the faculty as an opportunity. Incentives such as the addition of four faculty positions made the idea appealing. After some discussion and much debate, a faculty committee was formed to develop a proposal for the program and a leader for the group was appointed. Faculty remained concerned about how this might impact their workloads, but they decided that a successful doctoral program could add value to all of the education programs. The new doctoral program was designed to provide professionals with the expertise to deal with the increasing demand for data-driven decision making, and to provide educators who could help to address workforce-training needs and provide leadership for development of alternative deliveries in education.

Collaboration with community and state leaders was the next step, as it was critical to establish a need for the program and to show how it would contribute to the growth of the state and community, as well as the campus. It was amazing to see how the economic, education, and community leaders stepped forward to provide their support for a doctoral degree that provided options in Institutional Analysis and Occupational and Adult Education. The information they provided allowed us to document that a program was needed to provide access to students who were interested but were place-bound (over 200 students indicated an interest). The options we identified addressed the regional needs and concerns of professionals in education, industry, military, business and government. Leaders from all of these groups provided both written and oral support for the program. This program was recognized as having the potential to contribute to the economic development of the state.

The interdisciplinary approach of the program created opportunities for collaboration with other disciplines and with State agencies, colleges, universities, and all aspects of K-12 systems. Faculty and administrators from across campus, as well as from other campuses indicated that a doctoral program could benefit them and their faculty. For example, faculty and administrators at several of the four-year and two-year institutions in the state immediately saw this as an opportunity to obtain their doctoral degree.

The idea for a program proposal was presented to Viola in October, and the faculty submitted a proposal in January for campus review and approval. The collaborative efforts of many people on campus and in the community made this process a simple one. However, there was much review and debate at the state level. It was interesting to see how the people who had collaborated with

establishing a need and putting together a proposal voiced their support for the proposal. The proposal was officially approved in June.

According to the College Annual report, "...enrollment in the program is expected to meet, if not exceed, the goals of 20 students the first semester." The annual report, a year later, announced that enrollment was actually 30 students that first semester. The next year enrollment reports indicated 52 students had enrolled in the program. Four new faculty positions were created specifically for the program, and were hired the year of the program's implementation. Collaboration has continued to be important, as students and faculty have often focused their research to meet economic development, training and assessment needs that exist in the community and state. Feedback from a constituent-based advisory board has helped to shape changes as the program has evolved.

Several students in the program have received Presidential Doctoral Awards; the first graduate of the program received a post-doctoral appointment with Columbia University; and graduates have provided great feedback about the format and benefits of the program for them professionally as well as personally. The vision that the faculty had for this program was right on target—the program addressed needs and interests that were not being met. The future of the program seems very positive. However, building additional collaborative relationships and maintaining those that are in place will be critical to remain successful.

### Emerging Characteristics

Four overarching characteristics that incorporate the 14 themes (in italics) were identified as we engaged in collaborative work with our colleagues at our respective institutions and in our neighboring communities.

#### 1. *Vision*

We discovered that our vision for our collaborative initiatives evolved within a situation and changed over time as a result of multiple contextually-driven factors. The visions for our collaboratives and partnerships were not imposed, but rather created to fit with both the collaborative and the institution. In other words, *a vision was created that fit with our contexts and was realized incrementally*. For example, Sharon's grant proposal evolved from observations and discussions with key people about the institution's location and surrounding community. The vision for the grant proposal that would take up three to five years to be realized guided the way in which small, specific steps should be taken to build towards the end result. Susan felt that a strong endorsement from all her department chairs was essential before a proposal for an assistive technology center could be developed and forwarded to the provost. She held a series of meetings with the four chairs to talk about possible initiatives and why the one on assistive technology best captured the values and needs of the college. The four chairs came to strongly endorse this initiative and contributed ideas to the final proposal.

We also found that we needed to *enable the concept to grow beyond our own vision*. Collaboration with others altered our visions in unexpected new directions. We realized that we must be open to ways in which the concept can develop and change because of new data, valuable input from others, and new discoveries from other institutions. Sharon found that her institution's professional development schools (PDS) took a life of their own. The principals are using their liaisons differently and are engaging in different projects for their schools. For example, while one principal is focusing on teacher

mentoring, another is focusing on encouraging teacher education students to serve as tutors for the elementary students in all content areas. Also, Sharon now has a formal parent leadership network included with the CSI mission because her community leaders determined that the most pressing issue for such a collaborative was parent involvement.

We also realized that we need to *re-vision the concept as it evolves*. Our original plans had to change to truly reflect what was actually occurring. At the same time, new ideas became part of the plan. Sharon determined that the original school districts involved in CSI are not necessarily the most actively involved, and research in the PDS schools is not necessarily enabling faculty research to focus only on the Hispanic student population. Her internal team has had to rethink the original mission in relation to current realities.

