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Identifying and Addressing Issues Faced by New Community College Presidents

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NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING ISSUES FACED BY NEW COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PRESIDENTS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

In

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

BY

ANTHONY RAYMOND MIKSA

Chicago, Illinois

March 2009

Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

Dissertation Notification of Completion

Doctoral Candidate Anthony Raymond Miksa

Title of Dissertation Identifying and Addressing Issues Faced by New Community

College Presidents

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Dissertation Chair Dr. Rebecca Sue Lake

Dissertation Committee Dr. Diane Oliver

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Date of Final Approval Meeting _____

We certify this dissertation, submitted by the above named candidate, is fully adequate in scope and quality to satisfactorily meet the dissertation requirement for attaining the Doctor of Education degree in the Community College Leadership Doctoral Program.
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Signature	Date
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ABSTRACT

The American community college system is in the midst of a leadership crisis. Community college presidents are retiring at an alarming rate. Further exacerbating the leadership crisis is the lack of qualified candidates to replace the retiring presidents. Senior administrators at community colleges who are the natural choice to replace the retirees are also retiring or choosing not to pursue a presidency.

The overarching purpose driving this research was to identify the challenges encountered by new community college presidents, seek to comprehend the information gathering method utilized by new presidents to identify challenges, and finally, to present the strategies the participants employed to address the identified challenges. The information garnered from the identifying, strategizing, and addressing of challenges will provide meaningful insight for future new community college presidents, thus easing the difficult transition period the large number of new community college presidents will be facing in the near future.

The findings from the study demonstrated that new community college presidents seek information in both formal and informal manners. They prioritize challenges utilizing data driven decision making and intuition based decision making. Finally, the strategies they chose to employ when addressing challenges were extremely diverse in nature. However, a common theme among the diverse strategies is all presidents studied gravitate towards a collaborative problem solving approach. Further, each president exhibited a high level of self awareness relative to their leadership style.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Envision a new community college president who succeeded one of the many presidents that retired after serving more than 30 years within the community college system. Now envision that same new president mentally assessing the day's list of activities during the morning commute to the college.

The morning's meetings include:

1. An interview with the local media promoting an upcoming referendum to build a library which is required by the accrediting body but viewed as unnecessary by the community,

2. A meeting with a district hospital that is willing to donate funding for an endowed scholarship to a nursing program that is currently overextended and not accepting more students,

3. An on-campus meeting to determine the fate of a staff employee that has been underperforming according to past evaluations, but preceding supervisors had not taken action.

The afternoon's meetings include:

4. A meeting with the vice president of finance to begin the development of a budget for the next fiscal year. The preliminary budget is prepared 10 months in advance and must overcome decreasing monetary support from the state and counterbalance the ever-increasing costs of doing business,

5. Lions Club and a district Chamber of Commerce presentations to build relationships with district residents.

The evening's meeting is:

6. A board meeting with agenda items that include community members who are critical of the impending referendum vote because they do not want their taxes to rise and board members who are still not convinced of this action by the community college.

Every day for a new community college president may not be as busy as these challenging activities described. However, the example illustrates the multiple challenges encountered by the growing number of new community college presidents across the country. The question is - will future new community college presidents be prepared to handle the often overwhelming nature of the community college presidency? This research attempted to provide insight for the next generation of community college presidents.

In addition to the retirement of long-time presidents, long-time senior level administrators who typically apply for vacant presidencies are also retiring. Further, the stressful nature of the position has caused many senior-level administrators who are not retiring to avoid seeking a presidency. The retirement of experienced presidents, combined with long working hours, senior- level administrative retirements, personnel issues, financial challenges, and never-ending board member interactions, have seriously reduced the number of qualified applicants from which new community college presidents are drawn. The reduction of qualified candidates to emerge as future leaders within community colleges is causing what some term as a "leadership crisis" on community college campuses.

Christopher Shults (2001), researcher for the American Association of Community Colleges, states, "community colleges are facing an impending crisis in leadership" (p. 2).

Marilyn J. Amey (2006), professor of educational administration at Michigan State University, highlights the problem and believes, "seasoned higher-education leaders are retiring and the challenges facing prospective administrators seem daunting" (p.55).

Two year post-secondary institutions have been an integral part of the United States education system for over 100 years. "The American community college dates back to the early years of the 20th century" (Cohen and Brawer, 1996, p.1). From its early beginnings in the early 20th century, the community college system's growth has been fostered by a variety of events. In the early 1900s, the growth of community colleges accommodated the need of America's growing population for access to higher education (Cohen and Brawer, 1996). During the great depression of the 1930s, job-training was the engine of growth for the community college system (AACC, 2007). After World War II, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, or the GI Bill, facilitated expansion of the community college system (Cohen and Brawer, 1996).

The 1940s also brought a high birthrate which translated into another growth cycle in the 1960s (Cohen and Brawer, 1996). During this time, as many as one college a week was being developed and opened (Palmer & Katsinas, 1996). This view of growth in the sixties has produced the community college system we have today. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) website, today there are 1,195 community colleges in the United States (AACC, 2007).

The growth of community college campuses and the number of students served has produced a positive effect on the U. S. post-secondary education system. Cohen and Brawer (1996) state, "Community College has effected notable change in American education, especially by expanding access" (p. 24). However, this growth particularly over the last 40 – 50 years is also a contributing factor to the leadership vacuum in the community college system.

Shults (2001) states, "many community colleges were started in the mid-1960s and early 1970s. People who helped open the doors of community colleges and who, as leaders and presidents of the era, helped transform this uniquely American invention into one of the premier education and training institutions in the nation, are now on the brink of retirement" (p. 2). A recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* supports Shults' (2001) comment by stating, "nearly 45 percent of community college presidents are expected to retire by 2010" (Wheeler, 2007, p. A46).

Exacerbating the leadership crisis is the lack of qualified candidates to fill the open position. The number of graduates from universities which offer advanced degrees to prepare community college administrators is declining (Patton, 2004b). The decline in graduates is a contributing factor to the shrinking number of applicants for upper-level administrative positions (Farmer, 2005). The retirements, coupled with the "pressures" faced daily by presidents, and fewer graduating with advanced degrees (doctorates), compounds the leadership crises by decreasing the numbers actively seeking these positions.

Today's community college presidents are inundated with rapidly changing complex problems, issues and concerns. It seems that the only constant is change for those in the position of president. Cohen and Brawer (2003) support the notion that the position of a community college president is ever-changing and challenging with the statement,

> Administrators--in whatever office they hold--who fail to acknowledge current or impending change in education will not be able to adequately or creatively manage their institutions. The ability to see alternative views, to accept new challenges, to vary old ways of management, to introduce new concepts and new ways of putting these concepts into operation will be crucial for administrators in the twenty-first century (p. 135).

Shults specifically speaks to preparedness issues of the new presidents by stating, "Three areas cited by new presidents and their challenges as those for which they feel unprepared include the overwhelming nature of the job, the level of politics involved, and the amount of relationship building they are expecting to accomplish" (Shults, 2001, p.1).

The *Community College Week* published a variety of articles documenting the worries of college presidents. One article dated May 8, 2006 titled, "Presidents' Biggest Worry? Survey Says Lack of Public Funds," indicates the number one worry from community college presidents was the lack of financial support from state and local governments. Other challenges cited within the article were poorly prepared students, student retention, and rising technology costs (Pekow, 2006). In another article in the *Community College Week* on March 13, 2006 titled "Learning the Ways of The New President-Entrepreneur," the article cites the need of presidents to become entrepreneurs to bridge the gap in funding that is lost by the state and federal government. Therefore, it is no wonder the number of presidents leaving their position is increasing at the same time the number of applicants for those open positions are decreasing.

In summary, the American community college system is on the verge of a leadership crisis (Shults, 2001). Many of the presidents who helped open the doors of new community colleges in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s are retiring. In addition, the people in high-level administrative positions who support those presidents are also on the verge of retirement (Shults, 2001). In order to thwart the negative effects of the leadership crisis, the retention of new presidents is a key to maintaining quality leadership within the community college system. A component to retaining new presidents is to prepare them for the challenges which lay ahead of them once they assume their first presidency. Not only do new presidents need to have a sound sense of the history of community colleges, but they must also have a thorough understanding of

their role as the chief executive officer of the college. New community college presidents are expected to deal promptly, knowledgeably and well with all of the challenges facing community colleges today. However, since they are new to the presidential position, just where is this knowledge of understanding generated? Included in this substantial knowledge base is a president's recognition of the political, cultural, and organizational structure through which presidential power flows. This research will provide valuable information and insights to assist new community college presidents as they make the important institutional decisions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents encounter, how these challenges were prioritized, and the strategies used to address them at the beginning of their presidency.

Research questions arising from the purpose included:

1. What are the methods new community college presidents use to gather information?

2. What are the challenges new community college presidents identify?

3. What are the decision making methods new community college presidents employ to prioritize the challenges they identify?

4. What are the strategies new community college presidents employ to address the identified challenges?

Conceptual Framework of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents encounter, how these challenges are prioritized, and the strategies used to address them at the beginning of their presidency. In order to appropriately address this purpose, a conceptual framework was designed which encompassed an eclectic combination of concepts.

This eclectic combination of concepts provided context for the data gathered during the study and a framework of analysis.

In order to develop the conceptual framework, a diverse collection of applicable theories and concepts were investigated. Initially, organizational theories, leadership theories, and decision-making models were investigated. Organizational theory was thought to be an applicable element for the framework since it provides a framework to analyze change within an organization. New community college presidents addressing challenges at the beginning of their presidency may be required to force change upon an institution. However, this study focused on presidents within the first three years of their presidency. Change enacted during the first three years of one's presidency may have little time to take effect. Therefore, organizational theory was found not to be the most applicable for this study.

Leadership theory was also investigated to ascertain its relevancy to the study's conceptual framework. A president's leadership skills were thought to be a key element to their ability to identify, prioritize, and strategize solutions to challenges encountered at the beginning of their presidency. Specifically, serious consideration was given to situational leadership theory. Situational leadership theory is predicated on the view that leaders must utilize a variety of leadership approaches in order to effectively lead people. The applicability of this theory to the study centered on the idea that community college presidents lead a very diverse group of college stakeholders. Stakeholders who range from highly educated faculty and administrative staff to first generation college-bound students. Upon further deliberation, some assessment of the college's stakeholders was required in order to utilize situational leadership theory. Since this was not a component of the research design, this theory was eliminated from consideration.

Reflecting once again on the purpose of the study, it became apparent that new community college presidents must make decisions when determining what constitutes a challenge. Further, they are required to make decisions when prioritizing the challenges they encounter. Therefore, decision-making models became the central focus of the conceptual framework. While leadership skills are essential, the study examined the decisions made by new community college presidents. Therefore, leadership theory was eliminated from the conceptual framework of the study.

Multiple decision-making models were investigated and data-driven decision-making (DDDM) and intuition-based decision-making surfaced as two models applicable for this study. Because of the emphasis on accountability for decisions in community colleges, the data-driven decision-making model was seen as most appropriate. Intuition-based decision-making was chosen since many new presidents have to make immediate decisions based on incomplete data.

In addition to data-driven decision-making and intuition-based decision-making, the conceptual framework also includes an information-gathering concept. In order for presidents to identify challenges, they have to gather information to determine which issues are truly institutional challenges. This study utilized a structured and unstructured model of information-gathering from Dan Ciampa, an advisor and counselor to leaders in transition, and Michael Watkins', an associate professor at Harvard Business School, 1999 book, *Right From the Start: Taking Charge in a New Leadership Role.* This model is based on the input of leaders from the fields of business and education.

As background for the study, included is a review of the changing role of the community college president over the past 100 years. The culmination of this review reveals the four major

roles new community college presidents are expected to fulfill. These were utilized to analyze the participant's responses.

In summary, the conceptual framework of a study should "explain either graphically or in narrative form, the main dimensions to be studied-the key factors, or variables, and the presumed relations among them" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 18). The eclectic use of concepts for the conceptual framework correlates with the complexity of the study's purpose. Specifically, data driven decision making, intuition based decision making, and Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) information gathering model provide a framework for the study.

<p align="center">Overview of Study</p>

This research was a qualitative study in the interpretive paradigm. Six new community college presidents articulated their experiences related to identifying, prioritizing, and strategizing solutions to challenges they encountered at the beginning of their presidency. These comments were woven together in order to make sense or meaning of their experience. Creswell and Miller (1997) state the use of a qualitative approach to research, "places a substantial emphasis on how participants in a study make sense or meaning of a situation" (p. 5).

The methodology driving the qualitative interpretive paradigm for this research was case study. Researcher Robert K. Yin (1994) defines the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). Merriam (1998) defines a case study as, "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9).

