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A POSITIVE APPROACH TOWARD UNIT FUNCTIONING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A COMPANION DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
at the University of Kentucky

By
Susan T. Berry

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Neal H. Hutchens, Ph.D.
and Jane McEldowney Jensen, Ph.D.

Lexington, Kentucky

2013

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

A POSITIVE APPROACH TOWARD UNIT FUNCTIONING
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

This companion dissertation reports the findings of applied case study research on four community college organizational units that consistently meet or exceed standard performance measures. In addition, prior ample evidence confirms that performance extended significantly beyond what might be explained by available tangible resources alone. The case study contexts are common in higher education in general: a) an external partnership, (b) an ad hoc team, (c) a traditional, cross-divisional service unit, and (d) a grant-funded student service unit.

Emerging positive organizational theory and research show promise for revealing performance-influencing phenomena and behaviors that are not adequately represented in standard measures. Therefore, this collaborative case study research was designed to explore positive influences on the success of the four community college units.

This companion dissertation contains three manuscripts. Chapter 2, a technical report, contains the collaboratively-written synthesis of findings from the four individual case studies. Key findings across the units suggest the influence on performance of: (a) a people-first culture, (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership, and (c) resource richness beyond constrained tangible resources. This collective analysis reveals that leveraging resources for capacity building can help make the difference between an organization that performs adequately and one that performs beyond expectations.

In Chapter Three this researcher examines an individual case study of a community college student support services unit. I found that this unit's culture influences high performance by putting people first, leveraging intangible resources, and providing leaders and all unit members with autonomy and support. I also discovered that relationships, tacit knowledge, diversity, leadership qualities, and traits of unit members when leveraged in combination improved functioning and performance the most.

In Chapter Four, I suggest that the recommendations for high performance made in Chapter Three can be applied to a newly developed virtual coaching network, whose

members provide student services in a virtual environment. The actions recommended to help the network meet what appear to be conflicting administrative goals are: (a) identify unit strengths, (b) connect strengths to the unit mission, (c) develop constructive relationships, and (d) identify and leverage resources.

KEYWORDS: community colleges, organizational functioning, student services, virtual teams, positive organizational scholarship

Susan T. Berry

Student's Signature

August 1, 2013

Date

A POSITIVE APPROACH TOWARD UNIT FUNCTIONING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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DEDICATION

I am very fortunate to have a husband who has not only been tolerant of this dissertation process but also enthusiastic and supportive. In addition, he has oftentimes served as the fifth team member offering writing strategies, his critical thinking skills, and always patience with my busy schedule, dissertation worries, and frequent frustration. Thank you Tom, for everything

I must also include my teammates, Michael, Lewis, and Alissa. We have become more than just colleagues during this process, we are family.

Lastly, I hope my children, Cheryl, Scott, and Sharon along with their children, Ethan, Genna, Owen, and Miles take this achievement as a message that it is never too early or too late to set high goals and call upon others to assist in achieving them.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Growing up, schools and college campuses have provided the most pleasant of my life experiences. From the wonderful teachers I had in elementary and high school to my older sister allowing me to tag along when she worked part time at our local liberal arts college then attended our state flagship university. I am still happiest when I am on a college campus. Perhaps that is why I have appreciated working with a community college system and on a community college campus for over ten years and thank Dr. McCall our System President and Dr. White my college President for providing so many opportunities to further my education. This support comes in the form of time and financial backing for this doctorate program. It is nice to work for an organization that applies its principles and mission to its employees.

The experience of this cohort and team style of learning has brought amazing people into my life, including UK faculty Tricia Ferrigno and Jane Jensen who are superior role models for any woman determined to be a success and Neal Hutchens dedicated to fine scholarship and learning. I am grateful for everything I have learned from you.

The cohort of fellow students and also co-workers taught me more about support, the colleges we work for, and the diversity among those colleges than if I had studied higher education theory for the rest of my life. Finally, the team I became part of to take this final journey with me showed me more about teambuilding and persistence than all the positive research I could muster. I thank you all.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This collaborative dissertation introduces an alternate approach toward community college organizational functioning. This approach suggests that success at the unit level can be influenced by behaviors and traits of its members and leaders not usually considered in an analysis of organizational performance. Each of the four researchers on this collaborative team conducted an individual case study of a high performing community college unit. Chapter Two is an analysis of the results of these four case studies and is one of three manuscripts incorporated into this dissertation.

The research team members are all part of a doctoral cohort Ed.D. program from the University of Kentucky developed as part of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). The intent of the project is to collaboratively redesign the Ed.D. and to make it a stronger and more relevant degree for academic leaders and professional staff for the nation's schools and colleges. CPED has determined that the professional doctorate in education prepares educators for the application of appropriate and specific practices, the generation of new knowledge, and for the stewardship of the profession.

Chapter Two, "The Dynamics of Abundance: Superior Performance in Four Community College Units," describes the collected findings of case studies about an adult education program (Burke, 2013), a college accreditation team (Young, 2013), a community college library (Stapleton, 2013) and a grant-funded federal TRIO program (Berry, 2013). Lewis Burke Jr., Alissa Young, Michael Stapleton, and I became a team later than most teams in our cohort. With no predetermined topic, we searched to find an interest of concern to all of us regarding community college issues. After discovering

relatively new research flowing from the birth of positive psychology, we became interested in how community college units function well and what influences high performance (Cameron, 2003). The specifics of the research design evolved from growing familiarity with a grounded theory of community college functioning that focuses on the positive aspects of college functioning (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, & Strickland, 2009; Shults, 2008). The technical report, Chapter Two, explains how positive attributes and behaviors of leaders and members of community college units can influence high performance and increase opportunities for success.

Chapter Three entitled "If Students Succeed, We Succeed: Positive Workplace Dynamics in an Extraordinary Student Support Services Unit" describes the research and findings of the single case study conducted for this dissertation. Three major influences were found to contribute to this unit's success. They are a cultural legacy of autonomy and support, the expectation and unified vision of success, and the proactive development and leveraging of resources.

Chapter Four "Enhancing Team Dynamics in a Community College Virtual Coaching Network" is a discussion about some lessons learned regarding student services in Chapter Three to another functioning unit, a group of virtual coaches who act as advisors and mentors to students taking all online courses from Learn on Demand.

In Chapter Five, I discuss the process and implications of working with a team on such an extensive project. I describe the life-altering effects of participating in this program.

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Chapter 2

The Dynamics of Abundance: Exceptional Performance in Four Community College Units

Susan T. Berry; Lewis Howard Burke, Jr.; R. Michael Stapleton; Alissa L. Young

Executive Summary

In this technical report, the authors synthesize findings from four case studies of factors that influence exceptional performance of community college organizational units. The authors show how the units achieved their successes despite resource constraints, external circumstances, and extreme internal pressures. These units demonstrate that constraints need not hinder achievement of excellence.

Community colleges are responsible to their stakeholders for multiple missions (Dougherty, 1994) as well as for meeting performance and accreditation targets. Economic pressures and significant shifts in students' expectations have created simultaneous conditions of constraint and opportunity. Traditional approaches to performance enhancement have become insufficient to meet current constraints and to adapt to shifts in stakeholder expectations. Thus, colleges must adopt new approaches and ways of thinking in order to develop the capacity to thrive in a shifting, uncertain environment (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, & Strickland, 2009).

The cases, selected from four community colleges, represent four types of functional organization: (a) a partnership with an external entity; (b) an ad hoc team; (c) a grant-funded student service unit; and (d) a traditional service unit that crosses divisional boundaries. Data was collected from all four cases using similar methods of collection and a common interview protocol. A constant comparison method of analysis

was used within and between the individual cases to identify common and contrasting findings across the four units.

Key Findings

Analysis of findings from the units revealed numerous positive organizational dynamics that influenced exceptional performance. We assigned these dynamics to three broad themes or categories: culture, leadership, and resources. The ability of each unit to perform well depended on: (a) a people-first culture, (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership, and (c) resource richness. Unit leaders and members fostered these positive dynamics by thinking differently about culture, leadership, and resources. As a unifying influence, unit members shared a compelling vision of the future from which they derived purpose, motivation, and meaning. Unit leaders and members translated these positive dynamics into actions and behaviors through informal mission statements embodied in audacious goals. We summarize these findings in Table 2.1 on the following page.

Table 2.1
Positive Organizational Dynamics That Influence Exceptional Unit-Level Performance

Theme	Organizational Dynamic
People-first culture	Units are characterized by a culture that values people as people. Unit directors and supervisors follow traditional methods of authority, but also introduce and foster a people-first mindset. Unit members described a sense of professional community and trust, extending in some cases to a personal, or "extended family" level.
Authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership	Leaders are found at all levels of the unit. Leaders articulate the formal mission in terms of audacious goals, and the resulting informal mission becomes a strong motivation among unit members. Unit members share a clear vision that transcends the formal mission. Unit members expressed a sense of higher purpose. The units' formal leaders and members seemed to understand these things implicitly through experience rather than deriving them from formal professional development.
Rich resources	Units demonstrated a capacity to build synergistic relationships that allow them to amplify their efforts and make more resources available to the unit. Unit members did not allow resource constraints to be the "ceiling" of ability to perform. Instead, they actively identified and developed their intangible resources. The capacity to develop all available resources served as a lever that amplified performance and attracted new resources and people.

Recommendations

We compared and contrasted these themes across the four cases to develop a picture of organizational functioning that can be extended to other community college units. We found unit excellence to depend on broad views of culture, leadership, and resources that move beyond simple cause-and-effect calculations typically used in unit evaluation and assessment. Our highly-contextual findings cannot be condensed into a step-by-step manual for excellence. However, the following suggestions may help community college practitioners learn to broaden views and build capacity in their own contexts.

- Superior performance requires more than hard work—it also requires the ability to build capacity.
- Whether plentiful or not, tangible resources can charm attention away from capacity-building ways of thinking required to produce excellence.
- Intangible resources—culture, leadership, and ability to build capacity—are required to achieve aspirations of excellence.
- Patience is required because ways of thinking and perceiving can take time to change.
- People are much more than units of functional output. Valuing people as people creates supportive contexts for excellence.

Introduction

Higher education is in a people business. It is unique in that we develop longstanding relationships not only with the stakeholders who fund us, study us, or employ our students, but also with the students themselves. We spend vast resources trying to determine the best way to move students through the pipeline so they emerge educated and employable. Rarely do we study our own organizational dynamics (Bastedo, 2012). When we do, we often concentrate on our plans and deficits, and how we will find the money to meet our goals. As Caza and Caza (2008) assert, most research in organizational studies concentrates on solving problems. We report our performance to our stakeholders according to parameters they define. These measures do not effectively capture the range of organizational dynamics that affect performance (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003a).

In contrast, this research study was designed to understand the organizational dynamics of community college units that have performed with excellence that in some cases was unexpected, given the circumstances. The study offers an alternative to a prevalent view of resources that makes superior performance contingent on greater amounts of tangible resources. Consistent with emerging research into organizational and individual dynamics, this study shows that the most powerful drivers of performance are ways of thinking that build organizational capacity and allow for unexpectedly excellent performance despite constraints. To understand this, we analyzed the findings from four case studies on successful community college organizational units to learn how some of our most productive entities have achieved extraordinary levels of functioning and performance.

Our positive research perspective draws from positive psychology research (Peterson, 2006) and its extension to the workplace (Alfred et al., 2009; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003b; Luthans, 2002a; Luthans & Avolio, 2009; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). These are explained in detail in Appendix D and discussed throughout this report. We engaged this positive perspective to understand the performance of four successful community college units. Our goal was to identify influences shown in the positive organizational literature to contribute to above-average performance. Each member of this research team chose a community college organizational unit (a) that has performed well (or above average) using standard measures of performance and (b) for which significant aspects of the unit's successful performance are not adequately represented by standard measures nor easily attributed solely to levels of tangible resources.

Analysis of these four cases reveals how tapping readily-available, but often-underutilized, resources can influence overall performance and even attract additional tangible resources to a unit. It shows how these units achieved their success through the ability to amplify existing resources beyond expectations. Examples of resources in these cases include recognizing the leadership capacity of all members of a unit; the importance of sustaining a simple, shared vision that transcends the formal mission of the unit; and maintaining a positive organizational environment in which people come first.

This research builds on a study by Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, and Strickland (2009) who interviewed community college presidents to better understand and account for college performance. They found the primary determinant of excellence to be the amplification of resources through *leveraging*. That is, high-performing community colleges have the ability to identify and optimally deploy all available resources. This

ability rests on a central commitment of formal leaders to "building the strategic capabilities in staff" (p. 252) that fosters a capacity to "work differently" (p. 252).

Alfred et al. (2009) conducted their research at the institutional level through the perspective of senior leadership. Their research yielded the Community College Abundance Model (CCAM) that ranks a college's capacity to achieve abundance, as defined above. They also observed that community college leaders might be easily tempted, when confronted with a barrage of constraints and accountability requirements, to focus on growth and efficiency to meet performance goals. However, they conclude, "Working harder and faster will not get your college to abundance, but investing in people and working differently will" (p. 252).

Existing research on positive organizational functioning in community colleges stops short of explaining exceptional outcomes at the unit level or describing the dynamics that influence excellence. However, the work of community colleges is performed in organizational units collaborating within the institution and with external partners. Thus, our research emerges from an interest in investigating how the CCAM findings apply at the level of the organizational unit—where the actual work of a college takes place.

Based on their findings, Alfred et al. (2009) hold that building the capacity to amplify resources and to work differently requires community colleges, leaders, and staff to "think differently" (p. 252) about four aspects of the organization: performance, resources, the organization itself, and leadership. Our study of each of the cases selected examined the intentional capacity-building achieved in the units in each of the four aspects.

Thinking differently about performance means more than working harder or more efficiently—although those things are essential. In what ways do these community college units enhance performance beyond efficient effort?

Thinking differently about resources means recognizing intangibles as the means by which efforts can be amplified as an organization moves toward purpose-defined outcomes that exceed expectations. Intangibles include valuable traits, knowledge, and behaviors that are not easily measured (e.g., resilience that enables a student to persist and graduate in the midst of a personal crisis). In what ways do these community college units value and build upon intangible resources?

Thinking differently about the organization means living out the belief that people come first. In what ways do these community college units develop relationships, rather than interchangeable parts, and recognize the efforts of many leaders who are empowered with autonomy and support?

Thinking differently about leadership means understanding that there are many leaders in a high-performing organization. Formal and informal leaders with positive characteristics need to be present and, if not, developed and enhanced in those with the decision-making responsibility. In what ways do these community college units control personal resources—ways of thinking and being—that can be changed and developed? These resources are attributes and traits that can contribute to unit-level excellence as easily as they hinder or are merely neutral.

In addition, emerging streams of positive organizational theory and research have shown promise for focusing on what is best about organizations and individuals. These include positive organizational scholarship, positive organizational behavior, and positive

psychology. The positive research orientation presents opportunities to think differently about organizational performance. It augments familiar approaches by expanding the range of desirable outcomes and success indicators to include behaviors and characteristics that foster individual and organizational flourishing (Cameron et al., 2003a; Caza & Caza, 2008) as well as psychological capacities that influence individual and organizational outcomes.

These emerging streams of theory and research reveal new ways of thinking about individual and organizational performance. Scholars and researchers in these areas deliberately adopt a positive framework for understanding success in organizations. Through a focus on phenomena and behaviors that promote flourishing and vitality in the workplace, researchers have begun to discover correspondence between positive organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003b), positive organizational behavior (Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), positive psychology (Peterson, 2006; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Thus, in exploring the exemplary performance of the units described here, we applied the concepts of positive organizational theory to create a lens through which to investigate successful organizational functioning. In this research report, we consider three areas of focus in the positive literature: positive leadership, perspectives on resource development that build organizational capacity through resource amplification, and the presence or enhancement of psychological capital. Collectively, these are shown to promote phenomena and conditions that (a) enable individuals to be at their best (Cameron et al., 2003a; Peterson, 2006), (b) buffer the effects of trauma and uncertainty

(Cameron & Caza, 2004; Weick, 2003), and (c) create workplaces in which people are valued as people and all available resources are maximized (Alfred et al., 2009).

Background of the Study

During our coursework and within our professional roles, our research team was aware of one such positive framework for examining institutional performance—appreciative inquiry (AI). During our doctoral coursework, as members of different research teams, we conducted pilot studies using protocols informed by AI. In addition, as employees of KCTCS, we knew that AI had been integrated to frame ongoing strategic planning cycle discussions in positive ways. AI was also being introduced throughout the colleges as a supportive framework for numerous, significant initiatives planned for the coming years. Thus, when as a team of doctoral candidates we began to design the four case studies that are the subjects of this multiple-case analysis, we decided that an appreciative approach would be a good fit for our own positive research orientation.

A second influence was our experience of the implementation of AI across our colleges and system-office. Four-day workshops, designed around an AI approach to organizational development (Watkins & Mohr, 2001), were held with the intent to produce two certified AI trainers from each college. These would return to their home colleges, train others, and apply appreciative practices college-wide. Appreciative inquiry was thus intended to become the foundation of an organizational culture that would sustain significant, coming organizational changes. Although the training raised awareness of positive approaches to change, cultural changes have not trickled down as hoped—or at least not as quickly as hoped. For the most part, colleges that did not already have an appreciative culture have not changed much. Instead, traditional,

discrete accountability measures still seem to have the strongest influence on planning and processes.