However the vision evolved, we had to believe in it, know how to sell it, and believe in the people who are helping to realize it so that we could *tap resources*, another prominent theme identified. We needed to know how and when to tap into both people and material resources. This led us to recognize the need to take personal, political, and financial risks to develop what were initially at best amorphous ideas that seemed to have potential. We had to solicit help from our colleagues, set aside other demands to focus on a possibility, reach out to potential partners, and request time and resources from our own supervisors. When stumped in trying to create a definition for CSI that would satisfy all parties, Sharon brought in another to help with data crunching that eventually helped solve the problem. Sharon also worked with local teacher centers to get co-sponsorship funds for keynote speakers to help offset the costs of the annual conference. Darlene worked with members of groups such as Kiwanis and the Rotary, encouraging them to provide resources for the early college high school. Susan was able to get the director of the university's instructional technology service to collaborate in making changes to the system-wide computer update process. This enabled those with disabilities to leave a "profile" on an assistive technology computer rather than having it erased each night. Viola worked with her administration to get new faculty positions to help with the doctoral program.

## 2. *Interpersonal/Negotiating Skills*

We found that the quality and types of interpersonal relationships inside and outside our institutions were critical for realizing our vision. We needed to be *responsive to critical persons in the overall organization* by knowing enough about the organization to know who had clout in general and for specific situations to be able to move our agendas forward. Viola had to be responsive to three different groups of critical persons: (1) the president who gave her the charge to develop a doctoral program to respond to economic growth; (2) her faculty to encourage them to embrace the idea earlier than desired, and her faculty leaders to convince them to develop a proposal that would be accepted; and (3) the community and state representatives so that they would support and ultimately approve the idea.

We needed to *work closely with key persons within the unit (school, college, or department) and outside the organization*. Faculty and administrators within our organizations helped to shape and steer our collaboratives' direction, promote it to peers inside and outside the unit, and provide direct involvement of themselves and others in collaborative activities. Our ability to work with leaders from other organizations also affected our collaborative, from responsiveness to emails to providing resources for special projects. Viola's approach of first working closely with faculty to encourage them to accept the idea and then working closely with key representatives outside the institution and within

her organizational structure helped to promote transparency across all constituencies, which ultimately contributed to the program's approval. Darlene formed an advisory board to bring together the school district administration with her college faculty so that, together, they would make decisions about the early college high school. She also worked hard to form a close relationship with the school district superintendent so that they could become close partners in developing the program.

*We had to keep critical persons in the organization informed so that they were willing to support resource needs.* Each of us had to be strategic in what, when, and how we communicated with our key supervisors and institutional leaders so that they had sufficient information to make informed decisions about the resources to support.

We had to be creative in how we “choreographed” our interactions (Arends, Reinhard, & Sivage, 1981) so that we could select and guide the right mix of human and material capital to develop systems that worked. Darlene took small and big risks as she worked with her faculty and administrators to convince them to support a changing focus for her university. She brought together and “choreographed” the many resources inside and outside her organization to create a new concept with the early college high school. Although not always easy, she worked daily at figuring out new and different ways to appeal to university personnel to assume new responsibilities and allow a new concept to grow.

Because the concept of CSI was so new, Sharon met with the president to share her committee's progress with the community's demographic data and involve him in further defining the concept and identifying eligible school districts that met the definition (percentage of population change over specified period of time). She kept her president informed whenever issues arose, and worked closely with his executive vice president to reorganize the School of Education to identify a director to oversee CSI.

We needed to negotiate with every group that was directly or peripherally involved with the collaborative until there was agreement on goals and plans. We used information from our own faculty and administrative teams, our potential partners, other colleagues, and our own research and environmental scans to determine what and how to negotiate for the best possible outcome.

*Particularly important to negotiate were key players' roles and responsibilities to keep them appropriately involved, aware of and respectful of boundaries, and honest about their level of participation and contributions to the partnership.* Sharon was able to consolidate other positions in the School of Education to create an Assistant Dean's position for outreach. A primary responsibility for this position was serving as director of CSI. The person in this position happens to have a business background, specifically with marketing, and brings unique and important perspectives to the collaborative. Because this person does not come from education, the knowledge base and organizational orientation differ from other faculty and administrators inside and outside the organization, particularly school district personnel. As a result, Sharon oversees the PDSs, yet continues to need to negotiate her roles and responsibilities with the PDSs because of differing principal preferences and the growth in PDS schools affiliated with CSI.