Yin's definition gives credence to the researcher's method of case study to investigate contemporary phenomenon within a real life setting during the interview process. The presidents were interviewed on their campuses and field notes were used to record detailed facts about settings and reactions. This gave context to the answers of the interview questions. Applying Merriam's definition, the study examined the institution of the president and the process of determining challenges related to the presidents' first three years in office. The researcher collected data and synthesized the findings using themes and patterns.

Data Collection Strategies

The study identified six presidents that have been in their first presidency for, at most, three years to participate in the study. Three community college presidents from Illinois and three community college presidents from Iowa were interviewed.

The purpose for the selection criteria constraint on a president's length of employment at a current school was due to the focus of the study. The study aimed to identify challenges and methods used to address these challenges within the first three years of their presidency. After more than three years in the position, a president may be inclined to forget, minimize or exaggerate the challenges they encountered when assuming their position. The purpose for choosing presidents in their first presidency was that the study focused on presidents new to their rank.

Participants could have been promoted from within or recruited from outside the college. This issue was examined during the data collection phase of the process. Significant differences may have arisen between presidents that assumed the position from a previous position within the college. Those presidents promoted from within might have some prior knowledge of the challenges before becoming president. Consequently, they would already have knowledge of the

campus culture, but not from the viewpoint as the president. Therefore, the assumption made for this study was the participants could not have known the problems, issues, or challenges facing the president at that institution since none of them were in that role.

<center>Importance of the Study to the Field</center>

Community colleges are major educational institutions that are woven into the fabric of the American education system. In 2007, there were a total of 1,195 community colleges across the country (987 public, 177 independent, and 31 tribal) serving 11.5 million students or approximately 46% of all undergraduates in the United States (AACC, 2007). Community colleges educated "59% of new nurses and the majority of other new healthcare workers" in 2006 (AACC, 2007). Even more impressive is the fact that, "Close to 80% of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and EMT's are credentialed at community colleges" (AACC, 2007).

Some would argue that such astonishing statistics are derived from the design of the community college system. The design has provided significantly high access to education for citizens throughout America. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that presidents of community colleges have been the driving force behind this idea of access which has helped transform America.

The research sought to identify how new presidents obtain their information and the challenges confronting these new community college presidents. The study also sought out the decision-making process used to prioritize which challenges needed to be addressed and the strategies implemented. This sharing will provide meaningful insight for new community college presidents leading to more knowledgeable decision-making, thus promoting a thriving system to serve future students for the next 100 years.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Community college presidents are faced with a cadre of complex and challenging

decisions the instant they accept a presidential position. New community college presidents do

not have the time or luxury to gradually learn the fundamentals of a college presidency. Rather

they have to immerse themselves into their position, provide leadership, and make decisions that

immediately have a major impact upon the college. Presidents must be able to identify,

prioritize, and strategize solutions to a variety of challenges, or administrators, faculty, and

support staff will quickly lose confidence in their ability to lead and make decisions. The purpose

of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents' encounter, how

these challenges are prioritized, and the strategies used to address them at the beginning of their

presidency.

In order for new community college presidents to identify challenges they encounter,

they must have a sound sense of the history of community colleges. They must also have a

thorough understanding of their role as the chief executive officer of the college. Included in this

substantial presidential knowledge base is recognition of the political, cultural and organizational

structure through which presidential power flows. This vast array of accumulated knowledge,

theoretically, empowers new community college presidents to deal effectively with all of the

challenges they encounter. Since they are new to their presidential position, where do they

develop this vast knowledge and understanding of the community college presidency? However,

a more basic and pertinent question revolves around how a new president gains the relevant

information regarding their new institution. This research will provide valuable information and insights to answer this question thereby assisting new community college presidents.

Theories and concepts relevant to the exploration of this research reside in many disciplines such as economics, sociology, and psychology. In addition, general theories were investigated as to their relevance such as organizational theories, leadership theories, decision-making theories and socio-cultural theories.

Prior to delineating the scope of the conceptual framework, the researcher investigated leadership theory with the intent to use it as a central theory for the study. Specifically within leadership theory, situational leadership began to emerge as a plausible component for the theoretical framework of the study.   Situational leadership theory is based on the tenet that there is no one way to lead an organization. Rather there are multiple leadership styles that a person can utilize to lead. The style that is ultimately selected and utilized is based on the capabilities of the followers. (Blanchard, 1991; Hersey, 1997) In the community college setting, the followers would be all of the diverse constituencies the president engages such as the faculty, staff, and the board of trustees, students, community residents, and community business. Leading such a diverse group of constituents or stakeholders requires a president who understands the needs of each and can adjust one's leadership style to meet those needs. Situational leadership provides this type of paradigm.

However, upon further reflection, utilizing situational leadership as the central theoretical framework for the study was not appropriate. The design of the study, not the tenets behind situational leadership theory, eliminated the theory as a lens with which to view the research. Situational leadership addresses both the leaders' and the followers' abilities within an organization. This study focused on presidents, not on followers. Therefore, situational

leadership lost its applicability to this study since it requires assessment of follower's ability to be led.

Upon eliminating situational leadership theory as a core element of the theoretical framework, further reflection took place regarding the need for any leadership theory within the theoretical framework of the study. The initial notion was as the new presidents identify, prioritize and strategize solutions to challenges facing their new institution, their leadership skills would be the primary forces behind this process. After reviewing the leadership literature, it became apparent that, in order for new presidents to identify, prioritize and strategize, they must first learn about and understand their new institution. Leadership theory does not provide a mechanism for someone to learn about their new institution; rather it provides a method to lead. Therefore, leadership theory was not seen as a fit for the theoretical framework of this study.

Consideration was also given to organizational theory as an element of the theoretical framework for the study. The preliminary consideration of organizational theory was based on the tenet that new presidents might have to alter the college's organizational structure to achieve future goals specific to their vision. Gareth R. Jones (2007), professor of business at Mays Business School at Texas A & M University, states that, "organizational structure and culture are the principal means or fulcrum managers use to change the organization so it can achieve its future desired state" (p. 9). While a change might occur, sustained organizational change does not occur instantly and this research design focused on presidents within the first three years of their presidency. Considering the purpose of this study, organizational change may not have occurred when the participant was interviewed. Therefore, it was felt organizational theory was not appropriate for this study.

In order to consider the relationships of identify, prioritize, and strategize solutions to the challenges within the context of community colleges, this study employed a more eclectic use of theories and concepts providing a conceptual framework with which to situate the study. The study's overarching goal was to foster a more expansive and practical view of the how and in what ways new community college presidents begin to understand their new institutions and selectively gather information in order to subsequently take action.

In summary, this literature review includes: a history of the community college, the exodus of community college presidents, the role of the community college president, decision making, and information gathering.

<div align="center">The Community College</div>

Leading authors in the field of community college research, Arthur M. Cohen and Florence Brawer (1996) state, "The American community college dates back to the early years of the twentieth century" (1996, p. 1). From its starting point in the early twentieth century, the community college system has grown from a variety of events. In the early 1900s, the growth of community colleges accommodated the growing need for access to higher education. As secondary school enrollments grew, the demand for access to post-secondary education grew.

As the century continued, community colleges began focusing on job training. The website for the American Association of Community Colleges (2007) states, "During the Depression of the 1930s, community colleges began offering job-training programs as a way of easing widespread unemployment" (para. 5). Job-training programs remained the central focus until the post-war years when soldiers were returning from World War II. Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act in 1944 also known as the GI Bill. As a result of the GI Bill, which made available the first large-scale financial aid packages, the number of people going to

college increased rapidly because it reimbursed not only for their tuition, but also for their living expenses while attending college (Cohen and Brawer, 1996).

To meet this ever growing demand, the number of community colleges exploded in the 1960s and produced the community college system we have today. During this time, as many as one college a week was being developed (Palmer and Katsinas, 1996). Communities and academic leaders throughout America wanted a community college built in their area to serve residents. "Fueled by high birthrates of the 1940s, the rapid expansion of community colleges led their advocates to take an obsessive view of growth" (Cohen and Brawer, 1993, p. 16).

The community college's history of growth has been a unique journey that few institutions in American history can parallel. The expansion of the community college system is one of major importance to higher education and American society. Kevin Dougherty (1998), a leading scholar of community colleges and associate professor of Higher Education at Columbia University, feels, "the community college today is the single largest and most important portal into higher education" (p. 1). Therefore, it is of primary importance these institutions maintain their strength and position in higher education to meet a variety of growing demands. This research intended to provide insights for new community college presidents which will contribute to the continued success of the community college system.

<div align="center">The Exodus of Community College Presidents</div>

The growth explosion managed by presidents during the 20th century had many positive effects on the community college system. The growth explosion has also put a major strain on the leadership that moved the community college system into its current leadership crisis. Christopher Shults (2001), researcher for the American Association of Community Colleges, concurs. He states,

Many community colleges were started in the mid-1960s and early 1970s. People who helped open the doors of community colleges and who, as leaders and presidents of the era, helped transform this uniquely American invention into one of the premier education and training institutions in the nation are now on the brink of retirement (p. 2).

This view is supported by an April, 2007 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, where Wheeler (2007) concludes that "nearly 45 percent of community college presidents are expected to retire by 2010" (p. A46).

These retirements at the presidential level are causing a leadership crisis in the American community college system. This is a theme that is expressed throughout the literature discussing leadership at community colleges (Gilroy, 2007; Fulton-Calkins and Milling, 2005; Shults, 2001; Vaughan and Weisman, 2003). Shults (2001) recognizes it and states, "Community colleges are facing an impending crisis in leadership" (p. 1).

Retirements are not the only cause for the current leadership crisis within the presidential ranks of community colleges. Stress related to the pressures of the position has caused presidents to leave and future leaders to rethink their career. James W. Selman (1989) of Auburn University's Department of Vocational and Adult Education states, "Stress is a natural outgrowth from essential responsibilities associated with leadership roles of college presidents—little if anything could be accomplished without it" (p. 1). Selman (1989) continues, "Unfortunately, many community/junior college presidents do not recognize the high levels of stress associated with their positions, nor do they fully appreciate the potential damages related to stressors, and have not developed appropriate coping attitudes" (p. 4). James G. March (2003), professor emeritus at Stanford University, and Stephen S. Weiner, retired executive director of Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities, Western Association of Schools and Colleges,

and former member of Board of Governors of California Community Colleges, provide another perspective of the stress faced by college administrators. They state,

> Our recommendation is that anyone who wants to be an administrator should leave his or her innocence behind. The job is not one that produces friends. Because much of the leadership of any institution is bound up in enforcing rules and denying requests, any administrator who wants a friend should buy a dog (p. 11).

While these authors are referring, in general, to all college administrators, presidents are at the top of the organizational chart. Therefore, many of the rules presidents are enforcing and requests they are denying are based on the direction they have set for the college. For many presidents, this level of stress can be overwhelming.

Statements by community college presidents also exemplify the stress they are facing. Kevin Drumm, president of Sheridan College in Wyoming, states,

> The biggest adjustment (to becoming a community college president) had been to my time. It's a long day, a long week, a longer month. I'm only seven months in, so we'll see if it's a longer year. The time demands of [being] a new president are really dramatic. And for some, it goes on that way forever (Bagnato, 2005, p. 8).

Jesus "Jess" Carreon, the chancellor of the Dallas County Community College District in 2005, summarizes the presidency as follows, "The environment is so fast-paced that you can't hide" (Bagnato, 2005, p. 8). Carreon continues, "Stress takes quantum leaps as an administrator moves up the ladder and into schools with larger enrollments" (Bagnato, 2005, p. 8).

"Three areas cited by new presidents as those for which they feel unprepared include the overwhelming nature of the job, the level of politics involved, and the amount of relationship building they are expecting to accomplish" (Shults, 2001, p. 1). Phillippe and Patton (2000)

provide a slightly different and more encompassing view of stress stating, "Core community college principles like accessibility, affordability, and flexibility create stress the way freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights simultaneously unite Americans and generated tensions among them" (p. 9).

Presidential retirements and job stress are factors fueling the leadership crisis. The natural solution is to actively recruit new presidents. Unfortunately, this solution has been harder to implement than one would think. Finding qualified candidates to fill the open positions has become more difficult. In a November 21, 2005 article titled "Finding Leaders in All the New Places," from the *Community College Week*, author Ann Farmer interviewed Barbara Viniar, executive director of the Institute for Community College Development, a State University of New York/Cornell University partnership. Viniar said, "Whereas 80 to 100 applicants used to respond to each advertisement for a college president, now only 40 to 50 applicants are applying" (p. 2). This is causing Boards of Trustees to search in other places for community college presidents. In Ann Farmer's article, Viniar states, "Search committees are now extending their reach to increase the applicant pool. Among the most likely new target sectors is the military" (p. 2). The article went on to give an example of a person coming from the banking industry to become a college president.