All participants in the trainings received Watkins and Mohr's (2001) *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* as a suggested framework for developing the Transformation Initiatives mentioned. The authors list six freedoms or essential conditions of AI that echo the positive organizational literature:

1. Freedom to be known as a human being rather than merely for the role performed;
2. Freedom to be heard and not ignored—to voice information, ideas, and innovations;
3. Freedom to dream in community and at all levels in the organization, creating organizations as safe places where large, diverse groups can dream together;
4. Freedom to choose to contribute—an act that liberates power and leads to commitment and a hunger for learning;
5. Freedom to act with support in a climate of positive interdependence, thus feeling safe to experiment, innovate, and learn;
6. Freedom to be positive, to have fun, and to be happy—conditions that are not often the norm.

According to Watkins and Mohr (2001), when these six AI conditions are present, they create a self-perpetuating momentum for positive change. This individual and organizational momentum bears a resemblance to the positive, self-reinforcing *spirals of flourishing* that result from organizational virtuousness (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Froman, 2010).

Research Questions

Our interest in the positive, people-focused aims of AI provided an excellent foundation for our curiosity about the positive research orientation. In addition, our experience of the AI trainings within our own workplaces led us to wonder about

organizational units that were already performing at very high levels—before they received the training. To inform the research described in this chapter, we settled on a conceptual lens similar to AI, but more broad in scope. We draw from multiple related positive organizational literatures, described earlier, that focus on positive phenomena, behaviors, and traits in the workplace.

Accordingly, we were interested in how positive influences in the organizational units support extraordinary success. Our research team designed each of the studies to have a positive research orientation, similar research questions, and virtually-identical protocols. As a result, we asked questions of the case study findings from a shared positive research perspective. For example, what happens when an organizational unit leader prioritizes the development of unit members' psychological capital? How are bold, shared visions of desired unit outcomes related to performance? How do unit leaders influence unit culture? To what do members of successful units attribute their success? Do members of these units value people and intangible resources above tangible resources? If so, how are these values shaped, communicated, and perpetuated? What influences do positive organizational behaviors and psychological capital have on culture and performance in the unit? How do successful units acquire the capacity to perform exceptionally? Are successful units solely dependent on tangible resources, or are other influences at work? In successful units, how are positive behaviors and traits developed and nurtured? In what ways do these affect the performance?

To frame this multiple-case analysis and to connect it to emerging research on positive workplaces, we asked the following research questions:

- What positive organizational dynamics are found in the case studies chosen for this analysis?

- How do these dynamics influence unit performance?
- What outcomes, capabilities, and characteristics do unit members value that are not typically considered as performance measures?
- How is leadership perceived and practiced in the units?
- How are resources identified, prioritized, developed, and deployed? Which resources are valued the most?
- How do perspectives toward the recognition and use of intangible resources influence performance?
- How does psychological capital, or any of its four components, contribute to the successful functioning of these units?

Methods

During our team discussions about our research design, we decided to concentrate on functional or organizational units. Several reasons informed this choice. Small organizational entities seemed a narrow enough focus to be compatible with our research timeframe. More importantly, understanding team and group functioning is important because the everyday work of community colleges is performed in these contexts. However, we found that most positive-oriented research had been conducted at either the individual or the institutional level (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Few studies existed in the private sector, and the positive literature is virtually silent on higher education groups and teams.

In addition to timeframe and importance of group-level functioning, our decisions were influenced by contextual factors. Each member of our research team works in a community college, and personal and professional knowledge informed each member's ability to choose organizational units that have already been recognized as successful. To support the group research component of our study, we adopted a common research protocol the four individual case studies (Appendix A). Additional prompts were used to

elicit information about interviewees' perceptions about positive dynamics such as vision, relationships, trust, leader expectations, and behaviors.

We chose units of different kinds, one for each researcher, judging that the differences could provide a broader data set out of which to synthesize findings across the four cases. The four units represent common organizational structures within community colleges and in higher education generally, potentially extending the applicability of our findings beyond the boundaries of the four individual case studies and the cross-case analysis reported here. We continued to discover the full value of choosing four separate cases at the unit level as this analysis progressed.

We chose case study method for the individual research studies because it is useful for answering questions of how and why when observing a "contemporary set of events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). A unit of analysis, or case, can be an "individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Case study theorists agree that *boundedness* is a distinguishing characteristic of a case (Merriam, 1998). Boundedness denotes a clear idea about what is included in the case and what is not. We defined the bounds of each case analyzed for this report by limiting the number of participants interviewed and by restricting the data collection period.

To increase the validity, quality, and trustworthiness of the analysis, we used accepted qualitative research methods. The data collected for the individual studies primarily included participant data supported by documents and on-site observations. In addition to multiple data sources, our team engaged multiple reviewers and member checking (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). For example, as data was gathered

from the individual cases, we continuously discussed the findings to discern themes, account for unexpected findings, and consider rival explanations. The discussions continued during the development of the individual case analyses and throughout the analysis of the four cases together.

The diversity of our research team strengthened the collaborative analysis. Our varied strengths, professional experiences, life stories, roles as community college employees, and interests in our cases assured varying perspectives. The balance and insights in the conclusions reflect our diversity. In addition, our diversity and familiarity with community college functioning informed our thinking as we operationalized our findings into realistic implications and recommendations.

Tour of the Individual Case Sites

The units contributing to the case studies described below belong to four different colleges in the same 16-college state community college system. While governed by the same state and system-wide regulations, each college maintains individual accreditation and status as an independent college. The investigative team chose these community college units based on two criteria: (a) the unit performs well or above average relative to standard measures of performance and (b) the unit appears to demonstrate additional performance criteria that include positive workplace dynamics and desirable organizational outcomes consistent with this study's positive conceptual framework.

External partnership unit. The first unit studied exists as the result of a partnership between a secondary public school system and a local community college. The secondary school system has a district wide enrollment of over 100,000 students. Its post-secondary partner, a two-year public college located in the same urban community,

enrolls upwards of 15,000 students per semester. The purpose of the partnership is to promote the transition of adult education students into community college by improving mathematics, reading, and writing for students whose college placement scores fall below the minimum requirements.

This unit was chosen for study because of its national recognition as a model partnership. A national report funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education highlighted the collaborative approach of this program as a national model of practices to help improve participation and persistence in adult education (Tolbert, 2005). The authors noted, "Partnerships and leveraged resources also have helped programs expand their services and address the needs of specific populations" (Tolbert, 2005, p. 9). Alfred et al. (2009) identify external partnerships as capacity-building levers that amplify tangible resources and lead to improved performance.

Ad hoc committee. The second unit chosen for study was an accreditation preparation team located at a rural, public two-year degree granting institution that serves approximately 7,500 students. This ad hoc team, established for a specific amount of time, was tasked with preparing the institution to complete the accreditation process that includes conducting a self-study of the institution to ensure compliance with the accreditation organization's principles.

This unit was chosen because the evaluation of their accreditation report yielded zero recommendations for improving this institution. This was one of the first institutions within the state community college system to complete the reaffirmation process with no recommendations for improvement. Given the enormity and complexity

of the reaffirmation process, having received no recommendations for improvement distinguishes this ad hoc team as a high-performing unit. Additional reasons for choosing this unit include the investigator's knowledge of and experience with the accreditation process having served on accreditation review teams and her acquaintance with members of the chosen unit.

College-wide service unit. The third unit chosen for study, a community college library, serves one of the larger community colleges in the state system. The service area includes six campuses and enrolls approximately 12,000 students each semester representing over 100 counties. The library chosen for study resides in the main academic building of the primary college campus. This location is in close proximity to classrooms, administrative and student services offices, and student commons. As many as 1,800 students visit the library on peak days. As a result, many faculty and administrators describe it as the largest classroom on campus.

This library was chosen because it consistently accomplishes its mission and goals related to serving students, faculty, and staff as rated by its constituent groups in annual satisfaction surveys. Library surveys and college exit surveys indicate similar high levels of satisfaction with library services across a wide range of services (Stapleton, 2013). In addition, the professional role over several years has acquainted the researcher with the personnel and the environment, observing many of the phenomena, behaviors, and traits that are the subjects of research in the positive literature.

Grant-supported student service unit. The fourth unit chosen for study is funded by a federal Student Support Services (SSS) or "TRIO" grant. It serves a mid-sized community college with a large rural service area including a military installation.

The unit assists low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline during their undergraduate study. The unit provides a small number of qualifying students with services similar to those offered to the general student population, such as academic advising and tutoring. Unlike the campus-wide services, this unit provides its student population with a single physical environment for study, socializing, and academic assistance.

This unit was selected because it has consistently ranked within the top 10% of similar programs nation-wide, enabling it to receive continuing grant funding for twelve years. Similar to national and longitudinal measures of persistence, retention, and graduation, the SSS participants in this unit are more likely to: (a) remain enrolled in higher education, (b) accrue more college credits, and (c) earn higher grade point averages when compared to similarly qualified students who do not participate in the program (Chaney, Muraskin, Calahan, & Rak, 1997). The investigator chose this unit because it met the research design requirements and because the investigator, through familiarity with the unit, identified exceptional performance not revealed by performance evaluation. In addition, the investigator understands the purposes and functions of SSS and the demands of meeting grant performance standards for continued funding eligibility.

Exploration of Four Cases

The four members of the research team communicated with each other during the collection and analysis phase of their individual case studies. As preliminary data analysis proceeded, the team members used the findings derived from the individual case studies and through conversations, reviews of each other's writings, and brainstorming

sessions proceeded to shape an overarching analysis. Approaches included comparing findings and developing themes, rearranging the themes in different configurations, and finding contrasts between the unit themes and characteristics. As the analysis deepened, members of the research team found connections that distinguish this study's findings from studies conducted on larger organizations such as entire community colleges.

We discovered that the unit level reaches into resources often invisible to or ignored by leaders at higher levels of functioning and thus can increase performance capacity in unexpected ways. The variety of units provided us some common ground across units and revealed that some practices often thought to influence success, had little bearing on our units' success and yet other practices and attitudes often identified as neutral or unimportant had a huge effect on successful performance. The diversity of units who function in community colleges and higher education institutions in general are almost limitless so providing a small snapshot of that diversity proved valuable to this study and future research.

We proposed that discussion and review of each other's findings would reduce potential negative impacts of researcher bias or assumptions. In addition, collective analysis was broadened and deepened as we—who are community college employees ourselves—shared development of findings. In addition, we considered how our current roles and areas of responsibility as community college employees might influence the analysis of the findings. We each addressed this concern by using triangulation through interviews, observations, and documents.

Findings and Discussion

Review of the case findings shows three significant areas that influence the success of these units: (a) a culture showing commitment to a unified vision that enhances each member's sense of purpose and appreciates his or her contributions, (b) leadership traits and behaviors including trust-building that enhance and build upon a cohesive culture, and (c) leaders who value and enhance resources including intangible resources.

Although these are major themes from our units, they are not discrete categories. In our units that function successfully, they occur in intricate combinations. For example, culture influences personnel behaviors. Concurrently, leaders and unit members influence the culture through their actions, thereby effecting constant—although mostly minute—shifts in the culture. All unit members, regardless of formal or informal leadership role, learn, think, and grow continuously, thereby affecting how they influence everyone around them. In addition, as leaders receive feedback from the effects of how they use resources, they learn that some things work better than others do in the unit. This learning suggests new ways to leverage what they have.

People-First Culture

Bolman and Deal (2003) observe that "some people argue that organizations *have* cultures; others insist that organizations *are* cultures" (p. 243). Behaviors provide clues about the essential natures of cultures. The participants in the four units spoke at length about their behaviors and perceptions. These provided the researchers with clues about the reciprocal influences of behaviors and context. The participants' actions and characteristics formed the cultures of their units, and the unit cultures influenced the

participants. The members themselves are not cultures but rather *have* cultures both as culture-builders and as recipients of unit-level culture. Thus, we argue that the essential question about our units' cultures is not what they *are* but what the members *do*, or "the way we do things around here" (1982, p. 4).

Central to our findings in all four units was leadership as a leadership disposition or "organizational state and a mind-set" (Shults, 2008, p. 148) that regards people as the units' most valuable resource. This disposition results in behaviors that treat people *as people* rather than as functional units for performing job descriptions. This disposition is an intangible resource that enables behaviors and capacities that in turn become levers for resource amplification and improved performance (Alfred et al., 2009). The members' behaviors also create a feedback loop that strengthens member commitment to the units' values and reinforces positive behaviors. In consequence, the units may be described as *enabling workplaces* (Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Park, 2006).

In each unit, the members were committed to a unified vision and reported that this shared vision provided them with a sense of purpose. In addition to collective vision and individual purpose, participants described a sense of accountability. The influences of vision, purpose, and accountability interactively influenced participants' determination to achieve the vision and fulfill individual purpose.

Despite many similarities in their ability to achieve high performance, study participants in the four units described their cultures differently. This is not surprising, because a unit's culture is, among other things, an expression of its purpose and mission. Members of the adult education unit cited trust and collaboration as significant parts of their culture, whereas the accreditation team described a culture of excellence. Library

personnel exhibited pride in their unit's service and professionalism, whereas student services personnel emphasized commitment to students first. In the adult education external partnership, the importance of sustaining a committed culture based on relationships and trust was particularly interesting. Working together to develop an entirely new model of adult and college developmental education, the leaders of each "side" of the partnership created an innovative design that transformed a culture of competition into a culture of collaboration. These leaders continued their commitment through purposeful engagement and kept their personal commitments for ten years, renewing that commitment annually.

In each unit, unit members who deal directly with students emphasized the importance of relationships within the unit including a culture of care and support. For example, relationships among library staff helped them deal with sudden death of staff family members, and the grant unit's welcoming atmosphere influenced student success and employee satisfaction. This welcoming atmosphere was the result of a legacy, honored and sustained during the transition from the first unit director and passed down to the next leader, finally evolving into a legacy that she expanded to include students. As with the centerpiece of trust and purposeful engagement found in the adult education culture, the focus of autonomy and support exists among all of our units, even if not described as such.

The accreditation team and the college it represents demonstrated two cultural distinctives: (a) a culture of excellence and (b) a culture of evidence. In other words, superior performance was expected, and decisions were informed with evidence. A team member reported that the "use of gathering and monitoring data is not episodic. It is part

of the culture." Another team member said, "I don't know if it was said, but the expectation was always understood in my mind that we would get no recommendations [for change]." This was an essential goal of the team's charge because no recommendations implied no corrective action and thus represented the team's shared aims for excellence.

Like most organizational units, each unit in this study has a formal mission that is determined for them. Sometimes the mission reflects that of the college, as in the case of the reaccreditation committee and the library. The accreditation team reflects the college culture of nothing short of excellence and the library's reflects it longstanding director's influence. State statute defines the mission of the adult education unit, and federal guidelines define the grant unit's mission.

Yet each unit also developed an informal mission or set of internal guidelines that define the actual behaviors from day to day that have become an integral part of its culture. Library staff members "serve students" and "take care of each other." The grant unit personnel similarly take care of "students first and then each other" and exhort students with this directive: "If you succeed, we succeed." The adult education collaborators dedicated themselves to purposeful engagement taking an active part in meetings that chronicled the progress of the collaboration. The accreditation team strove for excellence through preparedness and developing the expertise of its members.

Each unit developed a set of internal guidelines that defined the actual behaviors from day to day. For example, the informal mission of the library staff is, "We do whatever it takes to get students what they need," even if the assistance is not specifically library-related. They also function as an "extended family" that "takes care of each

other." Similarly, the grant unit staff's informal mission has become part of who they are what they do in addition influence students to adopt their positive behaviors. The adult education collaborators dedicated themselves to purposeful engagement. That is, they actively participated in meetings that chronicled the progress of the collaboration, and they worked to ensure that staff in each partner organization shared the leaders' common vision. The accreditation team—guided by the college president's active mentoring, example, and high expectations—strove for excellence through developing the expertise of its members and by careful preparation.

Data across all four cases suggests the motivation for performing above minimum expectations comes from focusing on a vision. For example, the grant unit envisions every student who is willing to work as graduating. The adult education unit, as a national model, sees itself influencing the success of adult students throughout the nation through constant renewal and improvement of this model program. The accreditation committee sees itself contributing to the prestige and effectiveness of a community college nationally recognized for its excellence. Library staff members shared that "knowing we make a difference in the success of our students" motivates them to serve at all costs. The formal mission is important to the formal unit leaders but for unit members facing crises every day, it is crucial to have a vision and purpose that conveys that they matter, not only to those they serve but also to those they follow.

Authentic, Trusting, Inclusive Leadership

The leaders in this investigation demonstrated similar positive characteristics as they facilitated the exceptional functioning of their units. The stories of our unit leaders demonstrated the attributes of realistic optimism, emotional intelligence, confidence to

succeed, and hope (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2001). They show that although it might be possible to identify specific actions that appear to stem from a specific trait or behavior, as with other human attributes, they do not occur in isolation. As with all human attributes, these are intangible resources, and research has found these attributes to be more effective when demonstrated in combination (Luthans, 2002b).

For example, in the case of the accreditation team, the college president used most or all of these traits as she prepared for the college reaccreditation process. She knew her goal and the path to follow when early in the process she chose college leaders who would comprise the accreditation team. Her plan included training for those team members to assure they would achieve the goal of no recommendations for improvement. The appointed team members were also given the responsibility of collecting information from personnel in most college departments so their leader provided her executive support if things did not progress as planned.

The formal leaders that facilitated the adult education collaboration between a large community college and a large public school district believed they could create a successful adult education preparation plan for the area they serve. They used collaboration between two large organizations and their leaders as the path to achieve that goal. The executive formal leaders however did not stop there: They pledged their own continued involvement in the project and have kept that promise for over ten years. The will to succeed accompanied the plan to develop trusting relationships and maintain purposeful engagement. Without that leadership attitude, the program may not have received national recognition. Leaders who developed organizational collaboration without the exchange of a single dollar were confident that the team they were building

would succeed, just as the college president was confident that her reaccreditation team would receive no recommendations for correction.