Negotiating our own roles and responsibilities required us to be vigilant about protecting ourselves from getting buried in detail, yet not relinquishing so much power that we could not continue to drive the partnership's direction. Darlene worked with her chairpersons about who would be responsible for the courses developed for the high school students. Susan determined that she needed to assign

someone with expertise in disability issues to oversee the early implementation of the assistive technology center. She assigned the chair of the department that included the Rehabilitation Counseling program. Viola negotiated with her faculty about who could make decisions about accepting students for the doctoral program.

Also important was our need to *negotiate between groups* so that all parties were appropriately informed about decisions from other groups to support a collaborative's direction. Sharon found that with a project in a PDS school, there was conflict brewing between the university faculty and elementary school faculty. The biology professor and her undergraduate students who were doing a forensics lesson with all fifth-grade students did not know that one class included the special education students from the self-contained special education class. While seemingly enthusiastic for the project, the special education students did not respond appropriately to their guests. They made comments about the undergraduate students' physical characteristics. As a result, the undergraduate students did not want to return because they did not understand that these were special education students who had difficulty in knowing how to respond appropriately to new learning situations. Sharon had to negotiate between the professor and the school so that the professor would return with her students. Eventually, the principal agreed to work with her teachers and the entire fifth-grade team to establish expectations, and the professor agreed to convince her students to return the school (Author, 2008).

### 3. *Managerial Skills*

*Taking charge of daily challenges* was a recurring theme, and led us to underscore the need for managerial skills to form and sustain collaborative initiatives. We needed to know what, how, and to whom to delegate responsibilities, and we needed to make sure that people did what they were supposed to accomplish. We needed to make sure that we adhered to any written partnership agreements, and we needed to make sure that the costs of the collaborative initiatives did not exceed the benefits.

Also important was the need *keep the concept alive to others* by communicating at every opportunity any progress with our collaborative or partnership concepts. Susan knew that jealousies and suspicions among directors of other campus and community programs for the disabled could sabotage her efforts. She invited them to join an Advisory Committee responsible for crafting a unique role for the assistive technology center. Regularly scheduled meetings provided updates on activities and a venue for their input. Susan was a member of the Advisory Committee and still attends all meetings. Viola used meetings and newsletters to communicate about the doctoral program whenever possible.

We also needed to share the load and *do our homework* to build credibility. By doing what we promised to do, we acquired supporters because we demonstrated that we were sincerely committed to the partnership's success. Because Darlene knew about the mixed reactions to the early college concept, she was determined to do all that she could do to make it work. She chaired the committee that was to determine the direction of the concept. She made sure that she followed up with assignments between meetings so that the committee felt that work was being done on behalf of the collaborative (e.g., writing and circulating minutes, calling and meeting with school district superintendents, collecting data, and developing goals and action plans from the committee's recommendations). She made sure to make it as easy as possible for people to get involved.

### 4. *Confidence*

The ability to *handle criticism from others* was essential because of the change created in our organizations. All four of us have had to contend with criticisms because of changes in personnel, programs, and resources. Viola had to take a lot of criticism when the numbers of students in the beginning class of the doctoral program were large. Instead of seeing this as a validation of the need for the program, several faculty from across campus declared that it was a sign of a program that was “too easy.” One person from another university even wrote a letter that appeared in the local paper, which labeled the program as a “diploma factory”! Viola found herself “biting her tongue” whenever issues arose that did not seem to be issues to her.

We also needed to *have enough confidence to accept disappointments and use them to regroup*. Those who expressed interest in being involved did not attend meetings and events when they said that they would. Speakers turned down invitations. School district and community leaders lost interest because of more pressing matters. Money from constituent groups was not always forthcoming when such funding already has been included in the budget, and grant agencies and donors declined funding requests. We had to figure out ways to turn disappointing news into opportunities to try different approaches.

### Discussion and Implications for Practice

The themes and characteristics that emerged from our case study analysis supports the research on collaborative leadership (Gross, 1988; O’Brien, 2002), Ravid & Handler, 2001; Reeves, 2006), which indicates the need to work strategically over time to build multiple layers of buy-in, support, and guidance. We had to be diligent in trying to read our contexts as carefully as possible, and use our understanding to create or follow-up with possibilities that were mutually supportive of our colleagues and our institutional cultures. We also needed to be flexible in the way that we used our alliances to build and create our collaboratives and partnerships, and we needed to manage our relationships to help our budding collaboratives and partnerships flourish (Rubin, 2002).

Reflective of our understanding of Eisner’s connoisseurship model (1991, 1998; Thompson, 2005), we had a schema for understanding the subtle and not-so-subtle aspects of our situations. We used these understandings to engage in an introspective-retrospective account or critique or what we did to develop themes and overarching characteristics from the case studies that we created. We reflected about our actions, worked collaboratively with each other, and used critical disclosure to enable others to learn from our past experiences.