Contributing to the decreased number of applicants is the low number of people preparing to be community college presidents. Research shows a significant drop in enrollment to doctoral programs which prepared people for higher levels of administration at community colleges. According to Patton (2004a),

Research by AACC and others estimates that 700 new community college presidents and campus heads, 1,800 new upper-level administrators and 30,000 new faculty members

will be needed in the next few years. The number of students currently enrolled in

graduate school programs for community college administration would fill only a fraction

of these openings; the number of advanced degrees conferred in community college

administration decreased 78 percent between 1983 and 1997 (p. 1).

The number of presidents leaving the office is increasing and the applicant pool of new

presidents is shrinking. Therefore, retaining new presidents is a key to maintaining quality

leadership within the community college system. As they assume their first presidency, these

new presidents often experience immediate job "over load" while attempting to understand the

college's strengths, problems, and organizational culture. Providing insights garnered from other

new presidents is one way of providing them with practical and constructive assistance. This

study asked relatively new community college presidents to share their perspective,

understandings and insights as to how they gathered information, set priorities and put into place

strategies to the challenges they encountered at the beginning of their presidency. This sharing

among these elite individuals who are the chief executive officers can only be of benefit to all the

community college and its stakeholders.

<div align="center">The Role of the Community College President</div>

In 2003, Cohen and Brawer stated, "no other institution in American education plays a

more difficult role than the community college" (p. 427). George A. Baker III, Judy Dudziak

and Peggy Tyler (1994), authors of the seminal work, *A Handbook on the Community College in

America: Its History, Mission, and Management,* describe the community college by stating,

"The mission of the community college has grown from a rather simplistic focus on preparing

students for transfer to a senior college or university to a very complex concept of meeting the

needs of a diverse student population" (p. xiii). These two statements underscore the difficult

and complex administrative challenges facing a community college president. Large bodies of literature exist defining the role of a community college president. Pamela L. Eddy, assistant professor of Educational Administration and Community Leadership, Central Michigan University (2005), supports this by stating, "Presidents are one of the most studied administrative roles" (p. 705).

In order to put into context the current role of a community college president, one must reflect on the evolution of the position. A preponderance of the literature discussing the role of community college presidents expounds on the changing role of the president (Beehler, 1993; Goff, 2002; Martin, 2004; Redden, 2007; Vaughan,1989; Wenrich and Reid, 2003) Educators Linda Brown, Mario Martinez and David Daniels (2002) state, "Literature reveals that the roles and responsibilities of community college leaders have changed over a period of 30 years" (p. 1). George Boggs (2003) chief executive officer of the American Association of Community Colleges, believes "Although the founding leaders of the community college movement were the pioneers and the builders, today's leaders operate in a more complex world" (p. 18).

A search of the literature revealed multiple frameworks on which to base a historical perspective about the role of community college presidents. The work of three authors and researchers served as the foundation for the overarching framework for this research. The first is Leila Gonzalez Sullivan's (2001) four generation model of community college presidents. Contributing also to the framework is Cathryn L. Addy's (1995) description of the generations of community college presidents in her book, *The President's Journey*. She developed a three generation model of the community college president which concurs with Sullivan's first three generations. Lastly, George B. Vaughan's (1989) seminal book, *Leadership in Transition: The*

Community College Presidency, also describes a history similar to Sullivan (2001) and Addy (1995).

Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan, professor of community college education at North Carolina State University, labeled the four generations of community college leaders as, "the founding fathers, the good managers, the collaborators, and the millennium generation," (Gonzalez-Sullivan, 2001 p. 559). Table 1 provides a summary of Gonzalez-Sullivan's four generation model and the corresponding characteristics.

Table 1. Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan's Four Generation Model		
Generation	Name	Characteristics
1st Generation	Founding Father	Presidents were in charge of starting colleges
2nd Generation	The Good Manager	Presidents carried on the role of the "Founding Fathers" and expanded the community college mission
3rd Generation	The Collaborators	Presidents inherited an increasingly more complex organization dealing with issues of institutional control
4th Generation	The Millennium Generation	Presidents currently taking charge, focusing on fundraising, building trust, providing a vision, and developing relationships

Generation 1: The Founding Fathers

Elaborating on the founding fathers, Sullivan (2001) states this group was, "creative, daring, and unrestricted" (p. 561). Founding fathers were in charge of starting community colleges. Community colleges became large institutions, with "enviable physical plants, vast resources, and considerable community support" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 561). Addy (1995) described these presidents as, "the builders of buildings, the courtiers of politicians to get funding, the architects of the organizational structure borrowed from our sibling university and

colleges" (p. 127). Vaughan (1989) supports this concept by stating, "A founding president moved into an area, constructed building, employed faculty, developed curricula, recruited students, placed the teaching and learning process in motion, and spread the mission of the community college to anyone that would listen" (p. 7).

Generation 2: The Good Managers

Sullivan (2001) characterized the second generation of leaders, the good managers, as being very similar to the founding fathers. Typically, the founding fathers and the good managers were in their fifties, held doctorate degrees, and served in the military at some point in their career (Sullivan, 2001).

Distinguishing these two groups were the circumstances of the college they led. Good managers, rather than starting institutions like their predecessors, were responsible for building on the solid foundation created by the founding fathers. The good managers "led the colleges through a period of rapid growth and abundant resources," (Sullivan, 2001, p. 560).   Addy (1995) supports this by stating, "The second generation…has been the one which has taken the original concept of the community college and helped it to expand" (p. 128). Vaughn (1989) believed this generation, "served as presidents during the period of rapid enrollment growth" (p. 3).

In the late 1970s and 1980s when the good managers were leading the country's community colleges, the role of the president began to shift (Addy, 1995; Sullivan, 2001). No longer was the sole focus of a community college president about building and enrollment. Rather it was "more dynamic in role expectations and in diversity of role requirements" (Beehler, 1993, p. 1). Issues of institutional control and faculty unions started to elicit more of a

president's attention. Michael Beehler (1993) vice president for Extended Learning at South Puget Sound Community College states,

> Faculty unrest and state control were issues in their early infancy as the 1970s began. The generation of college presidents who founded or assumed presidencies of community college in the 1960s had a less complex environment to deal with than later generations (p. 1).

Further evidence which demonstrates the changing role of community college presidents during the good manager generation is derived from statements of presidents during the 1970s and 1980s. Presidents of the time reflected the concepts of balancing diverse needs of campus constituencies with the desire to achieve the goals of the community college (Greenfield, 1978). Another reflection of the time was that presidents must focus on a building process that will guide a community college's growth into the future (McClenney, 1978). In addition, the worry of future lack of funding was also articulated. Lack of funds necessitated presidents to become money managers rather than money spenders (Sims, 1978).

As community colleges moved into the 1980s, the role of the president continued to evolve in complexity. The community college presidency had become a mature position, meaning there was past presidential decisions and works on which to judge a current president. Vaughan (1989) articulated this by speaking of early presidents, "during the early decades, (presidents) were literally pioneers blazing the trails others were to follow; many of their decisions were neither right nor wrong, for they were groundbreaking decisions" (p. 7). Presidents during the early years did not rely on past perspective since there was none to judge them against. In contrast, presidents of the 80s needed to use the perspective from the past to lead them into the future (Vaughan, 1989).

One could empathize with the good manager presidents during the early 1980s, as they were being judged against past presidents. Times had changed and a successful president of the past who supervised the building of large campuses and grew enrollment was not automatically successful in the 1980s. Therefore, according to Cohen and Brawer (1999) a president's role had to shift from an instigator of growth to a strategic planner. These strategic plans promoted the college's successes in ways other than accumulating buildings and increasing enrollment. Coinciding with the shift from growth to strategic planning was the retirement of the good managers. Sullivan (2001) corroborates this group's retirement believing, "by the 1990s, most of these (good managers) had retired" (Sullivan, 2001, p. 561).

Generation 3: The Collaborators

The next generation of leaders, the collaborators, had begun assuming power during the late 1980s. Sullivan (2001) describes this group as one that, "built on [perhaps remodeled is the better term] the strong foundation laid by the two preceding generations, enduring recessions, pressures to be more accountable, public distrust, increasing numbers of under prepared students, and the explosion of the internet" (p. 561). Addy (1995) supports Sullivan's assertions regarding the impact of the internet on the collaborators. "In addition, the impact of technology cannot be underestimated. It is one of the primary forces shaping how we interact, how we organize, and how we educate" (p. 129).

Vaughan (1989) believed the collaborators should refocus the role of a community college president into three distinct areas. He came to this conclusion by synthesizing information, "based on a large number of interviews with presidents and trustees, extensive reading related to the college and university presidency, and my (his) own observation" (1989, p. 8). His conclusions were that presidents need to focus on three distinct areas, "(1) managing the

institution, (2) creating the campus climate, and (3) interpreting and communicating the institution's mission" (1989, p. 8).

Generation 4: Millennium Generation

The role of the community college president has continued to evolve and in the late 1990s, the collaborators started to give way to the millennium generation of leaders (Sullivan, 2001). A review of the literature revealed the forthcoming or millennium generation of community college presidents will need to place deep emphasis on financial issues and specifically fundraising (Evelyn, 2004; Katsinas, 2005; Murphy, 1997; Phelan, 2005; Redden, 2007).

Daniel J. Phelan (2005), president and CEO of Jackson Community College, supports the need for a deep emphasis to be placed on financial issues and fundraising. Phelan (2005), speaking on financial issues, states,

> Clearly, over the past several years, there has been a significant departure from the ways community colleges were traditionally funded. Declining federal support, both in real dollars and as a percentage of institutional operating budgets, continues to challenge the comprehensive mission of the community college (p. 94).

Phelan (2005) comments on fundraising, "community college leaders can no longer ignore or pay little attention to fundraising. This is not a responsibility that can be assigned to someone else." (p. 94).

In the *Community College Week* on March 13, 2006, an article titled "Learning The Ways of The New President-Entrepreneur," cites the need of presidents to become entrepreneurs to bridge the gap in funding that is lost by the state and federal government. Elizabeth Redden, in an October 3, 2007 article titled "The Changing Community College President," gave an

example of how President John J. (Ski) Sygielski of Fairfax Community College changed his college's approach to alumni relations to develop a paradigm of fundraising on the community college campus.

Other influential community college leaders also support the concept that presidents must become fundraisers. Jamilah Evelyn quoted Mark David Milliron, the then president of the League for Innovation, in a 2003 article as saying, ""It's a different time in the community-college world," he says. "And that means we need to think about the new skill sets that presidents will need." Milliron continues by stating "chief among them, many agree, will be the ability to bring in private donations, something presidents say already takes up 40 percent of their time, according to research by the League for Innovation." (Evelyn, 2004, p. A28). Deborah M. DiCroce, president of Tidewater Community College in Virginia, concurs with Milliron by stating, "Private fundraising was not a big push when I went into my first presidency in 1989" (Evelyn, 2004, p. A28). DiCroce continues her thoughts on fundraising with, "Ten years later, diversifying the funding streams was one of the first goals we set when we did our strategic planning" (Evelyn, 2004, p. A28).

Research provides credence to the article's emphasis on the fundraising role of the community college president. The fundraising role became another new role for the community college president during the 1990s (Glass, Conrad, and Jackson, 1998). Cathryn L. Addy, president of Tunxis Community-Technical College, emphasized this point in 1995 by stating, "Therefore, it will be critical for a president to be a good scavenger, a talented fundraiser, and a skilled marketer of the institution" (p. 135). Between 1995 and 1998, presidents of higher education institutions cited fundraising as a needed area of training for college presidents (Ross

and Green, 2000).   More recently, Shults (2001) cites fundraising as a critical skill identified by college chief executive officers as vital to their position.

The need for the fourth generation millennium presidents to develop alternate funding streams through fundraising in the 21st century to supplement their budgets is evident. However, the research shows other functions besides fundraising exist within their role as community college presidents. Eddy's (2005), Goff's (2002), Shults' (2001), and Fulton-Calkins' and Milling's (2005) comments regarding presidential skills will be utilized to complete the current role of the community college president.

According to Eddy (2005), "as college leaders, presidents act to help campus members create meaning during periods of uncertainty" (p. 706).   Donald Goff (2002), president of Roane State Community College, believes that the role of presidents must be, "dealmakers and coalition builders within the changing environment" (p. 5). Goff's research and experience lead him to state future leaders should, "inspire trust in their followers to move forward during a period in which higher education is recreating itself" (p. 571).