Because the SSS unit and college library units work with students daily, their leaders assist and encourage students, which is important for bolstering student retention. Students feel as if they matter when supported by people at the college. Library staff members use the same emotional intelligence to support each other through grief and the loss of loved ones by showing empathy and support.

Analysis of the data revealed that all leaders were focused and engaged and that leadership attributes and behaviors operate in combination with other attributes helping to explain how units are able to perform above expectations. All leaders in the four case studies were selfless, focused on the mission and vision of their unit, and trusted by their unit members. Although unit members other than the formal leader rarely identified themselves as leaders, the definition used in our study includes them as such. In the grant unit, having many leaders with the power to make decisions about resources created cohesiveness among the members.

Leaders within the four cases are authentic, feeling comfortable with who they are and what they believe and value. They act on their beliefs and values and act transparently with others (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). This authenticity also includes acting selflessly, although the leaders demonstrated this trait differently. For instance, accreditation team leaders recognize publicly any contributors to the excellent results of the reaccreditation. SSS unit leaders give their members some choice of location for their professional development, whereas accreditation team leaders recognize the talent and tacit knowledge of employees in personal ways. They also

address the needs of all the team members by providing additional professional development and training so team members are prepared to make informed decisions.

Together, the leaders in this study demonstrate a consistent attitude of treating people as people rather than objects or abstract budgetary personnel account strings (Alfred et al., 2009; Shults, 2008). They empower, support, provide a purpose, and create opportunities to make a difference for those they lead. The director of the grant program displays all of these behaviors when she asks staff members to participate in the grant writing process. Each staff member represents her area of expertise as she works "off the clock" to prepare a new grant and willingly contributes to the new grant outcome through this process. Dividing the responsibility among all the unit members and sharing the consequences if the grant is not renewed is an example of shared accountability. In distributing accountability, the leader trusts the unit members to use their abilities and expertise to reach the unit goal. This trust, in turn, provides them with a sense of purpose over and above their daily responsibilities. The work also empowers the staff through involvement in the outcomes that affect their future.

Several similarities and differences were present across the case studies. One similarity was the presence of a supportive, collegial climate among participants in spite of differences in organizational structure and decision-making process. The length of service each person has worked within the unit and organization contributed to unit members' subjective experiences of feeling supported. One library team member described this as the "ease of long-standing acquaintance" that facilitated the ability to know without speaking how to help other unit members. Across each of the four cases,

no individual has worked fewer than five years in the unit, and leaders recognized through title or responsibility have served in that unit capacity from eight to 20 years.

A noticeable difference across units is the way formal and informal leaders carry out administrative and managerial tasks. Some units were more hierarchal with a team leader or unit director assigning tasks. Other units function with a more distributed leadership whereby both informal and formal leaders share in the input and output of administrative and managerial tasks. This variation did not appear to hinder the high performance of the units. Areas influenced most by formal leadership include leadership style, culture, mission and vision, reputation, and a system of reward and recognition. All of the leaders not only influence the culture of their units, they may have created it as in the case of the SSS unit and the adult education collaboration. In the case of the library, the formal leaders are the driving force behind the existing culture. The SACS unit identified themselves as having a culture of excellence, the library a traditional hierarchy with a service orientation, the SSS unit prides itself on its leadership legacy of autonomy and support, and the culture that developed through the leaders of the adult education collaboration is defined a culture of trust.

Positive leaders trust in the capabilities and possibilities of their members to achieve unit goals, which paves the way for commitment to a shared vision and purpose that enhances a sense of shared accountability for outcomes. Adding to this positive environment are leadership actions that provide autonomy and support for all unit members. Autonomy and trust work together developing an environment where creativity and new ideas can flourish. Personnel trust that if an idea is not successful or if they make a mistake, they have access to whatever support they need to proceed toward

the development of something new or to recover from a mistake. Of equal importance are leaders who appreciate team members as individual people not just positions. These three in combination contributed to the success of all four units. While this is also an example of leveraging that evolves from the actions of the leaders, this leveraging may well occur by accident but with similar results as if they were intentional. However, if leaders understood and intentionally leveraged resources, the result might be even greater.

Resource Richness

Resource richness is our adaptation of the CCAM term *abundance*, a term that may be easily misunderstood to mean ample tangible resources (Alfred et al., 2009). We use resource richness to denote the condition that results when all available resources, both tangible and intangible, are optimally engaged. The four units achieved resource richness by looking beyond tangible resources. Their leaders and members did not view tangible resources as the primary constraining factors on their ability to achieve their high goals. Instead, by valuing their intangible resources, they were able to avoid being charmed by ample (or lacking) tangible resources. Adding these considerable intangible resources to available budgets, positions, equipment, and physical spaces created resource richness. From this position, unit leaders and members could create leverage and thereby enhance the effects of their tangible resources.

Tangible resources. All four units function under some sort of structured plan, a funding source, and a budget that describes relatively fixed amounts they have to work with. The importance of these tangible resources cannot be overemphasized. When leaders discussed resources and organizational functioning, they identified tangible

resources, especially money as extremely important. However, they also discussed quantifiable resources such as staff positions. Authority over the amount and disbursement of tangible resources varied from unit to unit. The leader of the adult education collaboration, however, indicated with pride that no money changed hands when the two leaders joined their organizations to deliver adult education and community college preparation to a large population of students. Each unit continues to function independently within its own strategic plan and funding source as it meets any legislative mandate that supports its operation. The SACS accreditation team, however, had access to whatever tangible resources they requested. Completing the assignment of sustaining accreditation remains such a high priority that no request was denied.

In all units, their tangible resources can ebb and flow, but in the case of the grant program, their funding can fluctuate annually and more often than not diminish year by year. To manage these changes and maintain their high performance, the team members stay focused on the things they can control and leverage other types of resources to accommodate for any lost funding.

All the units are fiscally responsible and adapt to shrinking tangible resources when needed. In some cases, as in the adult education unit and grant program, asking for community support can result in monetary donations from community organizations or businesses. Yet these are not the only sources available to meet unit needs. Utilizing intangible resources can expand possibilities to achieve unexpected results.

In addition to careful stewardship of tangible resources, the units in our study leveraged tangible resources with careful preparation for the future, including identifying leveraging opportunities, focusing on resources that are within the unit's control, being

prepared, and providing professional development. Each unit derives benefits from preparation. For example, the accreditation team leaders prioritized up-to-date data collection and credential verification. This advance preparation supported their ability to shepherd the reaccreditation process and complete it successfully with no recommendations for improvement. The administrative assistant for the SSS project developed a notebook containing all up-to-date documentation a site visit team from the department of education would require. The site visit team was so impressed with the notebook that they asked for a copy to use as a model for other sites. Library professionals make certain their committee responsibilities and reports are up to date, and adult education personnel prepare to meet the stringent reporting requirements. We found the more a unit makes a concerted effort to recognize and innovate with the resources, the greater its ability to perform with excellence.

Intangible resources. With such a fluctuation in tangible resources, the four units used a variety of resources, not easily quantified, to assist them in reaching their goals. This type of resource amplification is rarely a straight line, cause-and-effect event. Two areas in particular, psychological capital and positive leadership were clearly capitalized in these high-performing units.

Members of the SSS unit, displaying the characteristics of psychological capital, helped to develop and enhance those characteristics in students by modeling and encouraging desired behaviors, thus influencing the success of the unit purely through positive role modeling. Hope develops when a staff member assures a student he can succeed and helps devise a success plan. Accreditation members demonstrate self-efficacy through displays of confidence prior to an accreditation visit because they have

prepared well. Library staff and professionals demonstrate resilience when they work together to manually manage a library printing queue in order to help students. Psychological capital, as an intangible resource, thus becomes a lever that amplifies the capacity of unit members to meet their formal goals, serve their constituents, and respond to external pressures.

Important intangible resources prime for leveraging are the behaviors and traits of all unit members, formal leaders, informal leaders, and students who receive services. Whereas the core constructs of positive attributes of leadership (PAL) include confidence for the group to succeed, psychological capital emphasizes self-efficacy, the ability of an individual to perform a specific task with excellence. The resilience component of psychological capital is the ability of an individual or group to bounce back from adversity (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010; Froman, 2010; Luthans et al., 2001), and the emotional intelligence component of positive approaches to leadership is a relationship-focused attribute (Luthans et al., 2001).

Positive leadership can be found at all levels of the units examined because of the inclusive, people-first leadership structure. Behaviors prevalent in our investigation include treating people as people, building relationships, and collaborating with other entities. All the unit leaders value their personnel as individuals and professionals. The library director continued the care he traditionally shows to his staff during the holidays even through the pain of losing his daughter. The SSS unit director and her staff continued to serve students who needed their help, even when they could not count them as members of their program. Library personnel continued to take care of the students and faculty even when their staffing was short.

The library staff and professionals determined that they had not only reached but also surpassed the mark of excellence in student service. Their capacity to serve could have easily been diminished by a series of extremely difficult circumstances. However, their dedication, preparedness, and resilience buoyed their capacity to serve in the midst of pressing—even traumatic--difficulty. For example, their resilience was most evident as they continued delivering excellent service while at the same time supporting the needs of the library director who suffered the loss of two family members. Not only do unit members demonstrate these traits, they model the benefit of these attributes to the students they serve.

This expanded approach to organizational functioning insists that including intangible resources is paramount in the leveraging process in order to attain the best possible outcomes. Failure to develop and deploy intangibles creates *slack*, the unused set of resources that represent the leeway between what an organization could accomplish and what it does accomplish.

The units place a high value on people, the things that people can do, and the things that people need. The people in the units build relationships, collaborate, influence others, model behavior, learn, teach, grow, improve, nurture, and show concern. They benefit from autonomy and a sense of purpose. They feel valued, respected, and trusted. They have opportunities to learn and improve, make connections, and appreciate being unique. Things within their control include people, relationships with other organizations both inside and outside the college, and the talents of their own students. The previous examples provide evidence of how intangible resources can act as levers that amplify available tangible resources to increase the capacity for excellent performance. Finally,

the influence of positive leadership itself is an intangible resource in the development of others. For example, a supervisor may encourage development in unexpected areas. A participant explains, “I was a teaching faculty, and I wanted to do more. My president and academic dean saw something in me that maybe I never saw in myself, and I was given the opportunity to do things.”

Regardless of the different organizational structures, all of our unit leaders kept their followers focused on the unit’s mission from reaccreditation to organizational collaboration, to direct student service. Providing focus and direction produces stretch, the vision of results that seem out of reach based on current resources. This unit-level research confirms Hamel and Prahalad’s (1994) assertion that stretch serves as a powerful motivation for learning to identify, develop, and deploy slack resources to produce resource amplification through leverage. Our research also supports the institution-level findings of Alfred et al. (2009) of the role of leadership and intangible resources in influencing exceptional performance. Finally, it supports individual- and group-level research studies that describe positive organizational outcomes enabled by positive dynamics in a group.

Conclusions

This multiple-case analysis of four community college units reveals the effects of positive organizational dynamics on unit success. We grouped our findings into three areas: (a) people-first culture; (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership; and (c) resource richness. Within these areas, we noted how leaders and members attributed unit performance to positive characteristics and behaviors that were intentionally developed and nurtured. We described the importance of positive behaviors and traits in formal and

informal leaders and how these contributed to unit performance. We also discussed the power of shared vision and informal mission for cohesion, motivation, and purpose in the units.

Leaders influence unit cultures in which (a) people are valued holistically and above other resources; (b) authentic leaders provide autonomy and support while organizing the units' work around strengths, and (c) unit leaders and members maximize all available resources. Formal leaders influence the culture of their unit, develop and depend on shared leadership to focus on the overall mission, and facilitate leveraging all available resources.

The conclusions drawn from this four-case analysis are consistent with results of capacity-building, a component of the CCAM construct of abundance. In each unit, we found leaders skilled at identifying and developing their available tangible and intangible resources. The resulting leverage amplified the units' performance. At the unit level, there is great opportunity to facilitate leveraging. Unit members are the closest to where resources are actually used, and they are best positioned to identify slack resources—especially the intangible ones. Each person has control over resources—especially those that are unique to themselves. Examples include personal strengths, multiple relationships, interdepartmental collaborations, and the ability to pursue personal and professional development. Leaders beyond immediate supervisors may be too far removed to see opportunities to develop intangible resources at the individual level. Thus, when unit members are given the autonomy and support to develop and deploy those resources as they see fit, they have the potential to influence unit performance exponentially.

Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on innovating toward capacity building, leaders appreciating people as people, and leveraging all resources in the direction of abundance. Leveraging can move an organization toward abundance; but an organization cannot maintain that state without continually using the tools that helped them get there. Resources available to leverage include positive authentic leaders and their attributes, accomplished employees who are encouraged to use all of their strengths including psychological capital, and a culture designed to utilize capacity building. Collectively, this combination of resources can achieve results greater than expected, based on current levels of tangible resources.

Becoming open and knowledgeable takes time, and it can seem risky. Thus, if someone is not ready to understand that process, it could take a long time to learn to think differently about leadership, resources, organizational culture, and performance. The following recommendations reflect the experience of our team members as we moved from acquaintance to understanding, to application, to assimilation of the principles of positive perspectives of unit performance, authentic leadership, and the leveraging of resources. Other teams and units can also experience a similar process:

- Become acquainted with capacity-building and leveraging intangible resources. The literature referenced in this report, the experiences of the units under investigation, and the brief appraisal of unit functioning included in this report can help interested parties become familiar with the positive terminology and processes.

- Understand the concepts through a learning experience facilitated by educators acquainted with the process of unraveling abstract concepts with examples, role-playing, observation, and conversation.

- Assimilate the concepts by looking at and identifying your own examples. Looking at your own daily practice through the new lens constantly reminds you that leveraging is all around us.

- Apply the concepts by choosing an example of a unit that could be improved, preferably your own, and detail a specific plan of action for that unit to learn and apply leveraging for capacity building.

Further recommendations rest on our finding that individuals at all levels of the organizational chart control considerable resources of their own. For example, we have described the importance to team success of formal knowledge, such as one might acquire through training or education. We have also described ways of viewing culture, leadership, and resources that are at the same time familiar, yet difficult to translate into organizational vitality. These different perspectives are forms of tacit knowledge—intangible resources essential for building the capacity to amplify resources. Learning to operate these levers makes it possible to perform with excellence in an environment where resource levels and needs constantly change.

Further Study

This exploration of positive influences on unit-level performance leaves many questions unanswered and suggests avenues for further inquiry. For example, can the positive dynamics in successful individual units in higher education influence the performance of an entire college or university? If so, how and to what degree? Shifting the focus from units and institutions to individuals, can individual study of positive psychology and organizational dynamics influence team or organizational functioning? How and to what extent?

Leaders often mistake growth or plentiful tangible resources for high performance (Alfred et al., 2009). In doing so, they may assume that high performance comes from unique circumstances of growth or plentiful tangible resources. Attention is thus diverted from the possibilities for developing intangible resources that are essential for amplifying outputs regardless of available tangible resources. By contrast, the research reported here

shows that when unit leaders add to their metrics of success the ability to identify and deploy intangible resources, they develop the capacity to produce results thought to be impossible. It is tempting to ignore intangible resources, especially when tangible resources are plentiful (as in the case of the reaccreditation team) and even when scarce (as in the case of the library). Yet, consistent with the CCAM and positive literature, this study suggests that the key to outstanding unit performance is full utilization of all available resources achieved through special emphasis on intangible resources and desirable—and new—organizational outcomes. In order to produce a culture that supports this expansive view of organizational performance, we must first recognize that such units already exist and identify what exceptional performance looks like. This multi-case analysis has shown how positive organizational behaviors including attention to intangible resources can influence the ability to perform well in various contexts.

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Appendix

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

1. What are your position responsibilities in this program unit?
2. What is the relationship between your work and this program's overall performance?
3. In your program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?
4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?
5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective? What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?
6. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?
7. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?
8. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?
9. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

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Chapter 3

If Students Succeed, We Succeed: Positive Workplace Dynamics in an Extraordinary Student Support Services Unit

This case study examines the influence various aspects of functioning have upon the high performance of a community college Student Support Services unit. Part of a larger project examining different types of effective community college units, this study's conceptual framework is guided by literature that focuses on behaviors and traits that influence and help maintain the successful functioning of individuals and organizations. The conceptual framework incorporates the idea that intangible resources such as certain leadership qualities (Luthans, F., Luthans, K., Hodgetts & Luthans, B., 2001; Avey, Clapp-Smith, & Vogelgesang, 2009) and the optimal use of all resources (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, & Strickland, 2009) including traits of unit personnel (Luthans,Youssef & Avolio, 2007) can have a positive impact on performance.

The community college unit described here was chosen for its high performance in meeting its federal Student Support Services (SSS) grant objectives of student retention, graduation, transfer, and overall student success. Using a qualitative case study approach, past and present staff members of the unit were asked to describe the reasons for their unit's successful functioning, first by use of a preliminary online questionnaire requiring narrative responses and again during personal interviews. In addition, the researcher observed the functioning of the unit during meetings and program activities. Analysis of the findings indicates the influence of behaviors and traits which, when taken together, contribute to organizational performance that meets and even exceeds expectations. The major organizational characteristics found to contribute to the unit's

ability to achieve and surpass its goals are the autonomy and support leaders give to unit members, the expectation and unified vision of success, and the proactive development and leveraging of resources.

TRIO Programs and Student Support Services

Student support services projects provide many of the services available to postsecondary students outside of the classroom. In some cases a single unit such as Student Support Services delivers such services using a case management style while individual departments often provide distinct services separately. Services can include assistance with admission applications, federal financial aid forms and course selection. In addition, program personnel advise, tutor, and counsel students. Therefore, the unit selected for study not only represents other service units using case management, but also departments using more discrete methods of service delivery.