We found that one needs to allow a vision to grow, have interpersonal and managerial skills, and have confidence to foster collaborative or partnership possibilities. We found that our vision for our initiatives was the result of our collaborative work with others that actually evolved over time. Because collaborative initiatives and partnerships require the contributions of multiple persons and the integration of multiple perspectives, they need leaders who understand that a vision is not necessarily one person’s idea and can heartily adopt, internalize, and communicate such a vision to stakeholders. This supports the research on collaborative leadership that speaks to achieving mutually agreed upon goals (Gross, 1988; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Reeves, 2006).

We needed to relate to others through communication and interactions to increase our organization’s productivity. We needed to work with new and existing relationships that helped develop possibilities

and support our institution (Authors, 2008; Ravid & Handler, 2001; Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck, 2003). We needed to communicate skillfully to help build consensus between individuals and groups involved in our initiatives, similar to Rubin's (2002) concept of relationship managers. We did not always experience consistently smooth transitions as we developed our new professional relationships. We experienced tension and anxiety at times because of the demands from the partnership, the personalities of some involved, and the conflicting demands on our own time and other leaders' time. We realized, though, that we needed to maintain high-quality relationships with key persons within our organizations as we cultivated relationships with those outside the institution so that key persons would support our efforts. This realization helped us to minimize the conflict and disagreement that often occurs with new collaboratives because of the inevitable new mix of people of perspectives (Arends, Reinhard, & Sivage, 1981).

We discovered the importance of being effective and efficient managers of our own organizations so that we had the time to build and sustain new partnerships (Rubin, 2002). We had to deploy and supervise our human, financial and intellectual resources. We had to work judiciously with faculty and managerial teams so that specific tasks and plans could be accomplished.

We also needed to have confidence in our ability to serve effectively. Confidence is a dimension of self-awareness (Goleman, 1995). Studies of self-awareness indicate that our identities come from our own stories or narratives about our experiences and interactions with others. The stories that we tell are a series of tales that describe how our process of gaining self-awareness depends upon our interactions with others (Ashmore & Contrada, 1999; Author, 2008; Bracken & Lamprecht, 2003). In crafting a sense of identity or self-awareness through our interactions with our social environments, we are engaged in a reflective process. We become self-aware as a result of testing the meaning of exchanges with others in the workplace.

Sufficient experience in a leadership position promotes confidence because of multiple opportunities to interact with others and reflect on such interactions in relation to our sense of self. Confidence is what enabled us to do our job because so much of our job requires an ability to "take the heat" from others for all types of decisions.

### *Guidelines for Forming Collaborative Initiatives*

Analysis of our own collaborative leadership efforts led us to identify general implications for practice in relation to developing a vision, working and negotiating with others, providing oversight, and having the confidence to persist. First and foremost, it is critical to believe in the value of the collaborative or partnership; otherwise it will not get enough attention to develop. A vision for a partnership should be co-created and co-developed, and then revisited and revised as frequently as necessary so that it continues to fit with the parts and whole of the institution. We need work hard to know as much as possible about the material and people resources available to tap for different reasons and at different times, and do our best to acquire and allocate resources fairly.

We should use every opportunity to collaborate with others so that there is a critical mass of faculty, administrators, and staff who are invested in the concept. Groups should meet to discuss and further develop the partnership concept. We should do our own 360° for determining what is needed vis-à-vis information, involvement, and decision-making, and be realistic about what we can handle and delegate as appropriate. We cannot be afraid to relinquish authority, yet we need to make sure that we



are still working closely with those responsible for different parts of the partnership. At the same time, we need to be vigilant about monitoring progress.

We need to do our own homework, keep promises, and communicate our enthusiasm for the project through a variety of methods. We should figure out coping strategies for handling controversy, conflict, and criticism, for example, using colleagues (as appropriate), friends, and family to serve as sounding boards and problem-solvers. We also need to share the credit, share the work, and share the spotlight.

### Conclusion

Education deans have the responsibility of ensuring that their schools and colleges offer the best possible program opportunities for their students. As our four case studies indicate, there are many different types of collaboratives and partnerships that can be pursued on- and off-campus to enrich program offerings. Analysis of our experiences revealed that, while reaching out to others to pursue new ideas, we needed to ensure shared visions, cultivate mutually beneficial relationships, manage strategically and efficiently, and sustain and communicate our confidence for the partnership. Additional research through case study analysis on the unique and common roles and responsibilities of education deans will contribute to a better understanding of effective collaborative leadership in teacher education.

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