In 2001, the American Association of Community Colleges administered a leadership survey to community college presidents. Christopher Shults (2001) provided an executive summary of the leadership survey done by the American Association of Community Colleges. Shults (2001) summarized the survey by stating, "Presidents believe that the skills they need in the future will remain constant but that there will be more emphasis on the ability to be flexible, to understand technology, and to seek business-and industry partnerships" (p. 1). Patsy Fulton-Calkins and Charlie Milling (2005) of the University of Northern Texas concur with this view and list the following nine characteristics:

1) learning from the past while embracing the future;

2) enriching the inward journey;

3) leading from the center: values;

4) making connections: vision;

5) looking broadly for talent;

6) providing continual leadership opportunities through succession planning;

7) keeping faculty in the mix;

8) forging business and industry connections; and

9) not forgetting students: preparing the future workforce (p. 233).

Therefore, from current research the common themes of fundraising, building trust, vision, and relationship building reflect today's role of a community college president. For consistency and continuity, these four themes were used in the analysis of the information/data shared by the participant's.

Decision-Making

Throughout each day, community college presidents make numerous large and small decisions, facilitate organizational actions, and formulate institutional direction. Because the concept of decision making is so elemental to the president's position, it serves as a predominate building block of the conceptual framework for the study. However, new presidents have little time to understand many of the variables, including the culture of a college, in order to make sound decisions at the beginning of their presidency.

Poor decisions at the beginning of one's presidency could have a long lasting effect. This research provides those assuming their first presidency with insights from others who have recently gone through this transition process. The goal being that new presidents will find these

insights useful in order to make more manageable the difficult and often "bumpy" first few transition years for a new community college president

Data-Driven Decision-Making

Decision making concepts and theories investigated as plausible for the conceptual framework of this study were the classical models of decision-making; mixed scanning model of decision making; the concept of data driven decision-making; and the concept of intuition-based decision making. After reviewing each of these concepts relative to this study, the concept of data driven decision making and the concept of intuition-based decision-making seemed most applicable.

The concept of data driven decision making (DDDM) was utilized by educational leaders during the 1800s. Noted education writer Denis P. Doyle (2003) gives Abraham Lincoln credit for starting the DDDM model, "President Lincoln began the modern practice of collecting education data at the national level 150 years ago" (p. 3). Jeffrey C. Wayman (2005), assistant professor in the Department of Educational Administration at the University of Texas, Austin, states, "The use of data to inform school practice may seem new…but this concept has received varied attention in school research literature for more than 30 years" (p. 296).

The literature reflects the use of data to improve schools as an acceptable model of quality improvement. This has become especially true in modern times with educators' unfettered access to information and technology (Ackley, 2001; Collins, 2005; Chrispeels, 1992; Earl and Katz, 2002; Nichols and Beverly, 2000; Thorn, 2002; Wallace, 1985). Richard C. Wallace (1985) of the University of Pittsburgh School of Education states, "Educational leadership must be data driven…Planning must be data based" (p. 46). Well known author Jim Collins (2005) makes reference to the use of data throughout his book, *Good to Great: Why*

Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't. He provides multiple examples of how some companies were able to develop effective measures which indicate success or progress. Once the measures are developed and data tracked relative to the measures, adjustments could be made to advance the company toward greatness. Collins (2005) articulates his concept of data driven decision making as, "settling upon a consistent and intelligent method of assessing your output results, and then tracking your trajectory with rigor" (p. 8).

Noted school improvement consultant Mike Schmoker (1999) argues convincingly for the use of data driven decision making,

> You cannot fight what you cannot see… Data makes the invisible visible, revealing strengths and weaknesses that are easily concealed….[Data] will never be totally accurate or reliable, but in the hands of conscientious professionals, they promote successful, goal-oriented effort. We cannot afford to indulge in a sophomoric skepticism that absolves us of the responsibility to look at and act on information that tells us how well or not we are doing (p. 37).

The applicability of DDDM within the paradigm of decision making for the community college president is undeniable. A driving force behind the applicability as well as the need for useful pertinent information is the increased level of accountability facing community colleges. Frankie Santos Laanan (2004), faculty member in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Iowa State University, states, "In the early 1980s, the concern for measuring educational effectiveness surfaced as a major new focus for all higher education including community colleges" (Laanan, 2004, p. 58). Federal programs, such as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998 and The Work Force Investment Act provide money for community colleges while requiring data for accountability purposes. At the state

level, initiatives such as Illinois' Priorities, Quality, and Initiative program requires community

colleges to submit data showing progress towards goals (Laanan, 2004).

The basic concepts of collecting data, assessing the data, developing a plan for

improvement based on the data, and evaluating the plan to determine its effectiveness are

consistent themes throughout the literature on DDDM. The literature on data driven decision

making relative to higher education reveals two distinct paradigms: one a focus on student

learning and/or achievement; and the other a larger scope used for decisions relevant to the

institution as a whole. Denis P. Doyle, a nationally recognized education writer and consultant,

articulates the first paradigm. He is the co-author of *Winning the Brain Race and Reinventing*

Education. Doyle (2003) states, DDDM is,

the process of collecting student data--academic performance, attendance, demographics,

etc.--in such a way that administrators, teachers and parents can accurately assess student

learning. They can then make decisions based on the data to improve administrative and

instructional systems to continually promote student achievement (p. 1).

However, Doyle's (2003) definition focuses solely on student achievement. A new community

college president's focus cannot be so narrow in scope; rather they need data on a variety of

sources from the college to make a wide-range of decisions.

Authors Theodore Kowalski, Thomas Lasley and James Mahoney's (2007) definition

articulates the second paradigm within the literature of DDDM. Their paradigm is one in which

the focus of data driven decisions is broader in scope than just focusing on student achievement.

In their book *Data-Driven Decisions and School Leadership, Best Practices for School*

Improvement, Kowalski, Lasley and Mahoney's (2007) concept of DDDM is, "collecting,

connecting, creating, and confirming" (p. 103). Table 2 provides an explanation of each of the words with the definition.

Table 2. Kowalski, Lasley, Mahoney's Model of Data Driven Decision Making	
Activity	Explanation
Collecting	"Compilation of important data"
Connecting	"Analyzing the data from different perspectives or combining it with other data"
Creating	"Creating is doing. It is taking action on what you find"
Confirming	"Did the program or practice make a difference?"

(Kowalski, Lasley, Mahoney, 2007, p. 111- 114)

The concepts provided by Kowalski, Lasley, and Mahoney can provide a lens from which to view how, and in what ways, community college presidents identify, address, and strategize solutions to challenges they encounter at the beginning of their presidency. For consistency and continuity, these four concepts were used in the analysis of the information/data shared by the participant's.

Intuition–Based Decision-Making

Data driven decision making (DDDM) is not the only decision-making process new community college presidents utilize while identifying, addressing, and strategizing solutions to challenges they encounter at the beginning of their presidency. At times, data is unavailable or is incomplete, yet new presidents are still required to make a decision. Understanding and acknowledging this dilemma of new presidents, the concept of intuition-based decision-making was appropriate and applicable for this research's conceptual framework.

Supporting the use of intuition-based decisions by leaders is a statement by Robert L. Hess, past president of Brooklyn College (1988). He states,

No matter how strong the traditions of an institution, change is inevitable; the question

facing the leader is always only whether to be reactive or proactive. He or she must learn

to know instinctively when to act and when not to act. The leader must be willing to

explore unknown territory; he or she cannot fear the future. A heavy dose of optimism

(or faith) is required. While no leader would act out of ignorance, neither should one be

immobilized because not all the information is in (or not all pertinent data are available).

This means, of course, that the leader must be willing to take risks (p. 96).

Further supporting the use of intuition-based decision making is Duncan and Harlacher

(1991). They concur and state presidents should,

Know intuitively the zones of acceptance of their various constituencies, being aware that

to operate outside these zones may predict failure. Their success will depend upon their

ability to face difficult issues and conflicts "head on," to confront detractors skillfully,

and to negotiate resolutions (p. 46).

The literature showed there is a wide range of accepted definitions regarding intuition and thus

intuition-based decision-making. Debbie Anne Shirley and Janice Langan-Fox (1996),

researchers within the Department of Psychology at the University of Melbourne, state

"researchers and scholars do not agree on what intuition actually means and bring differing

perspectives to its study from many disciplines. A review of the literature yields many common

ideas among the vast array of definitions offered" (p. 563). Two definitions of intuition seemed

to be the most appropriate for this research and will be used in the analysis of the

information/data shared by the participant's.

The first definition is one by Shirley and Langan-Fox. After reviewing the literature on

intuition, Shirley and Langan-Fox (1996) put forward their own definition of intuition. They

state intuition is a "feeling with certitude on the basis of inadequate information and without conscious awareness of rational thinking" (p. 564). This definition is significant since it was a synthesis of the literature which is in contrast to many definitions which are based on a single experiment, or idea.

The Shirley and Langan-Fox's (1996) definition has a direct connection to the paradigm in which new community college presidents operate. A large number of the decisions made by presidents are based on inadequate or incomplete information. This can be especially true when new presidents assume their position. Barry Munitz, former chancellor of the University of Houston, humorously summarizes this phenomenon as follows, "When you are a presidential candidate, you must act as if you know everything. When you get the job, you must act as if you know nothing; the reason is that you actually know nothing" (Levine, 1984, p. 11). Birnbaum (1990) also recognized this concept by stating,

> Presidents realize that their first acts may have a profound effect on their terms of office, and they strive to develop an image of skill and decisiveness…Presidents who do not seem initially "in charge" may be viewed with concern by the faculty who may ask themselves, is he capable (p. 9)?

These two authors show the value of using intuition for new community college presidents. New presidents are charged with often making decisions from day one and yet they also must learn about the institution to be informed about the specific institutional culture and norms. Therefore, decisions made based on intuition are inevitable and essential.

The second definition of intuition providing applicability to this study is one by Amy Baylor (1997). Baylor is an associate professor and founder of the Center for Research and Innovative Technologies for Learning at Florida State University. She also developed a

definition of intuition also based on an extensive review of the literature. Baylor's (1997)

definition of intuition has three components, "immediacy, sensing relationships, and reasoning"

(p. 188). Table 3 provides examples for each of the three components.

Table 3. Amy L Baylor (1997) Model of Intuition	
Component	Definition
Immediacy	"the role of timing, … mind popping,… getting to the truth all at once, without the time consuming effort of deliberation that is also a source of error."
Sensing relationships	"reflects the formulation of connections, an intrinsic property of intuition."
Reasoning	"ironically incorporates analytical process while functioning in contrast to them."

(Baylor, 1997, p. 188)

Baylor's first component in her model of intuition-based decision-making is immediacy.

The component of immediacy is apparent in the highly intense transition period of the

community college president. New presidents are given little time in order to affect change in

order to move the college forward or in a new direction. James L. Fisher (1984), president

emeritus of the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and president emeritus of

Towson University, stated,

> Make as many changes and debatable decisions as possible during your honeymoon in
>
> office. It will establish a design for change, create precedent, and be accepted by the
>
> community. Don't listen seriously to the person who says 'Wait till you get the feel of
>
> the place.' It's too late then (p. 25).

Supporting this is Marisa Liddell, president of Aims Community College outside Denver,

who said she felt the pressure the instant she started her presidency. "Hitting the ground running

was the board's charge to me." (Bagnato, 2005, p. 7).   The perceived state of the institution will

also play a role in this component of immediacy;

For the new president of an institution in crisis, quick actions may be interpreted as reassuring and therefore, may be a more effective approach in paving the way for more substantive changes than learning about an institution (Birnbaum, 1989, p. 92).

Baylor's second component in her model of intuition-based decision-making is sensing relationships. This component is directly connected with Shults (2001) the relationship building role of the community college president. The two areas, politics and relationship-building, relate to Baylor's second component of sensing relationships. Both of these areas are about understanding the connections or relationships between people and how to use those connections to accomplish tasks and take actions to move the college forward meeting its mission.

Jess Carreon summarized the overwhelming nature of relationship-building at the beginning of his presidency when he stated, "All of a sudden, I have to be able to work with and talk to legislators" (Bagnato, 2005 p. 7). Donald Goff (2002) believes that presidents must be, "dealmakers and coalition builders within the changing environment" (p. 5). Meaning they must build relationships and coalitions in order to accomplish tasks.

Another perspective of relationship-building comes from Estela Bensimon, Marian Gade, and Joseph Kauffman (1989). These well-respected authors who have written extensively on college presidents believe the development of relationships by new presidents before they come to campus is essential. Bensimon, Gade, and Kauffman (1989) state, "In the process of getting to know the campus, you will be able to find out what the different constituencies expect and need…[this] helps you to anticipate what proposals will be supported and which opposed" (p. 10).