Background

TRIO includes eight programs targeted to serve and assist low-income, first-generation college students and individuals with disabilities in their progression through the academic pipeline from middle school to post-baccalaureate programs ("Federal TRIO Programs," 2010). The development of TRIO programs began with authorization under the Higher Education Act of 1965 and was reauthorized by the Higher Education Opportunity Act (Public Law 110-315) (HEOA) on August 14, 2008. The original funding and development of the TRIO programs represented what Thomas, Farrow, and Martinez (1998) refer to as a modest initiative by the United States to broaden access to higher education from primarily wealthy privileged White youth to a target population of academically talented poor youth. Establishment of the first three programs generated

the name TRIO. Those three programs are Upward Bound, developed in 1964, Talent Search, created in 1965, and Special Services for Disadvantaged Students later renamed Student Support Services, launched in 1968. Since that time, five other programs have been added to complete the eight TRIO programs currently authorized and administered by the US Department of Education.

Although all eight TRIO programs have the overarching goal of increasing the success of at-risk students in higher education attainment, each has a different constituency. Student Support Services (SSS) provides academic support for college students, including those with disabilities and helps motivate and assist them in completing their post-secondary education ("Student support services program," 2010). This type of TRIO program differs from the others by delivering integrated program services, such as admissions, advising, registration, and tutoring offered to the entire student population but often in a more departmentalized manner (Komives & Woodward, 2003).

Initiation, Evaluation, and Continuation

The Student Support Services Program at the US Department of Education establishes what are called projects at colleges throughout the United States through grant awards. These grants provide funding for projects designed to:

> (a) Increase the college retention and graduation rates of eligible students; (b) Increase the transfer rate of eligible students from two-year to four-year institutions;(c) Foster an institutional climate supportive of the success of students who are limited English proficient, students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in postsecondary education, individuals with disabilities, homeless children and youth, foster care youth, or other disconnected students; (d) Improve the financial and economic literacy of students in areas such as basic personal income, household money management, and financial planning skills as well as enhance basic economic decision-making skills (Student support services, 2012).

The purpose of SSS grants is to provide selected students opportunities for academic development, assistance with basic college requirements, and motivation toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. SSS projects may also provide grant aid to current SSS participants who are receiving federal Pell Grants ("Student support services program," 2010).

Student services in general are rarely the focus of community college institutional effectiveness because the connection between student services and student outcomes is not linear. Research concerning SSS performance in meeting grant guidelines is more common because SSS projects are required to report on specific student outcomes of retention, graduation, and transfer, which are not the direct focus of most areas of student services. SSS programs are evaluated by reporting college retention and graduation rates plus transfer rates and cost per student to the US Department of Education (DOE), which are then reviewed and published in the annual performance reports.

Subsequently the DOE develops performance plans that outline the goals, intended outcomes, and initiatives of the program for the following year. Prior to each fiscal year, an SSS project receives new annual targets and strategies in its performance plan along with measures for monitoring progress. The plan also includes actual performance data showing whether targets were met in prior years.

Reported outcome measures determine continued annual funding for an SSS project and influence renewal of an expiring grant. Grant proposals are expected to contain ambitious goals representing new estimates by the current program to increase performance, while utilizing similar or fewer resources. As with any program that

receives or depends on federal funds, there is always the possibility that funding will end (Dervarics, 2005; Dervarics, 2011; Jean, 2011).

Research concerning the actual organizational functioning of SSS projects and the experience of service providers is less common than the study of project outcomes; but available research shows that providing such service has a positive impact on the personnel who serve students. Despite the uncertainty of employment continuity due to grant funding, staff members of SSS programs have been found to express greater job satisfaction and suffer less burnout than personnel working in other types of human service areas (Brewer & Clippard, 2002). But that is not shown to be true in every case. A study related to program implementation (Wallace, Ropers-Huilman, & Abel, 2004) examined the experiences of university-based SSS professionals. Those working in the program felt as if it was misunderstood by the larger university community, who they felt viewed them as "border crossers" while at the same time "feel[ing] virtually invisible to the academic communities in which they exist[ed] (Wallace et al., 2004 p. 585)."

This case study examines the influence certain aspects of functioning have upon the high performance of a community college Student Support Services unit. This particular SSS project was selected because it serves as an example of above average performance in a community college unit that provides student services outside of the classroom.

Conceptual Framework

A body of literature emanating from the recent development of what has been termed positive psychology provides a pathway to understanding factors that are outside of more traditionally evaluated SSS project outcomes. Instead, this perspective examines

the inputs rather than the outputs of unit success. Based on the concept of capacity building described in the Community College Abundance Model (CCAM), an organization can adopt strategies to amplify the impact of its available resources and thus influence performance in ways that exceed expectations (Alfred et al., 2009; Hamel and Prahalad, 2005).

This study's conceptual framework is guided by literature that, rather than taking a deficit approach, seeks to identify and understand circumstances, behaviors, and traits that influence and help promote and maintain successful organizational functioning (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Mather, 2011). Thus, this framework emphasizes the impact of positive leadership qualities (Luthans et al., 2001; Avey et al., 2009; Shults, 2009) and the optimal use or leveraging of both tangible and intangible resources (Alfred et al., 2009; Hamel and Prahalad, 2005).

When organizations prioritize the development of what is best about people and build on strengths at the individual and unit levels, they can achieve extraordinary success (Cameron et al., 2003; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2011) and reduce the effects of trauma and uncertainty (Weick, 2003; Cameron et al., 2003; Seligman, 2011). In addition, such organizations enhance the value of *people as people* by leveraging demonstrated attributes and behaviors to engage in what is known as capacity building in an organizational unit (Alfred et al., 2009). Capacity building magnifies the ability of an organization to meet or exceed its goals and depends on the leveraging of both tangible and intangible resources. Tangible resources which can be easily quantified include money, staff lines, technology, equipment, and supplies. Intangible resources are an organization's "informal, subjective, emotive, and process-oriented elements" (Alfred et

al., 2009, p. 86) including organizational structures and communication methods, systems and policies, reputation, culture, shared values and beliefs, diversity, experience, peoples' strengths and tacit knowledge .

Capacity building also requires leadership that facilitates the leveraging of all resources. When leaders identify, develop, and deploy all available resources, the resources then influence the level of performance, which in turn influences the availability of more resources. This combination of actions and outcomes result in improved organizational performance.

The process and result of increasing organizational capacity is conceptualized in what Frederickson and Losada (2005) call spirals of flourishing. A spiral of flourishing demonstrates the effects of multiple leveraging actions that contribute to superior performance and in turn increase the availability of more resources that then become incorporated into the leveraging action. An upward and increasing spiral of accomplishment describes contributions to organizational functioning that are non-linear but of significant importance. Examples of leveraging combinations can be identified by finding various behaviors, traits, and processes that contribute to organizational success and are applied collectively. One feature or action supports another and together they magnify the result and level of success.

Leadership traits themselves are an intangible resource found to be influential in the successful leveraging of other resources (Alfred et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2001). Four significant leadership traits are realistic optimism, emotional intelligence, confidence, and hope which Luthans et al. (2001) term collectively *positive approaches to leadership*. *Psychological capital* also contains four qualities important not just for

leaders but for every member of a successful organization. These state-like traits are hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy. As with other leveraging combinations, when an individual employs all four qualities of psychological capital, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

This study investigates the functioning of a single community college organizational unit that often performs above and beyond expectations. The research is an effort to determine how the unit's functioning influences its high performance. Capacity building, as described in the community college abundance model is a possible model for explaining functioning beyond expectations. This model acknowledges leadership qualities that facilitate the leveraging of resources and considers people and their psychological capital as intangible resources that can be leveraged for high performance (Alfred et al., 2009; Luthans et al., 2001). Based on this model, this study explores the influence positive phenomena, behaviors and traits have on the superior organizational functioning and performance of this particular SSS unit. These include but are not limited to: (a) positive approaches to leadership, (b) successful leveraging of available resources, both tangible and intangible and (c) individual traits associated with psychological capital.

Research Methods

Research Design

The purpose of this study is to identify the organizational functioning of a community college unit that meets or exceeds expectations and to understand the influence that functioning has on the unit's performance. Of particular interest are the qualities and attributes of leaders and unit members that are considered intangible

resources capable of being leveraged. A case study design using qualitative methods of generating data was an appropriate approach because (a) the goal was to determine how and why positive organizational functioning influences its success (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Yin, 2009), (b) the scope of the study included a "contemporary set of events" (Yin, 2009) and (c) the parameters of the case required understanding situations over which the researcher has little or no control (Yin, 2009). This study meets each of these criteria. A qualitative approach also provides thick description, useful in identifying results that are not linear but rather contextual (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995).

Description of Selected Case

As stated above, this particular unit of investigation was chosen because there is evidence through traditional program evaluation data reported to the Federal Department of Education that over the twelve years of the unit's operation it has achieved results above and beyond minimum requirements. Significantly, this unit was awarded a five-year grant rather than a four-year grant three times, indicating that reporting evidence consistently placed this unit's performance into the top 10% of all SSS projects in the United States. Despite the fact that leadership changed and a few key personnel left the program or changed positions, the unit has continued and improved its high performance.

The members of this unit provide a variety of support services and activities for a minimum of 185 at-risk community college students. Services are provided by a program director, a counselor, a tutorial coordinator, activities director and tutor, an administrative assistant, and a varying number of part time tutors. Regardless of funding amounts, this SSS unit achieved success in meeting and exceeding its mission and goals during all twelve years since its first grant award.

In addition to performance evidence, my acquaintance with working in a location near this unit for more than ten years gave me an in depth understanding of the unit's responsibilities. My unit delivered similar services such as student tutoring and academic support but my supervisor discouraged our unit members from working with or helping SSS students and yet the SSS personnel rarely refused to cooperate with other college units, assisting students who fell outside of SSS responsibility, and supporting the college mission of high student attainment.

This proximity allowed me to compare the functioning of my own unit with that of the SSS unit. Based on my personal observations over that period, there was a significant difference in how the two service units functioned. The SSS unit seemed to have qualities that enhanced staff satisfaction and perhaps the ability of that unit to achieve above and beyond expectations. For some time, when I changed positions, I was no longer near the unit. But circumstances once again reunited us and as in the past, I sometimes mingle with students, observe a presentation, or attend a social event. This close proximity and prior relationship made the investigative process more comfortable for all of us. It was the possibility of identifying the unknown success factors that strongly influenced my selection of this particular SSS unit as a case study.

The unit had a new configuration of staff and a new location when I approached them to participate in this study. The new director of the unit had been the counselor under the previous director. With this change in personnel and a new location on campus, I wondered what affect this might have on how the unit functioned.

When I brought up the topic of studying the unit, the SSS director insisted upon consulting her staff members before agreeing to participate in the research. She seemed

concerned that the research had overtones of an investigation looking for problems. That type of research into unit functioning is more prevalent than a focus on positive functioning. I explained the positive focus of the case study several times to remind the participants that the research was looking at the positive things about the way they function as a unit. One member of the unit had reservations about participating because she was taking a vacation and did not want to hold up the research results. At her request, she only participated in the online portion of the inquiry.

The unit members who agreed to participate signed an informed consent document developed for the case study and approved along with the methods used by the University of Kentucky Institutional Research Board. All of the fulltime staff members provided narrative responses to a preliminary online questionnaire dealing with leadership and resource perceptions. Subsequently, additional data were collected or accessed to help answer the research question about the influence the unit's functioning has on its high performance. Data sources included: (a) information gathered from interview transcripts and questionnaires, (b) written notes from observations of unit functioning, (c) a site visit book containing all pertinent information needed for an inspection by the grant agents, and (d) grant proposal and approval documents. I conducted taped interviews with current and past unit personnel and I noted interactions between staff members as well as staff and students during observations of unit events, daily functioning, and a staff meeting.

The open-ended questions or prompts used in the interviews were influenced by the previous written responses. I personally transcribed interview tapes and gave a copy of his or her interview transcript to each participant to review for accuracy and, if needed,

revision. I transcribed and analyzed data as I collected it. This continuing process allowed me to make adjustments throughout the study, a procedure consistent with qualitative research standards, and allowed opportunities for testing emerging concepts and themes (Yin, 2009).

In addition to conducting interviews, I observed the unit function during tutoring sessions, a staff meeting, the student intake process, two informative presentations, and an intercultural buffet. Program documentation that supported data analysis included grant proposals, federal guidelines, and the site-visit book compiled by the administrative assistant containing staff resumes, yearly budget allocations, and unit success data.

Strategies used to augment the quality of this study included triangulation, participant checking, and colleague oversight. Triangulation was achieved by gathering information from several different sources including documents, observations, and interviews with current and prior members of the unit to gain different perspectives. Participant checking was accomplished by providing typed interview transcripts to the participants to check for accuracy and later, drafts of the data analysis document for review (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Included with the notes from observations was a research journal I maintained to record introspections about my personal research lens and its possible influence on the entire study and its findings (Yin, 2011). Prior access and rapport with personnel and students provided insight regarding the unit. This relationship contributed to an understanding about the performance and operation of the selected SSS unit not available to others; but to diminish the possibility of missing new insights I carefully reflected in my journal and encouraged code checking by colleagues, transcript review by interviewees, and manuscript review by fellow researchers.

Analysis

After personally transcribing the audio tapes, I began to examine the transcripts by color coding passages manually to identify common themes and areas of significance identified as important to successful functioning. Generalized categories emerged having to do with leadership qualities and behaviors, how the unit members work together, the relationships they develop within and outside their unit, and how they managed to meet the grant requirements even when they needed to revise their budget. My next step was to identify more detailed components or ideas relevant to several transcripts and supported by personal observations and written documents. I made notes and color coded various portions of the transcripts, considering all the available information as I continued my reviews.

From the information generated by these colors and notes, I organized a database to hold much of the data collected. The database contains interview transcript passages referenced by data collection source, categorized by selected attributes that emerged from continuing review of all the collected material . Code word categories emerged from themes identified in the transcripts as important. Some of those codes were similar to items identified in the conceptual framework and defined in the positive literature while others appear to be concepts that did not directly identify with the conceptual framework but helped establish new themes as they emerged during data analysis. This type of data arrangement easily identified the data collection source for each referenced code word or theme. Yin (2009) holds that these techniques support the creation and maintenance of a chain of evidence from question to conclusion.

Findings

Three themes emerged that describe how this unit achieves success. First is the style of leadership that sustains a culture of autonomy and support for all unit members. This type of leadership was passed on from one leader to the next and expanded by the current leader to include students as team members. Secondly is the expectation and unified vision of success for the unit itself, its members, and the students they serve. The third theme is the proactive identification and leveraging of tangible and intangible resources. The influence these three themes have, regardless of available funds, continues to promote the successful outcomes of the unit's performance. In fact, some examples indicate that budget cuts have incentivized personnel to look for ways to enhance intangible resources. However, leveraging intangibles only because tangible resources are diminished does not necessarily improve effectiveness. Leveraging intangible resources can produce performance beyond expectation if it is not used as a safety net to maintain the status quo, but is used instead in conjunction with tangible resources to enhance what has been done so far.

Legacy of Autonomy and Support

The leadership of this unit has defined a culture that stems from a balanced combination of autonomy and support. The leadership model inherited by this particular SSS unit was implemented by its first director and then passed on to the current director. This type of leadership allows unit members to design the way they fulfill their job responsibilities, expect the support they need to innovate, and receive assistance when they have a challenge they cannot overcome alone (Alfred et al., 2009). Every unit member commented on the benefit of working under such a model and declared how

much he or she appreciated having the autonomy to handle job responsibilities his or her own way. Staff members who worked under both leaders mentioned the benefits of the smooth transition between the two leaders who have dramatically different personalities but apply a similar leadership approach (Avolio et al., 2004).

The former director assumed his first professional position as the tutorial coordinator for an SSS project at another college. During our interview, he explained that he had been an at-risk, low-income student and it was a high school counselor who made the difference in his choice to attend college rather than opting to work in a factory. He sums up the leadership style he adopted when he became the director of the unit under study. "I give the individuals the tools necessary for them to perform their job and then let them do their job." The former director details his method:

> If I am going to do your job, then I don't need you to be there. So, I give a person the autonomy they need; tell them what their parameters are and say, "These are your responsibilities; if you have trouble, find me. If you need clarification or if you need me to run interference or if you need me to basically get somebody off your back, find me..., especially in TRIO we sink as a team and we [are] going to swim as a team.

For several years, the current director worked under this leadership style as the unit counselor. She credits this experience with having a strong influence on her own leadership style. Like the former director, she gives her team members the autonomy to do their jobs as they see fit while providing as many resources as possible to successfully complete their responsibilities. In addition, like her predecessor, she provides the support and opportunities for staff to implement innovative ideas, relationships, and collaborative opportunities. A unit member in charge of cultural events explains:

> The director endorses democratic principles and fosters the philosophy of esprit de corps to maximize this program's effectiveness. Teamwork appears to be a key element in unit effectiveness and serves to strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

A staff member who worked under both directors confirmed a smooth transition from one director to another:

> The former director, created a work environment and, then, the current director continued that when she became the director. He trusted each one of us to do our jobs and we did. And we trusted each other to do our jobs. We worked well together.

Team members past and present agree that a result of the autonomy is the development of many leaders within the unit. In this unit, being a leader means having control over resources along with joint responsibility for successful outcomes. Often times the role of decision maker is taken on collectively or given to the team member most qualified to make that decision. For instance, when a new grant application needs to be written, the various parts are distributed among all team members who, according to program regulations, must do the writing on their own time. Each team member receives the portion she is most qualified to address and all members take ownership of the success or failure of the grant approval. This gives team members a sense of being responsible for the success or failure of the unit as a whole and may explain why unit members are so willing to help each other by working together to accomplish their mission (Erkuthlu, 2012).

The leadership approach of providing the autonomy for staff to develop their own ways of doing things has continued to be successful during the program's twelve-year operation and three grant cycles. Such autonomy in the workplace is found to be an influential component for job satisfaction (Lutgen-Sandvik, Riforgiate, & Fletcher, 2011). The balance of autonomy and support demonstrates that if employees understand their job responsibilities and have the autonomy to perform their work as they see fit, they feel valued for their expertise by being included in decision-making. They have

control over some resources whether tangible or intangible. This arrangement develops a group of leaders all of whom have a personal investment in the overall success of the unit (Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2011). Therefore, they all have the same vision of the mission and work together to achieve it regardless of personal differences.

Program staff members are provided with resources and, in addition, opportunities to develop more resources, share responsibilities, and take advantage of individual expertise. The concept of having many leaders distributed throughout an organization and leadership that appreciates the individual expertise of each person is prevalent in organizations that are successful at capacity building (Alfred et al. 2009; Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2012; Hamel & Prahalad, 2003) as evidenced in this particular unit.

The support component of this unit's leadership style entails treating people as people and building trusting relationships. It recognizes that all people, regardless of their role, have the same need to feel that they matter as described in Schlossberg's transition theory (Rayle & Chung, 2007). This includes directors, leaders, and students in a unit such as this SSS unit.

Valuing *people as people* represents the idea that individuals are unique and dynamic rather than just the job line they fill or abstract budgetary personnel account strings. This valuing is expressed by taking time to develop relationships, reward and celebrate success, and provide needed support. For the personnel of this unit, treating people as people includes valuing students and each other as intangible rather than tangible resources and is expressed by serving students holistically and taking care of each other.

The members recognize that caring about each other helps fulfill their mission. They help each other rather than just being invested in their own job description because this is a culture where [we all] "swim together or sink together" in the words of its original director. The recognition that each person contributes to the overall success makes helping each other imperative to reaching their goals. Helping and caring nurtures a trusting environment where innovation and creativity flourish because they are well received even if not always effective.

The Expectation and Unified Vision of Success

The SSS grant documents define the unit's overarching mission: persistence, graduation, and transfer. Periodic reports to the DOE indicate progress toward meeting these formal expectations. However, the unit's staff members also spoke of their mission in informal terms. Over time, they have developed two potent "sayings" that show how its members function on a day-to-day basis and depict the expectations for unit personnel and the students they serve. The first saying, "students first and then each other" sets relationship priorities and the second, "if you succeed, we succeed" describes student inclusion in responsibility for unit success. The director feels that these two sayings have as much to do with mission achievement as the official mission of the SSS program. Written in calligraphy, the motto "If you succeed, we succeed" is beautifully framed and sits next to the sheet each student signs when they use program services.

This informal mission describes the unit's definition of success and while not the same as the formal mission, produces the desired outcomes. Focusing on daily behavior allows unit members to observe how much they can make a difference in other people's lives. These individual interactions build up over time moving the unit and its students

toward their vision of success. Students succeed in part because they are less likely to give up if they are given attention and support (Tinto, 2006).

The program director when asked how she felt her unit differs from other parts of the college explained how their culture of autonomy and support is different in that it puts the performance process for student service above the rigid separation of job duties that can create a "not my job" point of view.

> We sort of blur the lines [between responsibilities] from one job to the other because we are all here to make that student successful. What makes us different is we have been asked to not only do our jobs, but we sort of decide how we want to do those and how much we want to make the students get involved.

The program counselor describes how she has formulated a new view of her role based on student needs. New to higher education counseling, the counselor shared her realization that spending time talking informally with students is as valuable to their progress as formally scheduled advising appointments. So, rather than shutting her office door when she does not have appointments, she has adopted an open-door policy resulting in "[a] chair [that] is never empty." Being able to design her own process based on trial and error demonstrates that she is trusted and given the leeway to adjust her methods and determine their effectiveness. In some units casual or even serious but spontaneous conversations might be viewed as unproductive, while in this unit, the value of conversations is determined by the staff member, not the director.

In my observations of program events and daily functioning, all the staff members spent time with the students discussing every-day topics and problems. There is no strict line between subject matter conversations and the circumstances that can make successful academic achievement difficult. Several staff members who tutor academics mentioned

that at times they feel inadequate to deal with personal student problems but often find that listening satisfies the student need.

If they are not able or comfortable discussing certain issues staff members will refer the student to someone better able to assist. This willingness to include issues other than academic problems has been found one of the most significant contributions to the success of students in the SSS program (Abbott, 2004). Once again, unit staff members define the boundaries and style of interactions with students.

Embedded in the motto, "students first and then each other" is the importance of relationships which focus on people both inside and outside the unit. The concept of caring has been important to student success but is also a concept that is extended to SSS personnel. Showing concern for the needs and feelings of the person being served gives both parties involved a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. The student involved in such a relationship has a greater chance of completing their college goals because they feel like they "matter" (Ryle & Chung, 2007). The service personnel reap job satisfaction by helping someone reach their goals and getting to know them as a person (Krause, 2007; Brewer & Clipart, 2002).

Expressions like "you can do it," "don't give up," "try again next semester; you will do better," are heard continually among staff and students during tutoring sessions and informational presentations. These expressions add to an atmosphere of support, acceptance, and encouragement that reaps high rewards from the expectation of student success (Hoy & Tarter, 2011). The tutorial coordinator explains the powerful effects of belief on success:

> We make students believe in themselves and that they can succeed and overcome their difficulties. We believe in them until they can believe in

> themselves. As a result they maintain high GPA's, they graduate in record numbers, and transfer when they only set out to achieve a two year degree. They are confident about their future and they have internalized this belief. This value cannot be measured in monetary terms.

Believing in students and the resulting belief that students develop within themselves continues to support student success well beyond their experience in college and SSS participation. It is belief in oneself that helps develop the components of psychological capital such as hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism. These traits can be developed (Luthans, 2007) and strengthened with a supportive environment and role models such as those of the SSS unit.

This cultural legacy permeates all aspects of program functioning to include even the way students are handled and encouraged. Student responsibilities are detailed with high expectations that the responsibilities will be fulfilled and with staff acting both as role models and the support system that students need. Under the current director, this legacy has expanded to include students as team members sharing in the autonomy and expectations of high performance and the support provided by unit personnel. This type of freedom and trust also supports innovative ways of leveraging tangible and intangible resources.

Proactive Identification and Leveraging of Resources

The culture of autonomy and support prevalent in this unit promotes the implementation of new ideas and innovation. Increasing productivity and performance for this unit requires tangible and intangible resources. But when unit members were asked to describe the things that help make them successful or improve their success, tangible resources were seldom mentioned as being of primary importance. The budget of this grant program is determined by the U.S. Department of Education and is always

vulnerable to pressure from federal agencies and the economy. These external forces can influence the program budget in dramatic and unexpected ways.

Staff members cited with pride the ways they were able to use the relationships and reputation of the community college to facilitate student activities and acquire more resources. They cited specifically the reputation of the college, an inclusive environment that welcomes everyone, collaborative relationships with college departments, personal relationships with college personnel, and community relations with local organizations as being instrumental to reaching high goals.

Staff members noted that when they reach out to community organizations for donations those community members express pride in their community college and feel honored to help out. These external relationships coupled with the individual and personal characteristics of the staff members such as sharing tacit knowledge and utilizing psychological capital draw untapped resources into the unit's pool of possibilities.

Individual relationships and collaboration work together to improve performance, one interaction at a time, and effectively develop resources over time even if their initiation is the result of an actual or threatened budget cut. Proactive leveraging of available intangible resources and the enhancement of tangible resources continue to support each other producing a spiral of flourishing that yields results above and beyond expectations.

Diversity is another example of an intangible resource that is mentioned by most personnel as an asset that strengthens effectiveness in the unit. Interviewees also stressed that cultural awareness improves team-building and good relationships. As one of the

guidelines of the SSS program, the director explained that diversity experiences enlighten students who are often from single-culture environments, and the excellent functioning of this diverse unit provides a model for students to follow when they experience a diverse workplace. Most important to unit personnel is that this inclusive environment creates a level of comfort that as the director explains "students who may have always been treated as 'different' are accepted 'just the way they are.'

Several staff members mentioned that diversity among personnel adds to the high performance of the unit. Despite how little they have in common unit members make it a point to get acquainted with personal things about each other, such as children and grandchildren's names and ages, problems members may be struggling with or just that someone needs a ride to pick up their car at the garage. They all demonstrate a willingness to cover for each other and share responsibilities regardless of whether it is part of their job description or not. All unit members identified the differences between them as an asset. The unit counselor explained:

> We all have our own dimensions but we all are observant of everybody else. And we help everybody else. And I think that makes us more connected which makes us care more, not only about our own unit but about every other unit.

An inclusive environment that appreciates and encourages diversity by accepting those who may feel "different," has a great influence on the success of students (Escobedo, 2007; Gladieux, 2000; Rayle & Chung, 2007; Sanchez, 2010; Tovar & Simon, 2006). Research also indicates that minority students can be more successful in reaching their educational goals if they are participants in an SSS program (Escobedo, 2007; Sanchez, 2010). This environment of inclusion can assist low-performing Latinos

who are in need of assistance and are willing to accept it if offered (Tovar & Simon, 2006).

The SSS circle of friends expands in many directions to include student family members, college faculty, student affairs professionals, and members of community organizations. Both the director and the humanities tutor explained that relationships with faculty members add another important dimension to program support. One faculty relationship led to a workshop where students learned about and created their own masks, which then hung in the college art gallery.

As a result of reduced funds, program staff members broaden and deepen relationships with program participants, their families, and college personnel because many more of these people can participate in low cost local events. For example, when funds were cut for a trip to a dinner theatre, a barbeque with homemade food took its place along with the opportunity to invite college personnel and student family members to join the fun. In another case, an expensive cultural trip evolved into a bakeoff on campus offering dishes from other countries and including college administrators as judges.

The counselor explained that fewer tangible resources make planning events more time-consuming since she must make local connections to help facilitate an event or ask outside organizations for assistance. However, she agreed that the payoff is greater participation and stronger external relationships, which in turn provide more possible resources to tap for continued assistance. The investment in relationships over time multiplies the availability of both tangible and intangible resources.

Tacit knowledge is appreciated as an intangible resource that can improve program performance. Because tutoring is the greatest expense of the program and inevitably reduced when funding is cut, relationships with former students, local professionals, and faculty provide a willing group of volunteers who contribute their time and expertise when needed. The director said proudly that some paid peer tutors continue as volunteers to help the neediest students even when their paid hours are reduced. Also, both current and former program participants are willing to become mentors when approached by unit personnel.

Empathy and emotional intelligence along with persistence and longevity are necessary components of successful functioning. Both directors expressed the importance of having personnel who were either served by the SSS program when they were students or would have qualified to be served. Staff members that relate to the student circumstances and challenges are considered crucial to effective unit performance (Luthans et al., 2001).

Persistence and longevity are two additional characteristics found to be important to the success of the unit as described by the staff. The former director used the saying "I will is more important than IQ" as an example of what he looks for in a staff member and students as well. It is often the determination to succeed that propels students to achievement (Luthans et al., 2007; Hoy & Tarter, 2011). Every unit member mentioned with pride how long they had all worked there and that a staff member rarely moves on unless for career advancement.

One substantial resource and benefit described by both directors of this unit is the reward for caring about the well-being of another and the importance of taking the time

to listen to, address the needs of, and help another human being. The former director explained that he rewarded unit personnel for taking their own time to help a student in need, especially when assistance was required after regular working hours. To show his appreciation, he would allow the staff member to choose in what part of the country he or she preferred to attend professional development training. The current director emphasized that student emergencies could not be resolved by a timetable and that sometimes the paperwork would just have to wait for another day.

The development and implementation of the process of probation provides an excellent example of how a unit can build on its perceived weaknesses and leverage them into strengths. The culture of the SSS unit is built on a vision that sees the official grant requirements as the minimum results acceptable from this unit's performance. Their collective vision and purpose is to give every student who qualifies for SSS the opportunity to be successful. While only able to serve 10% of those qualified for the program, the willingness and tendency of program staff to help students who are not members of the grant-specified 185 student requirement spawned the innovative development called probation. It is an example of leveraging many types of intangible resources to produce results that are above and beyond even the expectations of program personnel.

In my 11-year recollection, no student who asked for or was referred for help was ever denied time for tutoring, a conversation about vocational rehab evaluations for a learning disability, a resume review, or a recommendation for the right instructor teaching a difficult course. While promoting good will, these services and student successes accumulated without being "counted" toward the required reporting outcomes

of the project itself. The estimate given by the unit director of students being served on average was over 200 at any given time—185 official students and an additional 25 or so whose achievements would never be reported. Another drawback of this traditional approach to defining project participants was a lack of enrollment space if a student asked for admission after the program was full. In some cases, this was irrelevant and the student could wait a semester to join. However, occasionally an excellent candidate for success would ask for short term assistance, but could not be counted because she would graduate before her accomplishment could be recorded.

The new counselor noticed too that in contrast to the successful students who were not being counted, some official students failed to apply appropriate effort and take responsibility for their success. This resulted in lower outcomes and wasted resources that could be applied to more dedicated and potentially successful students. Under the probation process, any student who qualified for the SSS program could utilize the services for one semester. The guidelines and expectations would be described in detail at an intake interview. At the end of the first semester, a meeting of all personnel would decide which students could remain and which would be let go. Most of the ones remaining were officially admitted to the program and would thus be counted in the 185. If a student showed that they were trying but not making progress as quickly as expected, the program personnel would decide if that student could spend a second semester on probation. For some students the extension gave extra time to raise the student's skill level and develop some of the characteristics this study finds crucial to success. The implementation of a probation process became a method for continuing to help students

who were not counted in the official number of 185, while holding accountable unmotivated students who would lower the final reporting data.

Traditionally, once a student is confirmed to qualify for assistance in the program and has filled out an application, their progress is followed for a specified number of years, beginning on the date they are officially admitted to the program until they graduate. Being counted as successful depends on the length of time to graduation determined by the grant guidelines.

The culture of autonomy and support permeates the functioning of the unit as a whole by extending the idea of mutual support to the whole process of admitting students and achieving higher than expected outcomes. Development of the process of probation offers an example of an innovation that moves organizational outcomes forward achieving results beyond expectations. The unit's outcomes since the implementation of probation have risen each year with results for the current year higher than ever before.

The leadership culture of support also provides flexibility within a grant regulation process that outlines what an SSS project must do and what they may do. Thus staff members are able to design an infrastructure of this program that is aligned with the structure of the grant requirements and still reflects unit members' own values and vision. This alignment is a positive aspect for an organization (Alfred et al., 2009). The support portion of the leadership theme engenders a trust between all unit members, who are willing to try new things, knowing that if efforts do not work out as intended they will not be discouraged from trying something else new for fear of judgment or criticism (Hoy & Tarter, 2011).

The human qualities, traits, and behaviors required to sustain an environment of individual success and thus unit success are supported by the positive concept of this unit treating *people as people*. An organization that values its people above all else has the best opportunity to achieve abundance, a state of sustained leveraging of all available resources both tangible and intangible according to the CCAM (Alfred et al., 2009). Leveraging expertise and relationships are resources no outside agency can reduce because of budget cuts and yet are an integral part of what makes this program so successful.

Conclusions

Results of interview analysis revealed relationships, tacit knowledge, diversity, leadership qualities, and traits of unit members were important to the unit's successful organizational functioning. These are intangible resources that are leveraged separately and collectively through the actions of formal and informal leaders (Alfred et al., 2009). When leveraged in combination, they improve functioning and performance the most (Hamel & Prahalad, 2005).

Resources are leveraged in almost every unit activity from grant writing to the selection of permanent program participants. Creatively leveraged intangible resources include relationships, personnel tacit knowledge, member diversity, leadership attributes, and the manifestation of traits that contribute to unit success. This leveraging enhances the capacity of the unit to achieve results even greater than expected through collective leveraging. Not all components are at work simultaneously, nor applied with the same emphasis in every situation. However, if the desired results are achieved, then the leveraged components are appropriately applied.

The process of probation provides an example of the development of flourishing by the creative leveraging of resources involved in the probation process. They include the autonomy to develop the innovation termed probation which produced success rates greater than ever before, the expertise and collaboration of all unit members to decide collectively who would become a permanent student of the program, the influence of the culture of autonomy and support as applied to student opportunities for success, and the focus on and expectation of success for the student by the staff.

Similar to the concept of psychological capital, the themes identified in the analysis of this case study are much more effective when used in combination. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The high performance of this unit begins with a cultural foundation that values and rewards people by providing autonomy and support. This culture has been maintained regardless of leadership, personnel, and location changes. Springing from the culture are creativity and innovation based on the trust between and among the leaders in the unit including almost all personnel because they have decision-making power over some resource allocation.

Proactive development of tangible and intangible resources is encouraged and supported not only during budget cuts, but as part of standard practice. Over time, these resources multiply because relationships and collaborative efforts are nurtured and appreciated. Working in concert, these aspects of culture, innovation, and persistence move this unit not just in the direction of their goals but beyond the minimum expectations. Having unit members themselves identify the best qualities of how this

organization functions, they tend to make more decisions based upon enhancing those qualities.

Unit members save time and energy when they know what contributes to their success . For instance, this unit has developed two potent sayings that help them remember the overall mission of their program. These sayings are not about failure but instead focus on what makes this unit achieve its mission.