In order to build relationships, Bensimon, Gade, and Kauffman (1989) suggest building relationship through uncomplicated methods. In their research, they found that new presidents

asked the vice presidents of the colleges to assist them in specific ways to learn about the

institution. These authors depict a new president, who asked the vice president of the college to,

> Prepare a list of every faculty member, with "about four sentences on each on describing
>
> his or her temperament and political position, and where they fit into the culture." This
>
> president memorized every name and description and in a sense got to know each
>
> member of the faculty before he arrived on campus (p. 5).

Tony Zeiss (2003), president of Central Piedmont Community College, believes "Building

Trusting Relationships" is a key element for new community college presidents.

> New presidents sometimes have the mistaken idea that they are finally in control and that
>
> their ideas will take root and drive the college. However, veteran presidents know that
>
> the first year in office is a time for building relationships, not changing fundamental
>
> elements of the college (p. 123).

Reasoning is the final component of Baylor's model of intuition. This concept is without

question an essential element to any new community college president's intuitive skills.

Presidents must use reason and engage in such activities as being honest, fair, respectful, humble

and adaptable (Zeiss, 2003). Birnbaum (1990) comments, "Presidents realize that their first acts

may have a profound effect on their terms of office" (p. 9). Essentially, using reason relative to

decision making at the inception of one's presidency can have a positive influence on the types

of relationships a new president develops.

However, the concept of reason is more complex and broader in scope, infused and

instilled within all aspects of the president's life. The unique intense and overwhelming

demands placed on a community college president can bring into question the proper balance in

one's life. Presidents, especially new ones, have to find that balance between work and personal

life. "Presidents have multiple constituents to keep informed and happy: students, parents, trustees, faculty, policymakers, administrators, staff, donors, and the community at large. This is a serious responsibility, and one that demands a great deal of time and thought. Most presidents feel they seldom have any time off" (Zeiss, 2003, p. 132). If a president is tired, over stressed, and "off-balance," it impacts their reasoning capabilities. In addition, employing reason to determine when the presidency and one's personal life are out of balance is important but no less so than putting it back into a reasonable balance.

Both Shirley and Langan-Fox's (1996) and Baylor's (1997) definitions provided a perspective of intuition which is applicable to the decision-making role of the community college president. Their definitions are based on a review of the literature and therefore provided a representation of intuition which is drawn from a wide perspective of research. Shirley and Langan-Fox's definition reflects on a feeling of certainty about a decision without adequate information. Both of these definitions portray an aspect of the paradigm new community college presidents are thrust into the instant they assume a presidency.

In summary, both data-driven decision-making and intuition-based decision-making provided a framework from which to analyze the decisions made by new community college presidents. Specifically, the Kowalski, Lasley, and Mahoney (2007) data-driven decision-making model provided a framework to analyze new president choices when they articulate decisions based on collecting data, connecting that data to develop a list of challenges, and utilizing that data to create strategies to address the challenges. Shirley and Langan-Fox's (1996) and Baylor's (1997) definitions provided a framework to analyze new presidents' choices when they articulate decisions based on feelings of certitude even when information is lacking or making decisions based on reasoning and relationships among people.

Information Gathering

In order for a new community college president to make sound decisions, they require timely, appropriate, and accurate information (as much as can be obtained). Information can yield clues to the culture, norms, values, and challenges facing their new institution. Information can also serve as a guide; maintaining decisions within the acceptable boundaries of the college's culture. Dan Ciampa, an advisor and counselor to leaders in transition, and Michael Watkins', an associate professor at Harvard Business School, method of gathering information from their 1999 book *Right From the Start: Taking Charge in a New Leadership Role* seemed applicable to this study.

Ciampa and Watkins' ideas were chosen after an extensive search of the literature regarding information gathering, leadership theory, and questioning. The majority of information gathering literature focuses on systems that culminate in the development of computer-based decision-making models, not gathering information (Craven, 1975; Norris and Mims, 1984; Wedley and Field, 1984; LeMahieu, 1981).

Literature reviewed on questioning techniques provided loosely connected concepts on how people in leadership roles can interview employees and ask the right questions. It did not, however, provide a systematic way a new leader would move into a position and glean information (Browne and Keely, 2004; Eales-White, 1998). Interestingly, leadership theory provides a framework for what leaders do; but did not articulate processes for collecting information (Hersey 1997; Kotter, 1996; Laub, 1999; Northouse, 2004; Neuschel, 1998; Stogdill and Bass, 1990; Spears, 1995; Spears, 2004).

In contrast to the information gathering models that resulted in computer based systems, leadership theory, and questioning techniques, Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) methods for

gathering information provides a conceptual framework applicable for this study. The intent of their research was, "to offer prescriptive advice to new leaders" (Ciampa and Watkins, 1999, p. 5). Specifically, they want to offer advice to leaders so they can, "take hold of their new organizations and surmount the challenges posed by transition, transformation, and succession" (Ciampa and Watkins, 1999, p. 5). The purpose of this study was much the same as Ciampa and Watkins' which was to provide advice, insights and perspectives to new community college presidents.

Their methods for information gathering are derived from their research, "Framework for Taking Charge." Ciampa and Watkins (1999) developed the framework after interviewing, "many senior executives who have been involved in leadership transitions" (p. xi). Specifically, Ciampa and Watkins (1999) interviewed over fifty senior level executives from industry and education. Those interviews yielded the following seven themes.

1. A new leader has two to three years to make measurable progress in changing the culture and improving financial performance.

2. On arrival, the new leader should already understand the organization's current strategy and associate goals and challenges, and should have formed hypotheses about its operating priorities.

3. New leaders must balance an intense, single-minded focus on a few vital priorities with flexibility about when and how they are implemented.

4. Within the first six months, the new leader must make key decisions about the "organizational architecture" of people, structure, and systems.

5. By the end of the first six months, the new leader must also have built some personal credibility and momentum.

6. The new leader must earn the right to transform the organization.

7. There is no single best way to manage a leadership transition (p. 33).

These responses were categorized into a three part transition framework which is composed of three core tasks: creating momentum; mastering the enabling technologies of learning, visioning, and coalition building; and managing oneself. Table 4 displays the three core tasks with a brief description of each.

Table 4. Ciampa and Watkins' Framework for Taking Charge	
Core Task	Description
Creating Momentum	"rapidly getting employees moving so that their energy is targeted in the most profitable ways and they become confident that they can succeed"
Mastering the enabling technologies of learning, visioning, and coalition building	"learning in order to engage in informed visioning, which promotes supportive coalitions in turn leading to more and better learning"
Managing Oneself	"exercising clear-headed judgment, staying on the "rested edge," and avoiding the "ragged edge""

(Ciampa and Watkins, 1999, p. 34-36)

Most germane to this research was the second core task because it contains the element of learning; "mastering the enabling technologies of learning, visioning, and coalition building" (Ciampa and Watkins, 1999, p. 34). This element provided a lens from which to view the learning embarked on during and as a direct result of the information gathering activities of the new community college presidents. This approach to information gathering had applicability to new community college presidents since it focused on learning by new leaders in upper level management positions.

Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) approach to organizational information gathering is divided into structured and unstructured gathering. Elaborating first on the unstructured information

gathering, which Ciampa and Watkins (1999) call, "embracing a learning mindset" (p. 149).

Table 5 summarizes the unstructured information gathering process.

Table 5. Ciampa and Watkins' Unstructured Information Gathering Approaches	
Method	Description
Being proactive about finding problems	New leader should seek out information rather than passively letting it come to them. "They (leaders) systematically identify and tap into good sources of information, and build internal and external networks of relationships to support intelligence gathering."
Learning with a point of view	Being prepared is the key to this type of unstructured information gathering. "Learning that is disciplined and shaped by a point of view-- which a new leader began to develop prior to entry."
Listening actively	This method of information gathering is based on actively engaging people while listening. "Listening from others requires insightful questions and active probing of initial responses."
Cultivating awareness	This method of information gathering encourages the leader to watch for non-verbal cues to identify hot-button topics, identify the power players by watching interactions among groups of people, and avoid negative reactions which may shut down frank, straight-forward discussion.

(Ciampa and Watkins, 1999, p. 159)

Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) second approach to information gathering is through

"structured learning" and is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Ciampa and Watkins' Structured Information Gathering Approaches	
Method	Description
Interviews and Group Discussions	This structured technique calls for new leaders to ask the same questions of people to be able to see the organization from different points of view. "Structure interviews with 'slices' of the organization are particularly useful as a way to quickly identify problems and opportunities."
Case Studies	Case studies are used to determine decision making paradigms and power holders within the institution. "Case studies can be used to assess patterns of decision-making and to identify sources of power and influence. The new leader might select an important recent decision and probe how it was made, who participated, and who exerted influence at each stage, more or less as an investigative journalist would."
Market Tours and Plant Tours	This structured technique has new leaders meeting customers and front line organizational people as a means of gathering information. "Market tours are opportunities to meet key customers and to interact with salespeople informally between meetings. Customers' complaints and insights become a springboard for discussions of causes and cures as well as product ideas."
Pilot Projects	A pilot project is a living case study. In other words, implement a new project or idea on a trial basis and observe how the project develops. This method forces employees to engage in dialogue to implement the trial project. During this time, "the leader ought to observe the group dynamics of the pilot team at feedback and report meetings…It is important not just to notice who talks most, but also to judge whether people say everything that is on their minds."

(Ciampa and Watkins,1999, p. 160 - 163)

In summary, the concepts align seamlessly with the role of the new community college

president. Presidents need to glean information from college stake holders to execute their role.

A multi-faceted approach like Ciampa and Watkins' is necessary due to the complex challenges

facing new community college presidents and the comprehensive mission of the community

college. These two organizational information gathering approaches were utilized when analyzing the information gathering activities of the new community college presidents who participated in the study.   In addition, these theories and concepts prominently discussed in the literature review brought to the analytical framework the integration of relevant *a priori* themes.

Conclusion

The American Community College system is in the midst of a leadership crisis. Presidents with many years of experience are retiring and the pool to replace the retiring presidents is shrinking. Contributing to the leadership crisis is the overwhelming nature of the position. Specifically overwhelming is the high number of complex challenges college presidents encounter. It is apparent that many qualified upper-level administrators in the community college system are either unwilling or unprepared to subject themselves to these complex challenges and apply for presidency positions.

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents encounter, how these challenges are prioritized, and the strategies used to address them at the beginning of their presidency. When assuming their new position, how and in what ways do they obtain vital information to make sound quality decisions. Presidents need to learn as much as possible regarding the institution so decisions can be made which are thoughtful and consistent with the college's culture.

In addition, a community college president also must have a firm understanding of the role they assume. This role, much like the community college system itself, has gone through a great deal of transformation over the past one hundred years. At the beginning of the community college movement, presidents were focused on growth. Their main task was to construct buildings and enroll an ever increasing number of students.

The time has now passed when a president can only focus on growth of the physical campus and the student body. Now presidents have to focus on their four primary roles of fundraising, building trust, vision, and relationship building. The fundraising role is to supplement the dwindling federal and state funding. The building trust role is to develop trusting relationships with internal campus constituents. The vision role is to provide direction for the college. The relationship building role provides a means to reach out to the community which the college serves in order to ensure it is providing the education residents want and require.

Fulfilling the role of a new community college president can be daunting without insight into the position. The knowledge gleaned from this study will provide insight for those whom are assuming their first presidency and for future community college presidents.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN

Introduction

This chapter sets forth the study's research design and techniques employed to answer the research purpose and driving questions. The research design provides a logical systematic framework which will guide the process for conducting the research. The purpose of the study was to identify the challenges and methods used to address them by new community college presidents. The goal of the research is to provide useful information for new community college presidents to utilize as they begin their first presidency. Thus, the quality and criteria of soundness throughout each stage of this study is essential if new presidents are to be comfortable in using these findings to make decisions. Donald R. Cooper, professor at Florida Atlantic University, and Pamela S. Schindler faculty, member at Wittenberg University (2003), state good research ,

> Generates dependable data, being derived by practices that are conducted professionally
> and that can be used reliably for managerial decision making. In contrast, poor research
> is carelessly planned and conducted, resulting in data a manager can't use to reduce his or
> her decision-making risks (p. 14).

Research Design

The design for this research is qualitative case study situated in the interpretive paradigm. Norman K. Denzin, Professor of Sociology, Communication and Humanities at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Professor of Higher Education and Head of the Department of Educational Administration at Texas A & M (1994, 2005) describe

approaches to qualitative research such as ethnography, phenomenology, grounded theory, historical research, interpretive research, and action research.

The development and use of qualitative research in the social science disciplines spans over 100 years. An interesting and informative description of this history is written by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 2005). They developed a five phase model of qualitative research which provides a framework to view the history of the design. They divide the past century of qualitative research into The Traditional Moment, The Modernist Moment, The Blurred Genres Moment, The Crisis of Representation Moment, and The Triple Crisis Moment.

The first period, called The Traditional Moment spanned from the early 1900's through World War II. This moment was characterized by studies which focused on cultures. Jerry W. Willis (2007), Associate Dean for Research at the University of Alabama, states "During this period other cultures were studied from the perspective of the researcher's culture" (p. 151). Considerable emphasis was placed on the fieldwork of the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Researchers used their fieldwork for, "offering valid, reliable, and objective interpretations in their writings" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 7). Researchers studied participants for endless hours in their natural setting to collect data. Then the researchers returned from the fieldwork to put in writing narratives about strange cultures and people they observed (Rosaldo, 1989). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, "The texts of Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Margaret Mead, and Gregory Bateson are still carefully studied for what they can tell the novice about fieldwork, taking field notes, and writing theory"(p. 7). The period started to decline when the validity of the research was questioned. Critics argued that the writings of researchers were romanticizing the life of their participants and not providing an objective portrayal of their fieldwork (Roffman and Purdy, 1981).

The perceived lack of rigor from the Traditional Moment encouraged the growth of the second period called the Modernist Moment. This phase ran from the end of World War II to the 1970s. The thrust of this phase was to bring rigor to qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, "In this period many texts attempted to formalize qualitative methods" (p. 8). During this period it seems qualitative researchers attempted to parallel fellow quantitative researchers. Willis (2007) states, "A core characteristic of the second moment of qualitative research was an attempt to put qualitative research on the same footing as quantitative-to make it a quantitative, objective, and statistical approach" (p. 152). Howard S. Becker (1970), distinguished author in the field of sociology research comments qualitative researchers during this phase used observations to support conclusions. This was accomplished with such techniques as looking for frequency of an event. This was different than the Traditional Moment when research conclusions were based on observations and objective writings (Becker, 1970).

The Modernist Moment was coming to an end at the beginning of the 1970s. The emphasis on scientific rigor started to fade and the interpretive paradigm based on the incorporation of multiple perspectives took rise during what was known as the third moment or the Blurred Genres Moment. "The essay as an art form was replacing the scientific article" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 9). The result was research in which the author's ability to interpret data was based on the researchers frame of reference.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe, "this was the golden age of rigorous qualitative analysis" (p. 8). Further, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) articulate the interpretive qualitative form of research is still used today, "the phase extended through the postwar years and is still present in the work of many" (p. 8). Prominent education researchers of this time were Struass and Corbin (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1993). These characteristics of the interpretive

qualitative paradigm align with the design of this study. Illustrating this is the use of interviews as the primary data collection technique which draws on the multiple perspectives of the participants and the researcher's frame of reference to interpret the gathered data. Further reinforcing the use of the interpretive qualitative design is the fact that prominent educational researchers such as Struass and Corbin (1990) and Miles and Huberman (1993) used this form of research in an educational setting which was the context for this study.

While Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe The Blurred Genres Moment is still alive today, they also believed new voices throughout the qualitative research community were forming. These new voices spawned another moment in qualitative research. Researchers began questioning how such factors as gender, class, and race affected the objectiveness of research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) remarked that works of the time, "made research and writing more reflexive and called into question the issues of gender, class, and race" (p. 10). Researchers investigated new and innovative concepts for finding truth (Rosaldo, 1989). Willis (2007) states, "Feminist and critical epistemologies grew in influence during this period, and the influence of traditional research methods that led us to some form of universal truth decreased" (p. 153). This moment called the Crises of Representation Moment started in the mid 1980s and continues to shape some of the current research paradigms of today (Denzin and Lincoln 2005).

The fifth moment in qualitative research is referred to by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) as the Triple Crisis. They believe qualitative research continues to be impacted by the new voices which surfaced during the Blurred Genres moment. The three crises which are upon the qualitative research community are representation, legitimation, and praxis. The crisis of representation is defined as the inability of researchers to truly depict the experiences of participants being observed. Willis (2007) states, "The crisis of representation is about the

inability of qualitative researchers to present in their written reports the lived experiences of those they study" (p. 154). Legitimation refers to the researchers' ability to assess what topics are worth researching. In other words, what topic is really a legitimate topic that adds to a discipline's field of knowledge (Willis, 2007)? The idea of praxis refers to the concept of activism. Meaning how will the results of qualitative research, which are written text, be used to effect change within the world (Willis 2007)? Denzin and Lincoln (2005) answer Willis's (2007) question with doubt. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) ask, "Is it possible to effect change in the world if society is only and always a text" (p. 20)?

The history of qualitative research provides context for John W. Creswell, Professor of Educational Psychology at University of Nebraska, and Dana L. Miller's, Assistant Professor of Research Methods at Doane College (1997), definition of qualitative research, they state it, "places a substantial emphasis on how participants in a study make sense or meaning of a situation. This knowledge resides 'inside' the individual as opposed to 'out there' beyond the individual" (p 5). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) add the dimensions of a relationship between the researcher and the data, and the concept of value-laden inquiry with their definition of qualitative research. They state,

> Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. Such researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning (p. 4).

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents' encounter, how these challenges are prioritized, and the strategies used to address

them at the beginning of their presidency. In order to fulfill this purpose, the study sought

relevant information and insights from new community college presidents painting a picture of

the trials new presidents encountered during the beginning of their presidencies. This qualitative

research blended these multiple painted pictures to develop a socially constructed reality

encountered among new community college presidents. This socially constructed reality will

shed light on the experiences facing new presidents and provide perspective for future new

presidents.

The concept of reality being social constructed is a key to this researcher. In their

seminal work *A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* sociologist Peter L. Berger and Thomas

Luckman (1966) state, "The most general answer to this question is that social order is a human

product" (p. 52). Social order is the habitual rules or activities humans follow on a regular basis,

in other words human reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966). Curtis W. Stofferahn (2000) from

the Department of Sociology at the University of North Dakota describes social constructed

reality by stating, "making sense of the situation through applying understood social norms, they

create social reality; they order their experiences to be congruent with their everyday social

world" (p. 5).

These are the concepts the research strove to uncover through the qualitative research

design. What are the habitual activities new presidents follow when they assume their position,

and identify, prioritize and address challenges? How do they make sense of the complex

situations which arise while acclimating to the lofty responsibilities of a community college

president? Their activities and the situations they encounter construct the reality the new

president must function within in order to success fulfill the requirements of the position.

The definition of qualitative research by Sharan B. Merriam (2002), Professor of Adult

Education, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, further supports the selection of qualitative

research paradigm for the study. She states, "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in

interaction with their world," and "there are multiple constructions and interpretations of reality"

(p. 3-4). Similar to Cresswell and Miller (1997) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Merriam (2002)

supports the concept of developing meaning by gathering information on how individuals

interact within their world. Her interpretation of qualitative research also reinforces the notion of

the use of an individual's perspectives to develop this meaning. Illustration of various authors'

definitions of qualitative research and applications to this study are found in table 7.

Table 7. Summary of Authors Definitions of Qualitative Research and Applications to the Study		
Authors	Characteristics	Study
Creswell and Miller (1997)	Making sense of a situation from knowledge within a participant	The study relied on the knowledge within new presidents to draw conclusions on the challenges facing new community college presidents.
Denzin and Lincoln (1994)	Value-laden inquiry to find meaning	The values of the new presidents were examined to determine how they identified and addressed challenges.
Merriam (2002)	Multiple views of reality	Six presidents were studied to get multiple views to develop meaning in relation to the challenges faced by new community college presidents.

The study was also situated in the interpretive paradigm. Jerome Kirk, professor at the

University of California, Irvine, and Marc L. Miller, professor at the School of Marine Affairs

(1986), defines the interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. Kirk and Miller (1986) state

interpretive qualitative research, "is a particular tradition in social science that fundamentally

depends on watching people in their own territory and interacting with them in their own

language, on their own terms" (p. 9). Engaging, observing and interviewing people in their own

natural context using their own language, lexicon, and terms is a key element to interpretive

qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) concur with Kirk and Miller (1986) by stating

interpretive qualitative research, "is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic

approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). Further, Kirk and Miller(1986) state interpretive

qualitative researchers, "study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or

interpret, phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (p. 2). Interacting with

study participants in their own familiar natural setting, and employing a lexicon particular to the

highest level administrators in community colleges and use of the researcher as the tool to

interpret data gathered are examples of situating this study in the interpretive paradigm.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) put forward five characteristics of qualitative research which

are naturalistic, descriptive data, concerns with process, inductive, and meaning. A combination

of all five of these were used during the research process. All of these five characteristic were

present throughout the study.

Kirk and Miller (1986) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) similarly describe naturalistic as

the idea of context, meaning viewing subjects or data in their natural setting.   The research

participants were interviewed on their campuses in their natural setting. This is important to the

study since interviewing someone in their own office, in their particular natural and familiar

setting put them at ease.

Descriptive data refers to the idea of data as "words or pictures rather than numbers"

(Bogan and Biklen, 2007, p 5). The dominate data source for this study was the participant's

words resulting from open-ended unstructured interview questions as well as field notes detailing

the researchers observations. Both the interviews and field notes, including observations and reflections, were included in the analysis of the data.

Meaning refers to the idea of making sense out of people's lives (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). This study made sense from the inclusive data analysis generated from the interactions and interviews of the participants, and the demographic surveys. Table 8 summarizes the definitions the interpretive paradigm along with its applicability to this study.

Table 8. Summary of Authors Definitions of Interpretive Paradigm and Applications to the Study		
Authors	Characteristics	Study
Kirk and Miller (1986)	Participants are studied in their own territory	This study interviewed new community college presidents in their offices.
Bogdan and Biklen (2007)	Five characteristics of qualitative research which are naturalistic, descriptive data, concerns with process, inductive, and meaning	All were predominate characteristics utilized throughout the study.

In summary, situating the study in the qualitative paradigm provided a structure which enabled the researcher to draw on experiences and insights from multiple participants. Employing the interpretive paradigm within qualitative research method led the researcher to construct meaning relative to the study.

Case Study Method

Choosing a method or a strategy of inquiry for the study was another key to maintaining the rigor and quality of the research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, "A strategy of inquiry comprises a bundle of skills, assumptions, and practices that researchers employ as they move from their paradigm to the empirical world. Strategies of inquiry put paradigms of interpretations into motion" (p. 14). Margaret D. LeCompte of the University of Colorado

Boulder School of Education and Judith Preissle of the University of Georgia Department of

Lifelong Education, Administration, and Policy provide a starting point for choosing a research

method. LeCompte and Preissle (1993) state, "What information most appropriately will answer

specific research questions, and which strategies are most effective for obtaining it" (p. 30). For

this research, a case study method served to bound the interpretive qualitative research design.

Case study method has been a viable research method for many years. Throughout formal

research the case study method has seen periods of extreme use and minimal use. The method

originated in Europe, specifically France. When it came to the United States in the 1930s, the

University of Chicago Department of Sociology was the American pioneer of the methodology

(Tellis, 1997). Winston Tellis (1997), Director of Undergraduate Programs at Fairfield

University's School of Business, states the view of the University of Chicago Department of

Sociology was, "Case study is done in a way that incorporates the views of the 'actors' in the

case under study" (p. 1).

The case study method has weathered multiple criticisms since arriving in America in the

1930s. The criticisms ranged from the ability of a researcher to draw conclusions based on

information from a low number of participants within a study to the lack of scientific rigor in the

methodology (Hamel, Dufour, & Fortin, 1993; Yin, 1993). Researchers have responded to the

criticism of low participants within the case study method by arguing, even case studies of one

can yield quality research (Campbell, 1975; Hamilton, 1980; Kemmis, 1980; Yin 1989, 1993).

Specifically, Yin (2006) argued if the goal of the study is to investigate a single phenomenon in

depth a sample size of one may be appropriate. Yin (2006) states, "Focusing on a single case

will force you to devote careful attention to that case" (p. 114). Stake (1994) also supports the

case of one in research requiring focus on a particular phenomenon. He articulates that multiple

cases inevitably bring comparison into a study. Stake (1994) states, "direct comparison diminishes the opportunity to learn from it (the single case)" (p. 240).

Hamel et al., (1993) argued the scientific rigor of the method and attributed the disapproval of the case study to the maturity of the sociology field in the first half of the 1900s. Hamel et al., (1993) believed the 1960s were the turning point for the case study method. The limitation of quantitative research was surfacing and a renewed emphasis was being placed on qualitative designs with a case study method. Stake (1995) believed case study has scientific rigor by stating, "Case study is a part of scientific method, but its purpose is not limited to the advance of science" (p. 245).