Unit personnel found that relationship building and collaboration are key components of their success. So, in a new situation requiring choice of tasks or allocation of time, the leaders will first look at what has been identified as the most important use of the unit's resources and proceed in that direction. This requires little change but just a greater emphasis on what is already working.

This study shows that focusing on leveraging intangibles regardless of availability of tangible resources can increase capacity continuously, not just when resources are scarce. Tangible resource challenges are not unique to this SSS unit and building bridges of cooperation, collaborating inside and outside the organization, treating people as people, and promoting positive attributes of leadership are efforts that can be applied to many units both inside and outside of the college environment.

The contribution of SSS in student involvement and retention (Kelly-Hall, 2010), as well as student persistence (Gibson, 2003) demonstrates that the SSS services provide positive results for the population they serve. The roles of SSS personnel as mentor/counselor/friend to guide, encourage, and inform students would benefit all students if adopted by all service personnel (Walsh, 2000). But for this unit, we have

been able to identify specific actions and behaviors supporting performance above and beyond expectations.

The cost of leveraging is low in tangible terms and the benefits can be significant as demonstrated by the influence they have on this unit's success. Leveraging resources for capacity building can help make the difference between an organization that performs adequately and one that performs beyond expectations. Leveraging intangibles can help remove many of the excuses that stagnate and paralyze positive movement toward results.

Recommendations

A desire to determine and improve unit performance begins with identification of what is best about what the unit does (Alfred et al. 2009; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Mather, 2010). This begins with all unit members identifying what about the unit functioning helps that unit's success. Because all units function differently, member strengths and accomplishments may vary under different leadership but members and leaders of a unit are the most qualified to identify what they do or could do best both individually and as a unit (Shults, 2008; Yang, 2009). This is not about determining what is wrong with the unit since that is usually a frequent focus when looking for improvement.

Connect Strengths to the Mission

Once strengths and contributions to high functioning have been determined, unit leaders can help all members connect their strengths to the process of achieving their collective mission. Positive traits and behaviors can be strengthened through training that

can for instance increase an individual's psychological capital (Avey et al., 2010) and a leader's positive leadership attributes.

Develop Constructive Relationships

Leaders and all members need to concentrate on developing positive relationships within and outside of their unit. Using every possible opportunity for collaboration with other units can enhance performance because collaborative relationships produce and utilize intangible resources that evolve from such relationships (Komives, 2000). In addition, leaders and all unit members need to nurture a culture that puts people first, recognizable by an ethic of caring (Alfred et al., 2009). The culture includes support for innovation amidst a trusting environment that provides the autonomy to perform position responsibilities with individuality (Erkutlu, 2012).

Identify and Leverage Resources

Focused on a unified mission, leaders and all team members will learn to recognize and leverage resources, especially often overlooked, intangible resources. In a trusting environment unit personnel will brainstorm new and creative ways to apply what is available to benefit the whole unit, regardless of budgetary restraints (Erkutlu, 2012). Learning to identify and leverage resources should apply to all unit members, not just formal leaders.

In a service unit, personnel working under these new or refurbished conditions can reap a greater sense of job satisfaction which in turn influences the services they provide and those who receive those services (Brewer & Clippard, 2002). The results are ways of functioning that produce performance outcomes above and beyond expectations.

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Appendices

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Viewing a TRIO Program through a Positive Organizational Lens

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the positive organizational functioning of a TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are or have been connected to this SSS program as an employee, student participant, or administrator. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 10 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Susan Berry, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky Department of Education Policy Studies and Evaluation. She is being guided in this research by Neal Hutchens and Tricia Brown-Ferrigno. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study. They are Alissa Young, Lewis Burke Jr., and Michael Stapleton who are also students in the same doctoral program.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The proposed study seeks to explore the reasons for exceptional performance of some community college units. By doing this study, we hope to learn about how the exceptional functioning of this TRIO program is influenced by positive characteristics of the organization's staff and their functioning as an organization.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Any person may decline participation without harm.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College. You will need to come to Rooms 102b in the Academic Technical Building at least once for a 45 minute interview, If you are a staff member, you may be interviewed two times during the study. Each of those visits will take about 45 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 45 minutes if you are a student participant, former director, or college administrator. These interviews will take place during the months of July or August 2011. If you are a staff member you will also be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire with open ended questions taking about 45 minutes to complete and a paper questionnaire, taking about 15 minutes to complete. The total amount of time a program staff member will be asked to volunteer is 2.5 hours in July or August 2011.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to respond to questions and share your thoughts regarding leadership, the use of resources, and the performance of SSS program staff as individuals and the functioning of the program as a whole. All participants will be asked to participate in the

interviews with the researcher who will ask you to reflect on your perceptions about leadership, resources, and unit functioning. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Once the interviews have been transcribed, you will be asked to review the transcripts to confirm that they reflect your intentions when the interviews were conducted. The researchers will discuss and compile the major themes that emerge from your responses.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help community college units understand the positive factors that are present in organizations that function in an exceptional manner.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All data will remain in the possession of the researchers or be kept in a locked cabinet or password protected system at the researchers' office.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Susan Berry at susan.berry@kctcs.edu or 270-706-8436. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent Date

Instrument

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

Viewing a TRIO Student Support Services Unit through a Positive Lens

This study is focusing on the things that help make organizations successful and why they work. This questionnaire is interested in your views and opinions about what works and why concerning the functioning of your SSS program unit.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Please respond to the questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible. This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1. What are your position responsibilities in this SSS program unit?

2. What is the relationship between your work and this SSS program's overall performance?

3. In your SSS program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?

4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective?

6. What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

7. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

8. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?

9. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?

10. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

Definitions of Facets and Associated Code Words

Abundance	reaching unexpected levels of organizational functioning and performance
People as People	treating people as intangible rather than tangible resources and represents the idea that individuals are unique and dynamic rather than just the job line they fill or abstract budgetary personnel account strings
Upward Spiral	the abundant result of leveraging intangible resources, which then produces more resources and that continues in an upward spiral creating abundance
Exceptional Value	benefitting well beyond what is expected
Intangible Resources	nonmaterial assets that cannot be quantified such as informal, subjective, emotive, process-oriented elements
Change	the functioning of the unit and the benefits received during and after a change has taken place
Collaboration	working within and outside the group with other individuals and organizations to support a goal
Diversity	appreciation and inclusion of difference as well as the purposeful exposure to those who are different
Empowerment	increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities
Networking	connecting with other people, professionals, and organizations
Relationships	benefits from liking and appreciating others
Tacit Knowledge	knowledge gained from experience and expertise of unit members
Leverage	getting the most from what is available
Tangible Resources	material assets: positions, finances, facilities, equipment, technology
Institutional Commitment	Committed facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, and other resources to supplement the grant and enhance project services
Leadership	behaviors that support abundance and leveraging of intangible resources
Cohesiveness	supporting and developing an atmosphere of working together as a unit
Vision	characteristic of Abundance, all members have the same vision as the leader
Autonomy	supporting the autonomy of each person in the unit; to make decisions about their responsibilities and to carry out their responsibilities in an excellent

	manner
Stretch Goals	audacious goals, ambitious goals
Professional Development	leaders provide opportunities for members to participate in professional development opportunities
Strengths/Personal Assets	utilization and appreciation for individual abilities and expertise
Other	topics outside of the Lens Facet
Mattering	Schlossberg's Theory of Mattering
Program Model	use this model of student service on a larger scale
Developing PsyCap	the process of leaders or other role models encouraging and modeling the application of PsyCap, to the point there is a demonstrated difference in another.
Positive Attributes of Leadership	Realistic optimism, Emotional Intelligence, Confidence to Succeed, Hope
Realistic Optimism	feeling positive about an outcome and finding a way to achieve it
Emotional Intelligence	comprised of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skill.
Confidence to Succeed	trusts in the capabilities and possibilities of the unit to achieve whatever goals they have to reach
Hope	persevering toward goals and, when necessary redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed
Psychological Capital	Four elements of POB which can be improved through training: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism
Resilience	perseverance to keep trying and bounce back if things don’t go well
Optimism	making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future
Efficacy	having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks

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Chapter 4

Enhancing Positive Team Dynamics in a Community College Virtual Coaching Network

The mission of the coaching network is to reach the seemingly conflicting goals of enrolling thousands of community college students while addressing the educational and employability needs of "one student, one job at a time" as described in the 2010-2016 KCTCS Business Plan"(2011). I argue that in order to fulfill this mission, this network's culture must put people first, leverage intangible resources, and provide its members with autonomy and support from their leadership. In addition, following protocols that enhance their ability to work virtually, it is possible that the members of this network can perform above and beyond expectations.

The benefit of putting people first and treating people as people was demonstrated in research of high performing community colleges (Alfred et al., 2009) and is applicable to this coaching network. While the influence on student success cannot always be traced directly to advising and support services, an organization with a people-focused culture will appreciate the value of all its members, including those who do not directly generate revenue. The coaches need time and appropriate tools to nurture and develop relationships with students and employees who provide service to students as well. Supported by retention research (Tinto, 2008), the relationships that coaches develop with students and each other (Berry, 2013) can help fulfill the mission of the community colleges and the national mandate to prepare citizens through education and employment to contribute to a recovering economy.

Leaders in a high functioning unit are defined as those who have control over resources and are empowered to leverage those resources. These leaders also understand that there are more resources available to them in addition to the tangible resources often identified as budget dollars and technology. While these additional intangible resources cannot be easily quantified, if implemented wisely they can move this coaching network toward greater success. Relationships, leadership qualities, and support for personnel are examples of such intangible resources that are at a leader's disposal.

Lastly, because leveraging resources is such an important part of achieving successful outcomes, anyone empowered to make decisions about the use or allocation of resources is defined as a leader. Therefore, the more leaders leverage and even multiply resources, the greater their chances of achieving exceptional results (Alfred et al., 2009).

A possible solution to this dilemma is based on two cultural components, valuing people as people while using technology and information management to help serve a large number of people attempting to reach educational goals. Recent research conducted by the dissertation team of Berry, Burke, Stapleton, and Young (2013) shows that the practices recommended in this paper can enhance high performance at the unit level of community college functioning. The development of this coaching network and application of these practices serves as a contextual bridge between the benefit of serving one student at a time and the need to educate thousands. Doing this successfully requires leaders who understand the process, prioritize the value of people, and leverage appropriate tangible and intangible resources.

Background of Learn on Demand

Learn on Demand was developed in 2009 under the premise that it would be self-supporting and as such, removed from the risk of shrinking budgets. This delivery model is an all online program initiated by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS). It distinguishes itself by delivering online credit courses, divided into smaller pieces called modules that a student can begin at any time, attempt to receive credit for prior knowledge, and proceed at his or her own pace toward a specified course end date. Based on a mastery learning approach, students cannot progress to the next module without successfully completing the one before it. Driven by technology, Learn on Demand can enroll thousands of students and start them in college courses very quickly. With this business model, course sections cannot be cancelled for lack of enrollment nor is enrollment restricted because a course or module has reached its student capacity or because a facilitator is unavailable which are situations that can occur often in a more traditional delivery model.

The business model for Learn on Demand pays instructors, called facilitators, per student per module as soon as the each student course becomes available for the student to work on. This is based on the student-selected start date. The original model expected students to pay as they go, taking one module or course at a time based on the condition that payment is what allows the student access to the module or course.

The first three years of Learn on Demand showed that the program can be effective and that self-paced works very well for many students, especially those who need independence and flexibility or who would otherwise delay higher education enrollment. Despite its appeal, Learn on Demand enrollment did not meet enrollment

expectations because citizens were unwilling and unable to pay for modules up front without using federal financial aid. Consequently, the rise in unemployment and diminished personal assets for college tuition reduced the number of students both interested and able to enroll in Learn on Demand. However, two important findings resulted from the first three-year delivery of courses.

First, the success rate for Learn on Demand students in terms of grade point averages appeared to be higher using the same evaluation methods used for students in more traditional programs. Several things that differentiated Learn on Demand could account for these findings. One difference is that the mastery learning model does not allow students to move forward until they have mastered the current material and secondly students paying for their own courses, sets a higher cost for failure. Also, when financial aid assistance did become available for Learn on Demand students, they risked losing their aid more easily than traditional students because guidelines for withdrawals and failures were more stringent. These strict requirements, served to filter out students who would not or could not meet the standards. While research has not been conducted to determine possible causes for the success, the result was used as a talking point when promoting the program to educators.

In the second important finding, administrators discovered that innovative practices such as a 24/7 outsourced call center and new types of software could be easily piloted using the small population of Learn on Demand students before scaling up to the entire student populations of all sixteen colleges. For example, the 24/7 outsourced helpdesk was established when the Learn on Demand program was rolled out. Helpdesk personnel and website materials continue to answer 90% of student and prospect

questions about Learn on Demand through calls, chats, and emails. In addition, data collected from helpdesk calls indicate that the majority of questions asked concerned other student service issues unrelated to Learn on Demand. At the onset, 10% of unanswered questions were forwarded to two college employees called Tier 2, who represented Learn on Demand for all sixteen colleges in the system. The use of helpdesk personnel saved money and offered quick responses with quantifiable results that appeared to take care of the majority of student problems.

Tier 2 personnel worked as liaisons between the outsourced helpdesk and all the colleges. In addition, they worked directly with students and gathered weekly enrollment data for administrative reporting. While Learn on Demand program offerings and enrollment grew based in part on the efforts of these two service personnel, Tier 2 did not receive the additional assistance promised making it difficult to provide adequate services for the students needing more than helpdesk general enrollment assistance. However, their responsibilities became the model for those who are now coaches. Unmet needs included continuous support and academic advising necessary to move students toward the completion of certificates, diplomas, and degrees. Increased enrollment for Learn on Demand was realized when federal financial aid could be used to cover the cost of Learn on Demand courses. But the lack of adequate advising and continuous support remained a problem in addition to the quandary of applying rigid federal financial aid guidelines to a flexible registration process.

The original solution to Learn on Demand advising needs was the solicitation of at least two academic advisors from each of the sixteen KCTCS colleges. This process floundered because while volunteer advisors were familiar with the programs, they had

neither the time nor incentive to take on this additional role. The conflicting mission of high enrollments and individual student service became obvious as the two Tier 2 personnel began to take on the role of academic advisors while never officially recognized as such. The question arose: how do we facilitate student success for the thousands of students enrolled in this program and include the KCTCS goal of one student, one job at a time?

Developing an Advising Model

A Complete College America Grant awarded to the Commonwealth of Kentucky in 2011 (Fulton, 2011) seemed to provide a solution to the dilemma of serving and advising students one-at-a-time. The solution would revolve around the purchase and implementation of software and technology to be rolled out on a grand scale. Its purpose was to assist the mass of students anticipated to benefit from newly developed Learn on Demand college readiness courses and testing processes. College readiness helps students who are not prepared to succeed at college courses but it differs from more traditional developmental programs because of its design to move students more quickly toward their educational goals. College readiness is based on the Learn on Demand modular mastery concept. The software budgeted through this grant, would also benefit current Learn on Demand students and those who are college ready.

Purchased with an eye toward the future and seen as a wise investment, the technology and software designed for the college readiness process would eventually be distributed to the entire system's teaching and advising population. In addition to technology, a nationally recognized advising consultant was contracted to prepare newly

selected volunteers now termed college readiness advisors to guide students toward completion.

This additional funding and prior challenges with Learn on Demand student advising prompted the selection of a group of college readiness advisors already holding fulltime positions to be used as a pilot for advising the new group of Learn on Demand students who are not college ready. These advisors were expected to assist developmental students not previously targeted for Learn on Demand with the new college readiness program. As with previously selected academic subject matter volunteer advisors, it became obvious that college readiness advisors could not fulfill either the grant or the KCTCS mission because of competing demands.

Decision makers then broadened their focus from using enterprise software as the sole solution to advising challenges to hiring employees dedicated to carrying out the Learn on Demand mission of enrollment, retention, and completion. Thus the virtual advising network came into existence to provide advising services to all Learn on Demand students anywhere at any time. The improved software could enroll thousands of students while the coaches focus on "one student, one job at a time." .

Like the academic delivery model of Learn on Demand implemented in 2009, this virtual coaching network model offers many challenges and good ideas; some of them are new while others are being revisited. The refocus on dedicated people to comprise the network is among the practices found to contribute to performance above and beyond expectations (Alfred et al., 2009; Berry et al., 2013; Berry, 2013; Shults, 2009). Administrators realized that support personnel have a strong influence on student success even if they do not provide direct revenue. Having only part time advisors had limited

the program's possibilities to exceed expectations for success (Alfred et al., 2009; Berry, Burke, Stapleton, & Young, 2013). Tripling the number of dedicated personnel from two Tier 2 personnel to six coaches seemed a solution to the enrollment goal and student success.

Virtual Coaching Network Implementation

The model consists of six success coaches hired specifically to use up-to-date technology that monitors the course progress of Learn on Demand students. This support is expected to perpetuate and increase enrollment while students proceed toward completion of diplomas, degrees, and then transfer to four-year colleges. Administrators promised to hire additional coaches as enrollment increases through additional marketing efforts. A lesson well-learned would be to keep that promise because a trusting relationship between administrators and personnel is crucial to the success of this or any network (Berry et al., 2013, Alfred et al., 2009).

Without a specific limit on workload, impossible expectations can perpetuate burn-out. In the grant funded high-performing service unit described in Chapter Three, the unit members began each year with a fixed number of participants and the option of adding unofficial students if the unit was capable of serving them. In this example, the service providers are the ones who determine if they are able to increase the capacity for service. With this type of role related autonomy, the level of service rarely falls below peak performance. In fact, service personnel have shown to perform with greater success when they have input into their work responsibilities as described in Chapter 2 and studies related to this dissertation.