Having established the origins and rigor of case study method demonstrating the applicability to the field of educational research is essential. Regula Kyburz-Graber (2004), Associate Dean for Resources of the Faculty of Art at the University of Zurich in Switzerland, states,

> Case studies are increasingly being used in educational research intended to describe context-specific educational situations and to draw conclusions by generalizing from the findings. Not only do case studies seem to allow research to be conducted with a minimum of effort, but they also allow the results to be communicated much more easily and directly to the people concerned (p. 53).

Mark Hadfield (2000), Professor of Education at University of Wolverhampton, states, "In education, case study has a wide range of uses from curriculum development to the evaluation of new policies and practices" (p. 363). Well respected author and researcher Robert K. Yin (2006) states, "By now, the case study method has attained routine status as a viable method for doing education research" (p. 111).

Yin's support of the case study method in educational research provided a logical transition for using his definition of a case study within this research. Yin (1994) defines the case study research method as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 13). Further, Yin (2003) describes a case study as a research method that answers such questions as "how" and "why (p. 1). The researcher investigated other research methods for this study. Yin (2003) states, "The case study is but one of several ways of doing social science research. Other ways include experiments, surveys, histories, and analysis of archival information" (p. 1). While these methods showed some application to the study, the case study method surfaced at the most appropriate for the research.

The definition and comments Yin (1994) puts forward provide credence to the researcher employing the method of case study for this research. This research studied the phenomenon of new community college presidents identifying challenges and the means by which they addressed these challenges. The study interviewed six presidents asking the "what" or "how" questions therefore affording context to the processes new presidents' experience when assuming their position.

Further elaborating on the case study method, Merriam (1998) defines it as, "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9). This information drawn from multiple sources assisted the researcher in triangulating the data and ensured responses which were accurate to the phenomenon being described. The data analysis was done using both *a priori* themes derived

from the study's conceptual framework. The researcher collected data and analyzed the findings

using both *a priori* themes as well as any and all data garnered from the participants.

Hadfield (2000) builds on the definition of Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998). Hadfield

(2000) defines case study as, "in-depth and holistic research into a particular instance or

singularity. It places individuals, events and organizations within their contexts and by doing so,

attempts to understand the meanings and behaviors encountered by the researcher within these

settings" (p. 363). Hadfield (2000) adds to Yin (1994) and Merriam (1998) by introducing the

researcher into the study. This is a central component to this study since the researcher is a

"tool" for data collection and data analysis. The researcher employed his background

knowledge of community colleges throughout both the data collection and analysis phase of the

research to "understand the meaning" and "behaviors encountered." Table 9 summarizes the

definitions of case study methodology along with its applicability to this study.

Table 9. Summary of author's Definitions of Case Study Method and Application to the Study		
Author	Characteristics	Study
Yin (2003)	Inquiry into contemporary phenomenon, within a real life context	The study will inquire into the contemporary phenomenon of the challenges facing new community college presidents. The study will answer "what" and "how" questions.
Merriam (1998)	Examination of a phenomenon such as an institution	The study will focus on the institution of the community college president.
Hadfield (2000)	Researcher makes sense out of a phenomenon studied	The researcher will draw conclusions based on the information provided by the presidents during on-campus interviews.

The definitions put forward by Yin (1994), Merriam (1998) and Hadfield (2000) showed the applicability of the case study method to this research. The case study method provided the best design for this study of new community college presidents.

<div align="center">Participant Sampling</div>

Choosing a sampling technique which yields relevant and pertinent data is essential. Creswell (1998) and Weiss (1994) believe researchers have the option to choose from several different sampling strategies in order to select the appropriate participants. Participants should be selected to answer the study's purpose. Further, Patton (1990) suggests researchers should choose participants rich with information. Lincoln and Denzin (1994) state, "A good informant is one who has the knowledge and experience the researcher requires, has the ability to reflect, is articulate, has the time to be interviewed and is willing to participate in the study" (p. 228).

Applying the concepts of Creswell (1998), Weiss (1994), Patton (1990) and Lincoln and Denzin (1994), participants where chosen that are information rich, willing to articulate their perspectives and experiences, have the time to be interviewed and meet the selection criteria of the study. In order to locate presidents with the desired characteristics, the researcher utilized purposeful and convenient sample methods. Purposeful sampling refers to choosing participants who have relevant knowledge regarding the research topic, thus are information rich (Patton, 1990). Further, the late Fred Kerlinger (1986) former professor of psychology at Wayne State University and noted author on qualitative research methods believes purposeful sampling is characterized by the researcher utilizing their knowledge of the topic to identify participants which are typical of the phenomenon being studied.

While many of the sampling techniques had applicability to this study, the researcher chose to specifically utilize the convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling is a

technique to obtain participants based on accessibility and availability. This makes it easier for

the researcher to select participants which met the selection criteria. Therefore, a purposeful and

convenient sampling technique was used.

Selection Criteria

The selection criteria for the study included three components. Each component was

carefully selected in order fulfill the purpose of the research. Three presidents were chosen from

Iowa and three presidents were chosen Illinois. All presidents were first time community college

presidents having been in their position three years or less.

Table 10 summarizes the selection criteria of the study.

Table 10. Summary of Selection Criteria	
Criteria	Description
1	Three presidents from Iowa and three from Illinois
2	First time community college president
3	Three years or less in the current position

The rationale for choosing presidents in their first presidency is that the study is focusing

on those new to the position. The large number of community college president vacancies for

various reasons, leads to the filling of these positions with those having no experience.

Therefore, perspectives and insights shared by these six new presidents can assist future new

leaders as they transition into the position.

One of the selection criteria established a constraint on a participant's length of

employment as a community college president. The purpose of the study was to identify

challenges plus the methods used to set priorities and address these challenges within the first

three years of a person's presidency. After more than three years in the position, a president

may be inclined to forget, minimize or exaggerate the challenges they encountered when first

assuming their position. Therefore, it is crucial to have participants who are new to their

positions in order to glean more accurate and timely information and insights.

Age, gender, race nor size of the institution has any bearing on the selection of the six

participants. These factors were not be taken into consideration since this research focused on

identifying, prioritizing and addressing challenges faced by *any and all* new community college

presidents. This does not diminish the quality of the research since this research is located in the

interpretive qualitative paradigm. This paradigm did not rely on gender, class, or race in order to

produce quality research (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

A participant's past employment history and the route they took ascending to their

presidency was not part of the selection criteria.   However, if a participant was promoted from

within the college to the presidency, this was identified during the data collection phase of the

process.

<center>Data Collection Strategies</center>

The primary data gathering technique for this research was face to face unstructured

interviews. The interview as a data collection device has been used for many years. Andrea

Fontana and James H. Frey (1994) both professors in the sociology department at the University

of Nevada Las Vegas give Charles Booth credit for spearheading the modern interview

movement. They state, "The individual generally credited with being the first to develop a social

survey relying on interview was Charles Booth" (p. 362). His research focused on the economic

and social conditions of people in London from 1902 – 1903. Booth also is given credit for

developing methods to ensure validity of the interview process. "Booth embodied what were to

become separate interviewing methods; he not only implemented survey research, but

triangulated his work by relying on unstructured interviews and ethnographic observations"(Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 362).

Researchers W.E.B. DuBois, R.S. Lynd, and H.M. Lynd brought Booth's data gathering technique of interviewing to American in the late 1800's. They conducted research similar to what Booth undertook in London but focusing on American cities. At approximately the same time, the University of Chicago sociologists began employing the use of interviews to advance their research (Fontana and Frey, 1994). These early American researchers were true to the methods Booth developed in London. "They (early American researchers) clearly relied on a combination of observation, personal documents, and informal interview in their studies" (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 362).

The multifaceted approach to interviewing lost favor by the middle of the 1990s. The method was being replaced with interviews which quantified data. "What became relevant was the use of interviewing in survey research as a tool to quantify data" (Fontana and Frey, 1994, p. 362). This was being driven by the desire for the United States government to study the soldiers returning from WWI and WWII (Young, 1966). The interview as a data gathering technique yielding qualitative results is still prevalent in today's research. Fontana and Frey (1994) state "The methodological dominance of survey research continued unabated through the 1970s and 1980s and into the 1990s, although other methods began to erode the prominence of survey research" (p. 363).

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) support the use of interviews as the primary data gathering strategy by stating that interviews can, "be the dominate strategy for data collection" (p. 103). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state, "The interview is the favorite methodological tool of the qualitative researcher" (p. 353). Further, Fontana and Frey (1994) state, "interviewing is one of

the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 361).

The choice for using face-to-face semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection strategy is supported by its ability to probe deep into relevant topics which encourages the emergence of new concepts. Christine Dearnley (2005), Lecturer in Health Care Studies and Research Methods, in the Graduate School of Health Studies at the University of Bradford, when referring to semi-structure interviews states, "The open nature of the questions aimed to encourage depth and vitality and to allow new concepts to emerge" (p. 4).

A benefit of face-to-face interviews is designation of the site or natural setting where the interview is to be held. Conducting the interview in the natural setting puts participant at ease and promotes in-depth reflection on the interview questions, thus leading to narrative rich with data for analysis. Further, the breadth offered by face-to-face semi-structured interviews provided the researcher with the opportunity to immediately investigate and probe the broad range of answers the presidents share.

Another data gathering technique for this research was the use of field notes, both observational and reflective, to record detailed facts about the participants and the interview session and the researcher reflections. Robert Emerson, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw (1995) of the University of California define fieldnotes as, "accounts describing experiences and observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner" (p. 5 - 6). The field notes described experiences and observations the researcher saw and heard throughout the interview.

These descriptions, such as the interview setting and participants reactions, coupled with the responses to questions, supplied the study with rich information necessary to draw

conclusions. The researcher captured field notes using a laptop computer after the interview.

The reflective nature of the field notes put into context the statement made by participants

during the interviews. The reflective comments within the field notes were referenced during the

data analysis phase of the study to triangulate the results and insure accuracy.

<div align="center">Elite Interviewing</div>

This research entailed interviewing six community college presidents, three from Illinois

and three from Iowa. The word "president" to many elicits thoughts of people in elite positions

and these research participants are in the top position at a community college.   Therefore,

consideration of the elite nature of the presidential position at the community college level was

required. This consideration provided context to the responses given during the interview

process. Robert Phillips (1998), Senior Lecturer in History Education at the University of

Wales in Swansa, provided a framework from which to view the issues facing a researcher when

interviewing elites. Phillips (1998) proposes three issues when interviewing elites: access,

ethics, and truth.

A review of the literature revealed no research specifically stating community college

presidents are considered elites. However, Patricia Ward, Peter Orazem and Steffen Schmidt

(1992), researchers at Iowa State University, state, "elite positions are the top administrative and

policymaking offices in major economic and political institutions" (p. 32). Fritz and Halpon

(1994) define elite settings as "institutional locations in which national policy is devised and

translated into directives" (p. 34).

Applying these two definitions to the role of a community college president places the

position in the category of an elite. Using Ward, Orazem, and Steffen's (1992) definition,

presidents by definition of the college structure operate in the top administrative and policymaking office.

Access

Phillips (1998) states, "The relative ease or difficulty of access is likely to be contingent upon three factors, namely the nature of the elites themselves, the actual timing of the interviews…and finally, the sensitivity of the issue being researched" (p. 8). Rosanna Hertz ,Chair of Women's Studies at Wellesley College, and Jonathan Imber, Professor of Sociology at Wellesley College (1993) support this by stating elites, "establish barriers that set their members apart from the rest of society" (p. 3).

In order to overcome the challenge of access, the researcher used the Internet to search for participants. The researcher investigated 30 presidents using the Internet. Of the 30 investigated, 13 candidates were emailed and four viable candidates for the research responded. Therefore, for the four who responded and fit the criteria, access was not an issue. Two presidents did not respond but fit the criteria, so access became an issue. In order to overcome the issue of access for these two presidents, the researcher made contact with the presidents' administrative assistants, the president's gate-keeper. The researcher used this gatekeeper connection to alleviate issues of timing and scheduling the interview. The researcher assured the administrative assistants, the gate keeper, the time for the face-to-face interview could happen according to the president's schedule and all presidents' identities would remain anonymous.

Ethics

Ethics in elite interviewing is the second issue Phillips (1998) puts forward. Ethics refers to the researcher's ethical commitment to the research. Phillips (1998) states, "An explicit outline of intention…may be interpreted as an ethical commitment on the part of the researcher to demonstrate the sincerity of his/her research mission" (p. 9). The importance of this ethical

commitment to the elite interviewee is derived from the sensitivity of the data being gathered. Phillips (1998) states, "Some data derived from elite interviews may be so sensitive as to compromise the interviewee" (p. 9). Therefore, for elites to truly give candid honest answers for this research they must believe in the commitment and feel confident the researcher has ethical intentions regarding the data garnered. If the elite believe the data will be used inappropriately or would compromise their status, less than truthful answers may be put forward.