However, if parameters are set by administrators and then changed without input from the coaches, these actions can drastically affect morale. To prevent this, weekly reporting numbers for Learn on Demand can be monitored not just for growth rates but also for the size of each coaching workload. Coaches can request assistance when the number of coaches needs to be increased due to a rise in student population. As research indicates, having that autonomy can improve coach effectiveness and job satisfaction (Berry, 2013).

One focus for the coaches is assisting those students who are underprepared for college level work, a population historically difficult to retain and advance through the education pipeline. These students will be part of the college readiness model designed to target student subject-matter weaknesses and decrease the time needed to advance to college level courses. If this model is successful, its design and the premier software used for its implementation will become available to all online community college students not just those choosing Learn on Demand. If administrators have a people-centered focus, this retention model will also include Success Coaches, like the ones used for Learn on Demand.

The virtual coaching network is designed around an advising concept that is holistic, comprehensive, longitudinal, and part of the quick response helpdesk model that offers an entire range of student services. Such a design can apply Schlossberg's theory of mattering which simply put, says that it is important for students to feel as if they matter to college personnel and even to fellow students (Santiago, 2007). Currently, many coaching responsibilities are similar to those handled by traditional on-campus student affairs professionals such as providing admissions, registration and financial aid

assistance. But coaches have the opportunity to provide the benefits of continuous service from first student contact to beyond graduation (Blimling, Whitt & Associates, 1999). However, for Learn on Demand these services must be accessible in a 24/7 and 365 format which means that success for the coaching networking requires greater availability and collaboration between academic and student affairs professionals (Dale & Drake, 2005; Grace, 2002; Kezar, 2001; Schroeder, 1999) from all sixteen KCTCS colleges.

Measurable goals and benchmarks, indicators of the coaching network's success, are defined as total student enrollment and credit hour enrollment per student reported weekly. A cap of 200 students for each coach was raised to 300 after a few months along with additional unforeseen enrollment responsibilities. If this increase from originally defined job parameters remains permanent, it can erode the trust that exists between the coaches and administration. Because the course delivery model is self-supporting, reaching these goals and benchmarks is crucial to program sustainability including coaches' salaries. This need for sustainability can place additional pressure on coaches to meet enrollment demands and also affect the quality of individual interactions. Innovative strategies such as the application of positive psychology principles can help administrators meet enrollment goals and help counteract this distraction by focusing on the original purpose of hiring the coaches to improve student retention and completion rather than increase enrollment. Having a people focused attitude by employing the strategies suggested in this paper can reap benefits far greater than increasing enrollment numbers.

Coaches' primary service as described at hiring interviews is to deliver academic and transfer advising along with personal counseling and problem solving. To do this in a holistic manner, they must also be informed on financial aid and other types of student processes. These activities are part of consistent positive support throughout and beyond the student's college career. The coaches take their place within a system often described as a funnel, created to attract and enroll as many students as possible through a massive online enrollment campaign. The original design placed coaches as a reference contact for enrollment specialists, who initiate contact with a student or potential student. Other referrals come from the toll-free helpdesk personnel who field inquiries into the program.

Coaches are meant to function as a contact that will provide direct and continuous service for individual students using a group/individual case management style, one student at a time (Sander, 2008). A priority for hiring a coach is that he/she has a master's degree and the desire to help students be successful. A higher purpose or vision such as student success aside from immediate enrollment goals acts as a powerful motivator, crucial to establishing a successful coaching network (Berry, 2013).

Upon employment, coaches receive laptop computers, dual computer monitors, traveling cases, office supplies, headphones, and an iPhone. In addition, new coaches attend live and virtual training on a minimum of five types of enterprise software. Professional development opportunities include access to and attention from a professional advising consultant and attendance at state, regional, and national advising conferences. The type and length of training is determined by the individual hiring timeframe. The advising consultant indicated in his national blog that his biggest concern for the network was managing the various technological challenges the coaches must face

(Stoller, 2012). Research on virtual team functioning suggests that this is not the most important challenge a virtual team faces because continued training to develop appropriate technological skills can be provided. (Kirkman, Rosen, Gibson et al., 2002). However, in the case of this network, technology can hinder a coach's ability to provide efficient service and reporting because software programs are not integrated and do not promote end-user efficiency. Instead, they become time-consuming challenges to work around incompatibilities between assigned tasks and software capabilities.

Coaching Challenges

Virtual coaches face several challenges that cannot be met through the exclusive application of tangible resources. Challenges include (a) overcoming isolation from colleagues, (b) balancing personal responsibilities and on-call hours, (c) successfully maneuvering through higher education bureaucracy, (d) managing software fragmentation, (e) compiling and reporting data, and (f) adjusting to unpredictable changes inherent in the development of any new model. Five challenges identified by virtual team research (Kirkman et al., 2002) expand and overlap those identified for this network. These challenges are: (a) building trust, (b) cohesion, (c) team identity, (d) isolation, and (e) assessment and recognition of team performance. I have combined this series of challenges into four areas that research conducted for this dissertation found crucial to high performance. Areas crucial to all four unit case studies are: (a) building trust; (b) team identity and cohesion; (c) building relationships; and (4) leveraging intangibles.

Meeting the Challenge

While obstacles can seem rather daunting, the results of the research identifying positive influences on high performing units can help the coaches apply their strengths and leverage available resources to meet and overcome these challenges. These challenges provide specific starting points for applying positive strategies (Gittell, 2003).

Practices found to enhance performance of a service unit include but are not limited to creating a culture that provides autonomy and support, developing relationships inside and outside the unit, and strengthening positive human characteristics such as leadership qualities and psychological capital. The application of these organizational practices can enhance unit functioning plus improve individual job performance and satisfaction (Berry, 2013) while meeting the KCTCS transformation goal of "one student, one job at a time" ("2010-2016 Business Plan", 2011).

When applied, these practices center on the value of people as people in an organization such as the coaches in the network and the students they serve, while leveraging the resources available to them, including the use of technology. This approach appreciates the value of people as an intangible resource that promotes student success where a more common approach assumes a straight line or cause and effect explanation for student success even when student success literature (Dale & Drake, 2005; Grace, 2002; Kezar, 2001; Santiago, 2004; Tinto, 2006) contradicts this line of thinking.

However, Alfred et al. (2009) have shown us that organizations that value people above everything else tend to engage in what is known as capacity building. This means that by leveraging their resources including people, their traits, relationships, strengths,

and tacit knowledge, organizations can enhance performance and achieve results above and beyond standard expectations. Applying the findings of positive unit research (Berry, 2013; Berry, Burke, Stapleton, and Young, 2013) based on this premise will add a positive dimension to the coaching network's functioning. The result will be an influence on student and coach performance even if tangible resources are diminished (Alfred et al., 2009) or workload grows with increased enrollment. While the resources tapped in this model are freely available, the use of these resources to resolve the conflict between size and service is part of an often unrecognized innovation.

Building Trust

Trust begins with the philosophy of customer service espoused by the organization. If the principle and promise of putting students first remains consistent, then the coaches will have the freedom to utilize their resources both external and internal, tangible and intangible to perform in a way that puts student needs first regardless of enrollment goals or the expense of hiring more coaches.

Berry et al. confirms the importance of leaders developing a culture that engenders trust among the coaches and organizational administrators. Leaders need to be developed at every level of the coaching network and are defined as those who make decisions about the use of resources. Resources include intangibles such as personal strengths and expertise. This autonomy to make decisions about resources also gives the team an opportunity to develop its own identity (Gillett, 2003), another important aspect of team success. With this individual and group autonomy comes a sense of responsibility both individual and collectively to be successful and help each other as described in Chapter Three regarding a grant-funded service unit.

Leaders build trust by providing opportunities to keep up to date with changes and encourage suggestions that can improve performance and reduce the stress of a continually increasing workload. Coaches are more willing to make informed decisions and improve processes when they feel supported in risk taking and even possible errors.

Team Identity and Cohesion

Working together, coaches determine how they will be most effective as a team and how to adjust to the frequently changing responsibilities and bureaucratic guidelines. Since how they conduct their work is different from most college organizations, they need to decide how to support each other, leverage various strengths, and adjust schedules to cover on-call responsibilities. A team identity, autonomy, trust, and respect as professionals will develop a cohesion that provides autonomy for coaches. This autonomy allows them to define how they perform their duties and leverage intangible resources. Using this combination of actions, coaches build the capacity of their network's performance (Alfred et al., 2009).

A cohesive team identity means that team members share a vision that is crucial to exceeding minimum requirements. High functioning units have been found to use a vision that describes what they see as their purpose over and above the formal requirements they are asked to report. As with the unit described in Chapter Three and the library unit in Chapter Two (Stapleton, 2013) coaches care about student success and will do whatever it takes to assist them. Another discovery in the study of high performing units is that successful teams develop a motto or informal mission that describes how they plan to fulfill the vision (Stapleton, 2013). In the case of the coaches, this might be "students first" or "whatever it takes" or "if you succeed, we succeed" or

overheard recently, “teamwork makes the dream work.” This motto is not imposed by administrators but arises from the coaches themselves. A vision of success does more than motivate coaches, it motivates students because they respond to the belief that they can be successful as well (Barefoot, 2006). By choosing to follow that vision, personnel keep their focus and determination to work under less than perfect conditions (Stapleton, 2013) as they guide students toward success.

Developing Relationships

The organization that employs the coaches understands the importance of building relationships both within and outside of the coaching network because the guiding KCTCS customer service principles are the standards used to make decisions and conduct activities as well as keep service commitments and promises (thePoint, 2013). Of the eight such principles and promises, four describe the need for and type of relationships that can help the coaching network be successful with results that exceed expectations. These practices were also found in high performing units described in Chapter Two of this dissertation. They are: (a) put students first; (b) coordinate department contacts and other resources to ensure the customer’s needs are met; (c) communicate effectively and efficiently at all times by following-up and following-through and (d) build long-term relationships with internal and external customers (thePoint, 2013).

As their employer indicates, relationships are a key to the high performance of all teams, but coaches must be experts in developing and maintaining relationships with a wide variety of people and at a distance. This includes getting to know other coaches, the several hundred students they coach, and all the people who help them provide professional service. Coaches must bridge many divides between student affairs

personnel, course facilitators, program developers, and administrative personnel for the many programs and courses offered by the 16 different colleges in the system. This is a difficult and important responsibility crucial to student success and thus program success (Schroeder, 1999).

Gittell (2003) describes a theory of relational coordination arguing that the coordination of highly interdependent work is most effectively carried out through high-quality communication and relationships, particularly through relationships of shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect (2003). These relationships are especially important when coaches are working with a variety of service personnel in different departments at sixteen different colleges. An example of this type of coordination is the successful timing of student enrollment in Learn on Demand courses and the application of financial aid benefits to assure that students will be able to start their courses and receive their aid in a timely manner. This process takes cooperation between a coach doing the enrollment and any one of 16 financial aid departments who do aid packaging. This theory reinforces what we already know, that one person performing interdependent work depends on another to perform their work to coordinate an important outcome. In most higher education processes, there are several steps and many people involved in enabling student success.

Another example of such relational coordination is evident in the case of a student who moved to a military base in another state with her new partner and her teenage son. Her online education continued seamlessly until she experienced a breakup in her relationship. She lost her home and internet access as she was just preparing to begin a new job. She called her coach in desperation. The student was falling behind in her

coursework and ready to quit school and return to her home state and family immediately. The coach clarified the situation by asking questions. She suggested that the student complete her courses and continue to receive her financial aid as it was providing the student and her son with some financial stability. The coach encouraged the student by telling her not to quit and suggested she use restaurants, coffee shops, and libraries to work on her classes. This plan would provide stability for her son who had acclimated to his new school and was happy in their new location. In the meantime, the coach would help make arrangements with the student's two course facilitators for deadline extensions. Everyone in the Learn on Demand program cooperated to help the student stay in school. She contacted the coach several more times to update her about internet access, course progress, and general life circumstances.

Upon successful course completion, the student once again contacted the coach to help her enroll in courses for the next semester. She shared that she liked her new job, her son liked his school, and she was ready to complete her prerequisites and transfer to a local occupational therapy program in the state where she currently resides. She said that a turning point came when she was feeling very down and received a certificate in the mail congratulating her for making the Dean's List for the semester. "Imagine," she said, "just a little piece of paper, meant that much to me."

The players behind the scenes in this scenario exemplify excellent relational coordination starting with the student and coach, student and facilitators, coach and facilitators, office staff managing the transaction of extensions, financial aid officials, and ending with college academic and service personnel who determined her status and

mailed her the award of Dean's List. The importance of relationships and collaboration can never be over emphasized.

Not only do relations determine the efficiency of work but also, whether a coach feels isolated. Kirkman et al. discovered that conventional wisdom had assumed isolation and trust-building would be an issue in a virtual team but that was not well-founded. Researchers found virtual employees who reported, "I think trusting someone in a virtual team is linked directly to their work ethic. It is task first. Then trust has been built through the task-based relationship that has evolved" (Kirman et al., 2002 p. 69). This same type of trust can be built with students during virtual transactions if coaches respond quickly, do what they promise in a timely manner and let the student know that they matter.

Virtual workers also reported:

> If you are working with people you never see, you can develop trust, but you must respond to that person. Follow through. If you tell them you are going to get back to a customer, get back to them. (Kirman et al., 2002 p. 69)

Resource Leveraging

All leaders spend time making decisions about resources. Initial focus is on tangible resources such as budget dollars, number of employee positions, and procuring necessary equipment including technology. The largest expenditure in service organizations is generally on personnel and the benefits they receive. But there are resources available to every leader that remain unrecognized because they are intangible and therefore underutilized. Among useful intangible resources are employee strengths, relationships, collaboration, student engagement, positive leaders, psychological capital, professional development, the use of technology, and data collection (Alfred et al., 2009).

Intangible resources become more evident when leaders and unit members are made aware of what they are and what they can do for promoting unit success.

Personal strengths

Psychological capital is the combination of four state-like traits that can be enhanced and leveraged to improve work performance and thus contribute to organizational capacity building (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). The combination of the four components of psychological capital, hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism when utilized together in an individual produces an increased effectiveness far greater than if the characteristics occur separately. These capacities influence the effectiveness of organizations and individuals as well. If they develop and apply psychological capital, both coaches and students will enhance successful performance. For example, coaches will follow through in complicated tasks and persist in making necessary contacts when common contacts are not available or responsive and students will also persist when they see how coaches are willing to persist on their behalf confident that they can be successful. As student confidence increases, they will become more proactive about taking responsibility for their education. They will be able to take over their own registration and enrollment while relying on their coaches for continued support. They can track their degree requirements and interact with their facilitators as they move toward graduation, knowing that at any point, their coach is available. This development of self-sufficiency with support, enables coaches to handle a greater number of students as they move current students toward independence.

The trait of hope is defined as perseverance toward goals and when necessary, redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed. This dual process is sometimes referred to

as having the will and finding a way. Any service person working in higher education can be more effective when demonstrating hope and the second attribute of self-efficacy which entails having the confidence to take on and apply the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks. Success in the continually changing landscape of higher education requires resilience described as the perseverance to keep trying and bounce back if things do not go well as in the case of the stranded student and her son. Resilience is a necessary component of student success (Tinto, 2006). The fourth component, optimism means making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future, viewing current setbacks as transient (Luthans et al., 2007).

We can see in the prior example of student success that with the help of her coach, the student was willing and able to complete her courses and continue on a personal path to independence and self-support. But as we see in most cases, it does "take a village."

Technology

While access to technology and its equipment are considered tangible resources, the use of technology is an important intangible resource that can be leveraged to improve performance above and beyond expectations. The use of technology can give people the time and opportunity to be more human and humane, while repetitive and time-consuming tasks are performed for them.

With a team identity, service philosophy of students first, and the autonomy to define how they will carry out their responsibilities, coaches will be asked for input about the technology and how they use it. Software programs that do not always make the user's job easier or more efficient will be modified or replaced to give coaches more time

to put “students first.” Programs that are purchased for administrative purposes but create inefficiency and frustration for the coaches will be modified or utilized by other personnel. The result will be less transaction time and more time to interact with students.

An organization that continually creates situations that interfere with its promise to hold true to its service principles does not appear to value its people. This weakens the valuable bond of trust. Trust can be maintained or even restored if answers are found in software designed to collect the data required to report productivity measures for administrators and at the same time meet the challenge of valuing the intangible interactions between coaches and students.

It is not enough to copy over current processes into an online environment; for to do that will only duplicate service that could be improved. Innovation requires using technology and knowledge management as creative tools for improvement that can help eliminate the frustration of a steep learning curve and complicated processes (Serban & Jing, 2002). Intelligent use of technology and knowledge management can provide time for coaches to focus on the students they serve. Swift access to information is crucial to achieving the goal of excellent and engaging coaching services for students. It is important to remember that this is not about technology or online learning; it is about students and how colleges can best meet their needs and thus accomplish institutional and individual goals. The technology should support rather than lead, which is the expectation of the Net Generation; not what it does, but the activity it enables (Wager, 2005).

Personnel attitude, availability, problem resolution time, response time, and caring are some characteristics and perspectives already described as important in current research (Shea & Armitage, 2003). Leveraging these intangible resources, enhances their value by enhancing other resources. For instance, the caring attitude of the coaches is enhanced by the time saved through leveraging the use of technology and in addition helping coaches avoid burn-out.

Professional development and in-service training, as well as input into the design, will help gain the support of those who will be utilizing this transformed system (Floyd, Winter 2004). The training must focus on more than manipulating software or quick problem resolution. It must include information about and practice in building positive relationships between the program and its students, all the while helping students stay focused on their long-term goals. All types of communication between the college and its students can be viewed as vehicles for developing positive relationships. Types of communications can be website information, letters in the mail, email, phone calls, live chats online, or video-conferencing. Admission services and college promotional media play a critical role in setting the stage for student expectations. The holistic advising and coaching model described gives us the roadmap to get it right both in person and at a distance regardless of the medium. Social presence (Aragon, 2003), engagement (Tinto, 2008), and mattering (Schlossberg, Lassalle, & Golec, 1990) need to be a part of the student experience from the first contact a student has with a college until graduation and beyond. Coaches can become familiar with these theoretical concepts through scenario-based guidance and study.

In addition to providing more alternatives, digital interactions can also provide a record of what occurred between a student and their coach, thus effectively supporting the continuity of service and relationships that are so important to student engagement (Abbott, 2004) and providing the means to assess and recognize coaching performance. However, if performance goals are a moving target, technology can only report outcomes, not level of performance.

Technology is a tool that can perform some tasks more efficiently than if performed manually; it can free up coaches to personally interact when a student is in need and still fulfill the data collection mandate of the virtual coaching model. For instance, student tracking systems, sometimes called Learner Relationship Management (Serban & Jing, 2002), make it easier to reach out to students who are struggling academically or socially by having an advisor or student services professional contact them (Salas & Alexander, 2008). However, if those systems are not integrated with student data, coaches need the autonomy to report such issues and make suggestions for better management from a coaching perspective. If the use of technology is not leveraged, such a student may otherwise fall through the cracks if they do not feel comfortable asking for help.

Hundreds of students can be monitored by knowledge management software which is a task that would be impossible for a single individual. But it is important that software programs installed to streamline tasks do not consume valuable time instead. Social networking tools such as Facebook can create a sense of social presence and also be used to relate to students based on their individuality (Heiberger & Harper, 2008; Petouhoff, 2009) but if using those additional tools consumes time better spent advising

and counseling then coaches need to be part of evaluating their worth. Additionally, technology can be used to improve motivation and retention through the use of personalized motivational email messages (Huett, Kalinowski, Moller, & Huett, 2008) and should be utilized if coaches, as professionals, use informed decision-making that determines them to be useful.

All of these possibilities exist and are used daily in education environments. But it is the comprehensive planning and utilization of these tools in a carefully crafted model, coupled with continuous and professionally trained coaches giving feedback that can make the difference between minimal performance outcomes and results above and beyond expectations.

Coaching Challenges from a Positive Perspective

Looking at what works in an organization can use a positive outlook to identify and leverage resources. The six challenges faced by members of the coaching unit can be viewed as opportunities to improve team performance and energize its members. Using this positive perspective to address isolation, on-call hours, higher education bureaucracy, newly acquired software, progress reporting, and unpredictable changes can reinterpret reality so that change can take place.

All six coaches are located at different colleges physically separated by as many as 200 miles. This separation could reduce the effectiveness of team performance by reducing collaboration (Gratton & Erickson, 2007). But coaches have access to a variety of communication tools including instant messaging with two types of chat software, office telephone, cell phone and two virtual meeting methods. Coaches can give and get answers quickly, even if they are talking with a student in person or on the phone.

Already cohesive as a team, coaches give priority to requests from other coaches, sharing information at a moment's notice. As research supports (Gittell, 2009) responsiveness and follow-through on promises are important to developing constructive online relationships. Coaches face the same challenges with the outsourced helpdesk personnel and local college call center personnel but can keep in touch even from a distance via separate chat software. Using technology can continue to assist in developing relationships through emails between coaches and service personnel at all sixteen colleges.

The key to those electronic relationships is quick response and follow-up (Gittell, 2009). Focusing on integrating human traits such as humor and personality into the written word helps the coach develop authenticity and positive relationships while having a record of interactions. With continued practice and feedback from one another, each coach can develop their own online persona that students and other contacts identify even if they never meet the coach in person.

Sometimes coaches are required to give bad news to students, such as a delay of financial aid, an unexpected failing grade, and most often that some bureaucratic change is interfering with the student's original plan. Changes could be in academic requirements or tightened federal financial aid guidelines. Delivering this news and helping the student devise a new plan requires tact and patience on the part of the coach driven by the motivation to help the student complete his or her education. Coaches know that an incomplete college education, regardless of cost, is worth very little by comparison.

Coaches are on call every sixth Saturday, one evening per week, and during institutional closings. This availability calls for technology that enables working from home evenings, weekends, and holidays. Coaches can develop a schedule that works with their private lives and helps each other with unexpected schedule changes. They work from home two days a week and one of those is often used as compensation for on-call time. Autonomy with the schedule and coordinated scheduling with other team members can enhance this benefit.

Higher education processes are complicated and when they are applied to a nontraditional program there are unexpected and often stressful results. Regular processes for student enrollment and financial aid disbursement cannot be used. There is a steep and constant learning curve for understanding how higher education processes work for a program that functions outside of standard semesters and offers federal financial aid on a diverse schedule. Resolving these conflicts takes patience and skill on the part of the coaches as well as the ability to appease student frustrations and concerns. Layers of authority and diverse processes among the different colleges and departments can hold up student registration or financial aid. Learn on Demand processes continue to be redesigned to avoid some of these bureaucratic slowdowns, giving coaches the authority to speed up transactions that help students move forward.

Learning software programs that are new to the institution can create stress for end users. Sometimes bonds between student and coach can strengthen as they work together to find solutions. Administration can build greater trust by acknowledging the time-consuming technical and bureaucratic problem-solving that coaches perform

without detracting from the relationship building needed to help students move toward their goals.

New software can be a challenge whether for an individual user or a system that serves 100,000 users. An experienced technology user will be familiar with the delays and unexpected issues. Coaches benefit from this experience by helping students overcome the frustrations of technology glitches, whether with their personal equipment or college networks. Handling students well during these times can be a real test for a coaches' ability to effectively provide counsel and a learning experience that can make a difference in whether students stay or quit (Abbott, 2005). In addition, coaches learn to utilize the benefits of such software not only to improve the processes for which they are responsible, but to help administrators manage the software for its greatest productivity.

Constant monitoring for progress toward goals can be stressful when data collection requirements change often and depend on manual processes. Progress reporting and unpredictable changes are both part of innovation and accountability. Grant reporting to stakeholders and changes in direction are part of the price for having the opportunity to develop new ways of doing things. An important characteristic that develops from such situations is the organizational characteristic of "being prepared." This was a valuable asset found by Berry et al. (2013) in their investigation of four high performing community college units. Coaches can "be ready" with information that they gather themselves through their own database so they can use it as well in a format that works in different situations. For instance if reporting from system-wide software malfunctions, personal data can act as a backup and assist reporting requirements.

The risk of stress and possible coach burnout calls for specific supports for the coaching team of this new advising network. Supported by retention research (Tinto, 2008), the relationships that coaches develop with students and each other (Berry, 2013) can help fulfill the mission of the community colleges and the national mandate to prepare citizens through education and employment in order to contribute to a recovering economy.

The outcomes associated with leveraging intangible resources such as leadership and psychological capital can enhance the performance of the virtual coaching network described in this paper. In addition the application of recommendations can result in an increasing level of effectiveness. As network personnel perform exceptionally well, their behavior acts as a positive example for students to model. When students model the positive behaviors demonstrated by coaches, the result is improved student performance, success, and independence. When students become more and more responsible for themselves, the coaches have time to develop relationships with new students until they too reach a higher level of independence and competence. Such success promotes greater satisfaction among coaching personnel, improving their performance as they remain successful in their position. The presence of certain characteristics or behaviors modeled for students increases the positive outcomes which then improve the overall performance which in turn, generates more positive behavior. This resource leveraging produces acontinual performance improvement which then results in greater effectiveness increasing the organizational capacity for high performance to an unknown level. This is not a linear process but better described as a contextual bridge that can close the gaps between high altitude global goals and individualized student outcomes.

This application of recommendations from positive unit research is based on the premise that putting people first, providing autonomy and support for all members of the team, and learning to recognize and leverage intangible resources can assist the performance of the new coaching network. These improvements can address student needs, move students toward graduation while meeting administrative enrollment goals along with student success goals.

Until now, little priority has been given to organizational functioning of those people who actually deliver service in higher education. A great deal of attention is paid to having adequate tangible resources for the purchase and roll-out of new technology and delivering training to manage that software and inform the delivery personnel. Large projects enlist expert project managers, while conversations surrounding customer service say little about developing or identifying the positive attributes of psychological capital or the autonomy of shared leadership. These characteristics influence a culture that provides effective implementation and delivery that surpasses expectations based upon available resources. Regardless of all the other components identified in this positive model design, if the attributes that promote exceptional performance are ignored, we will build just another giant container, housing a good idea that does not succeed at making the dramatic changes its design had promised.

It is most important that the people who implement, the people who deliver, and the people who receive the services so critical to meeting the outcomes of student success be thought of as people, not quotas and that all along the way from design to implementation to evaluation that identifying people-as-people, one person at a time, is never left out of the formula for success.

Recommendations for the Coaching Network

The recommendations for enhancing the performance of the Virtual Coaching Network are not a list of items that can be chosen at random and implemented in isolation. Attaining results above and beyond expectations requires an integrated collection of actions that work together as illustrated by the spiral in Figure 4.1. As with the spiral, the necessary contributions for success will not occur all at once but evolve as one action promotes understanding that promotes the next action. However, successful outcomes from prior organizational studies (Berry et al., 2013; Alfred et al., 2009; Shults, 2010) were all influenced by similar conditions: (a) formal leaders and administrators develop a culture that values people as people, (b) leaders develop trust by providing autonomy and support for each other and those they serve, (c) organizational members focus on a vision or purpose and move toward that vision using informal language that describes how that will be accomplished, (d) organizational members identify and leverage their strengths, connecting those strengths to achieving their purpose, (e) priority is given to developing relationships and collaboration, and (f) an awareness of the value of leveraging intangible resources such as tacit knowledge, character and performance strengths, and relationships becomes paramount.

Organizational administrators develop trust by creating a culture of autonomy and support for coaches. Coaches share leadership through their ability to make decisions and manage resources, such as software management, and daily processes. Coaches create their own saying describing the process of serving “one student, one job at a time.” As a cohesive team, coaches identify team and individual strengths while connecting those strengths to the vision of student success. Connections between stress and team

vision create processes that leverage those strengths. Coaches develop relationships with students that promote student independence and self-efficacy while embracing the idea that students and coaches depend on each other for their joint success. Together, coaches use brainstorming to identify, develop, and leverage freely available intangible resources such as: coach and student psychological capital, internal and external relationships, collaboration among varying entities, positive leadership attributes, and the use of technology.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

I am a very strong proponent of cooperation and collaboration. However, I have never been required to complete as comprehensive a project as an applied doctorate in a team format. The academic process and learning have always interested me which may account for the several graduate degrees I have earned, culminating in this applied doctorate in education.

I am an introvert, very used to doing things on my own and having complete flexibility in my choice of study. I chose to apply to this program because it was convenient, flexible, and supported by my employer. Just like the thousands of community college students I have worked with one on one, I too must balance the demands of work, college, and family. I did not like the idea of working with a team and so I hesitated to commit myself unlike most of my colleagues who prepared by choosing a topic and team members early on in their studies. When the final team assignments were determined, there were four of us left who had not really committed ourselves to the final process.

Our team was labeled the outliers, the Pollyanna group, and team abundance, truly an anomaly from the beginning. We came together with little in common, very few common interests academic or otherwise and representing diverse segments of the community college organization. We chose a topic unfamiliar to most of our colleagues and members of our doctoral committee. We identified our strengths and found that we had few in common and when the team commitment was made, I was described as being the glue that would hold the team together. Little did I know at the time that this

experience would teach me the one lesson I needed to learn the most in spite of all my academic credentials.

I learned that like the four behaviors and traits of psychological capital — hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism — the contribution that can be made by a team is greater than the sum of its individual contributions. And so, we the outliers began to study high performing community college units and what about them makes them high performing. At the same time we were applying to our own team the principles we were discovering through the literature and research. To me, this is about as applied as any research can be. We kept each other going by being positive when things did not always go so well, and focusing on the contributions we all had to make toward the research. Not only were we driven by the importance of our sharing our research with our colleagues and colleges but it was the findings of the research that helped push us to the finish line. Both the team experience itself and the knowledge we gained and applied to our own practice made earning this doctorate more valuable than I could have ever imagined.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

1. What are your position responsibilities in this program unit?
2. What is the relationship between your work and this program's overall performance?
3. In your program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?
4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?
5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective? What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?
6. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?
7. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?
8. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?
9. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Viewing a TRIO Program through a Positive Organizational Lens

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to take part in a research study about the positive organizational functioning of a TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are or have been connected to this SSS program as an employee, student participant, or administrator. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about 10 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

The person in charge of this study is Susan Berry, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky Department of Education Policy Studies and Evaluation. She is being guided in this research by Neal Hutchens and Tricia Brown-Ferrigno. There may be other people on the research team assisting at different times during the study. They are Alissa Young, Lewis Burke Jr., and Michael Stapleton who are also students in the same doctoral program.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

The proposed study seeks to explore the reasons for exceptional performance of some community college units. By doing this study, we hope to learn about how the exceptional functioning of this TRIO program is influenced by positive characteristics of the organization's staff and their functioning as an organization.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

Any person may decline participation without harm.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The research procedures will be conducted at Elizabethtown Community and Technical College. You will need to come to Rooms 102b in the Academic Technical Building at least once for a 45 minute interview, If you are a staff member, you may be interviewed two times during the study. Each of those visits will take about 45 minutes. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 45 minutes if you are a student participant, former director, or college administrator. These interviews will take place during the months of July or August 2011. If you are a staff member you will also be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire with open ended questions taking about 45 minutes to complete and a paper questionnaire, taking about 15 minutes to complete. The total amount of time a program staff member will be asked to volunteer is 2.5 hours in July or August 2011.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

You will be asked to respond to questions and share your thoughts regarding leadership, the use of resources, and the performance of SSS program staff as individuals and the functioning of the program as a whole. All participants will be asked to participate in the

interviews with the researcher who will ask you to reflect on your perceptions about leadership, resources, and unit functioning. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Once the interviews have been transcribed, you will be asked to review the transcripts to confirm that they reflect your intentions when the interviews were conducted. The researchers will discuss and compile the major themes that emerge from your responses.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not get any personal benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help community college units understand the positive factors that are present in organizations that function in an exceptional manner.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES?

If you do not want to be in the study, there are no other choices except not to take part in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law.

Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All data will remain in the possession of the researchers or be kept in a locked cabinet or password protected system at the researchers' office.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you, or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Susan Berry at susan.berry@kctcs.edu or 270-706-8436. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent Date

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

Viewing a TRIO Student Support Services Unit through a Positive Lens

This study is focusing on the things that help make organizations successful and why they work. This questionnaire is interested in your views and opinions about what works and why concerning the functioning of your SSS program unit.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Please respond to the questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible. This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1. What are your position responsibilities in this SSS program unit?

2. What is the relationship between your work and this SSS program's overall performance?

3. In your SSS program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?

4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective?

6. What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

7. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

8. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?

9. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?

10. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

Appendix D

Definitions of Facets and Associated Code Words

Abundance	reaching unexpected levels of organizational functioning and performance
People as People	treating people as intangible rather than tangible resources and represents the idea that individuals are unique and dynamic rather than just the job line they fill or abstract budgetary personnel account strings
Upward Spiral	the abundant result of leveraging intangible resources, which then produces more resources and that continues in an upward spiral creating abundance
Exceptional Value	benefitting well beyond what is expected
Intangible Resources	nonmaterial assets that cannot be quantified such as informal, subjective, emotive, process-oriented elements
Change	the functioning of the unit and the benefits received during and after a change has taken place
Collaboration	working within and outside the group with other individuals and organizations to support a goal
Diversity	appreciation and inclusion of difference as well as the purposeful exposure to those who are different
Empowerment	increasing the spiritual, political, social, or economic strength of individuals and communities
Networking	connecting with other people, professionals, and organizations
Relationships	benefits from liking and appreciating others
Tacit Knowledge	knowledge gained from experience and expertise of unit members
Leverage	getting the most from what is available
Tangible Resources	material assets: positions, finances, facilities, equipment, technology
Institutional Commitment	Committed facilities, equipment, supplies, personnel, and other resources to supplement the grant and enhance project services
Leadership	behaviors that support abundance and leveraging of intangible resources
Cohesiveness	supporting and developing an atmosphere of working together as a unit
Vision	characteristic of Abundance, all members have the same vision as the leader
Autonomy	supporting the autonomy of each person in the unit;

	to make decisions about their responsibilities and to carry out their responsibilities in an excellent manner
Stretch Goals	audacious goals, ambitious goals
Professional Development	leaders provide opportunities for members to participate in professional development opportunities
Strengths/Personal Assets	utilization and appreciation for individual abilities and expertise
Other	topics outside of the Lens Facet
Mattering	Schlossberg's Theory of Mattering
Program Model	use this model of student service on a larger scale
Developing PsyCap	the process of leaders or other role models encouraging and modeling the application of PsyCap, to the point there is a demonstrated difference in another.
Positive Attributes of Leadership	Realistic optimism, Emotional Intelligence, Confidence to Succeed, Hope
Realistic Optimism	feeling positive about an outcome and finding a way to achieve it
Emotional Intelligence	comprised of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skill.
Confidence to Succeed	trusts in the capabilities and possibilities of the unit to achieve whatever goals they have to reach
Hope	persevering toward goals and, when necessary redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed
Psychological Capital	Four elements of POB which can be improved through training: hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism
Resilience	perseverance to keep trying and bounce back if things don’t go well
Optimism	making a positive attribution about succeeding now and in the future
Efficacy	having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks

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