The researcher demonstrated an ethical commitment from the first email contact with potential participants. The email explicitly described the intention of the research. Further, the email attempted to put the participants at ease by assuring the confidentiality of the information. In addition, the email had the researcher's position, which is a dean at a community college. This was purposeful to demonstrate that the researcher has knowledge of upper administration in a community college.

Truth

Phillips (1998) concept of truth is based on the idea that the elite hold the majority of power within the interview. Further, this power situated the researcher in a vulnerable position. Phillips (1998) states, "the situated knowledge and power of the interviewee, which contrasts with the relative vulnerability of the interviewer" (p. 10). Maurice Kogan (1994), Professor of Government and Social Administration at Brunel University from 1969 to 1995, calls this the "ritual humiliation of the researcher" (p. 73). The power dynamics of the relationship between the elite and interviewer may lead the elite to developing their own sense of reality. Therefore producing inaccurate data from responses loaded with political overtones (Ball, 1994).

Preparation was essential to address and incorporate Phillip's (1998) concept of truth throughout the interviews. The researcher prepared for each interview by familiarizing himself

with the presidents' school and the president's professional background. Phillips (1998) states, "building up our own situated knowledge through…a desire to analyze as much relevant documentary material as possible" (p. 7). Jeffrey Berry, a professor in the Department of Political Science at Tufts University, supports Phillips (1998). Berry (2002) recalls the problem of truth and how to overcome the problem when he interviewed elite lobbyists in the aviation field. He states, "Do your homework. One reason why I was misled by my interview with the first aviation lobbyist was because I walked in cold, not knowing a thing about the organization" (p. 681).

In order to address the concept of truth throughout the study, the researcher diligently prepared for each interview. This consisted of reviewing information on the college's website, such as letters from the college president, board reports, plus the college catalog. The researcher also reviewed newspaper articles regarding the college. Further, the researcher arrived early to each college and explored the campus.

In summary, this researcher interviewed community college presidents. Using definitions by Patricia Ward, Peter Orazem and Steffen Schmidt (1992) and Fritz and Halpon (1994), presidents of community colleges are elites. Therefore, an examination of the issues regarding interviewing elites is essential to provide context to the ways and mean of data gleaned from the community college presidents. Phillips' (1998) framework of issues related to access, ethics, and truth provides a framework in which to view those issues.

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

In conclusion, the research design for the study was a qualitative study using case study method and situated in the interpretive paradigm. The driving factor behind the design of the research was to ensure rigor and quality at each step of the study--design, data collection, data

analysis and conclusion. A rigorous study at each phase of the research process provided quality and trustworthy findings. Quality results produced practical and useful findings to contribute to the field of community college leadership.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION AND STRATEGIES FOR ANALYSIS

Introduction

Six community college presidents expounded on their experiences as they navigated the complex terrain of their first presidency. These experiences were captured in interviews, and the data analyzed to identify patterns and themes. The purpose of this chapter is to articulate the techniques used to collect data and describe the strategies used for data analysis.

Data Collection

Qualitative research data can be used to give meaning or describe the experiences and perspectives which are created by individuals.   Specifically, qualitative data is excellent for capturing the multiple perspectives of the participants engaged in the study. Examples of the multiple perspectives garnered from each participant are their values, beliefs, and views regarding an experience or phenomenon. An advantage of gathering multiple perspectives is that a researcher can weave them together to gain a new or more in-depth understanding of the experience or phenomenon being studied.   In order to accomplish the goal of gaining multiple perspectives for this study, the researcher employed two appropriate data gathering techniques: face-to-face "elite" interviews and field notes, both observation and reflective.

The interview is a well established technique for gathering data within qualitative research. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) believe in using interviews as the primary data gathering strategy by stating interviews can, "be the dominate strategy for data collection" (p. 103). Fontana and Frey (1994) state, "interviewing is one of the most common and most powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (p. 361). James A. Holstein from Marquette University and Jaber F. Gubrium (1995) from the University of Florida state an

interview is a "universal mode of systemic inquiry" (p. 1). Yin (2003) concurs and feels an interview is one of the most significant sources of data collection for a case study.

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used to glean data from the six participants. Dr Tom Wengraf (2001) senior lecturer in social research methods at Middlesex University believes semi-structured interviews are, "designed to have a number of interviewer questions prepared in advance but such prepared questions are designed to be sufficiently open" (p. 5). Patton (2002) states semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to "explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject" (p. 343).

The semi-structured interview format allows researchers to adjust an interview to maximize the information gleaned from a participant. Christine Dearnley (2005), Lecturer in Health Care Studies and Research Methods, in the Graduate School of Health Studies at the University of Bradford (2005) states, "semi-structured interviews allow all participants to be asked the same questions within a flexible framework" (p. 4). Dearnly (2005) articulates her meaning of a flexible framework. She states, semi-structured interview participants are, "encouraged to talk about their experiences through open-ended questions" (p.4). Dearnly (2005) continues, "The nature of the interviewing framework enabled re-entry to the field at different intervals to develop existing categories and identify concepts that were just beginning to emerge" (p. 4). Therefore, if participants articulate new or unique concepts when answering the prepared questions, semi-structured interviews provide the researcher flexibility to probe deeper into those responses. It is obvious that both Patton and Dearnly view the ability of the researcher to probe and explore themes or concepts expounded by the participants as a clear benefit to semi-structure interviews.

Over a four month period from December 2007 to March 2008, six semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted with study participants. Three interviews were conducted with community college presidents from schools in Iowa who met the selection criteria. Similarly, three interviews were conducted with community college presidents from northern Illinois who met the selection criteria. In order to identify the six presidents for the study, an internet search was done to determine which presidents from Iowa and northern Illinois might fit the selection criteria. The researcher was searching for the presidents statements about the college or news articles which indicated their length of time at the college.

Thirty presidents from Iowa and northern Illinois were found to be possible study participants. The researcher determined that 14 of the 30 presidents could be prospective participants based on information garnered from their colleges' websites. An email was sent in early October 2008 to the 14 prospects to assess their interest in the study and to determine if they fit the selection criteria. Included in the email was a brief explanation of the study and the interview questions to be asked. The email to potential participants, participant demographic survey, and interview questions are located in Appendix C, D and E respectively. Of the 14 emails, six responded that they had been presidents at previous colleges which eliminated them from the study. Four did not respond to the email. However, four presidents responded, two from northern Illinois and two from Iowa, stating they fit the criteria and would be willing to participate.

The researcher inquired a second time to two of the four presidents who did not respond to the initial email. This inquiry went to one president from northern Illinois and one Iowa via their administrative assistant. The inquiry was made by telephone rather than email in order to make a more personal direct contact with the administrative assistant in the president's office. In

each case, the administrative assistant acted as a mediator or gate-keeper with the president. The administrative assistant was provided detailed information regarding the purpose of the study, the selection criteria, and the researcher's background. This information was provided in detail to overcome the challenge of "access" when interviewing "elites" as described by Phillips (1998). In both cases, the administrative assistants responded within a week stating the presidents fit the selection criteria and would be willing to participate in the study.

The selection process took approximately three months and was complete by December 2007. Once the presidents agreed to be interviewed, they were contacted by email either directly or through an administrative assistant to set a convenient date and time for their interview. Approximately one week before the interview was to occur, a confirmation email was sent as a courtesy reminder to each participant. The confirmation email included the interview questions. Each interview was conducted in the president office either while the president sat at his desk or at a conference table within the office. All presidents were accommodating and willing to answer interview questions and follow-up questions. Each interview took approximately one hour and was digitally recorded. Once the interview was transcribed, the transcriptionist returned the disc with the data to the researcher.

As validation of the interview data, the researcher listened to the digital recording to establish the transcription accuracy. The interview transcriptions were then sent via email for "member checking" to each participant for their review and correction. The email which the transcripts were attached to is in Appendix F. No changes or edits were made by any participant. The researcher provided a designation or code for each of the colleges, presidents, and towns to ensure confidentiality among participants. Northern Illinois colleges were labeled IL CC1, IL CC2, IL CC3, corresponding presidents were labeled IL PR1, IL PR2, IL PR3, and

corresponding towns were labeled IL TW1, IL TW2, and IL TW3. Similarly, Iowa colleges

were labeled IA CC1, IA CC2, IA CC3, corresponding presidents were labeled IA PR1, IA PR2,

IA PR3, and corresponding towns were labeled IA TW1, IA TW2, and IA TW3.

Field Notes

The use of field notes was also incorporated as a data gathering technique. The field

notes described experiences and observation the researcher observed and heard throughout the

interview. They were utilized to record detailed facts and perceptions about the participants and

the interview process after each interview session as well as the researcher's reflections.

Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) define field notes as, "accounts describing experiences and

observations the researcher has made while participating in an intense and involved manner" (p.

5 - 6).

Once the interview was completed and the researcher left the participants office, the

researcher captured field notes using a laptop computer.   Within a week of the completion of the

interview, the field notes were reviewed to ensure accuracy. After all interviews were complete

and while the researcher was reading the transcribed interviews, the field notes were referenced

to assure accuracy of the transcripts and perception of the process.

Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research process. Participants signed

informed consent forms and the transcribers signed confidentiality agreements. The participant

informed consent form and the transcriber confidentiality form are located in appendix A and B

respectively.   All data relating to the study has been kept in a locked cabinet at the researchers'

domicile and will remain secure for five to seven years after the study is completed.

Data Analysis

This section of the study will present the strategies utilized to analyze the data gleaned from the six participants. In order to determine a strategy for analysis, the researcher reviewed the literature on data analysis techniques to uncover the process appropriate for this study. A quality data analysis strategy is essential to produce results which new community college presidents can utilize to make decisions during the initial months in their new position.

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) state qualitative data analysis is, "working with data, organizing it, breaking it into manageable units, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is important and what is to be learned, and deciding what you will tell others" (p. 145). Catherine Marshall professor of Educational Leadership at the University of North Carolina and Gretchen B. Rossman professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania (1999), state,

> Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process. It does not proceed in a linear fashion; it is not neat. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data (p. 111).

Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "our definition of data analysis contains three linked sub processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion/verification" (p. 428). Further, Miles and Huberman (1994) state, "These processes occur before data collection, during study design and planning; during data collection as interim and early analyses are carried out; and after data collection as final products are approached and completed" (p. 428).

Each data strategy definition articulates the concept of data organization in order to form structures which produce meaning, and reducing the data into categories or groups. A constant

theme in the literature was the acknowledgement of the vast amount of data encountered by qualitative researchers can be overwhelming. Reducing or categorizing the data was essential to developing quality findings. Patton (1980) states, "the data generated by qualitative methods are voluminous" (p. 297).

Bogdan and Biklen's (1982) and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) definitions advance the idea of data analysis strategy beyond just categorizing. They believe the concepts of synthesizing, discovering what is important, deciding what to tell people, and finding relationships among categories. Data analysis requires drawing meaning from the categories, which leads to new concepts or conclusions about the topics being researched. In this study, the new meaning or concepts would provide insights for new community college presidents when they assume their first presidency.

Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Miles and Huberman (1994) advance another concept prevalent throughout the literature on data analysis. Data analysis is a time consuming process which occurs throughout all phases of the research process. Supporting Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Miles and Huberman (1994) is Creswell (2007). He states, "the process; of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project" (p. 150).

Illustration of various authors' definitions of data analysis strategy and applications to this study are found in Table 11.

Table 11. Summary of Author's Definition of Data Analysis Strategies		
Author	Characteristics	Study
Bogdan and Biklen (1982)	Organizing data into manageable units, exposing patterns, visualizing what is to be learned, and what others should know	The researcher organized data in manageable units and then determined what others needed to know.
Marshall and Rossman (1999)	Bringing order, structure, and meaning to data through a process which is messy and time-consuming.	The researcher organized data into a meaningful structure utilizing *a priori* categories and being cognizant of emerging categories that arise.
Miles and Huberman (1994)	Data reduction, data display and conclusions	The researcher reduced the data to manageable units, presented the data and drew conclusions for future community college presidents.

Utilizing these three definitions , an initial data analysis strategy was developed.   The goal of the strategy was to organize data and reduce the shear volume of information into manageable categories. Then the categories were analyzed to draw connections, discover commonalities or differences and to develop conclusions meaningful to future new community college presidents. The process was integrated throughout the study since the research questions, conceptual framework, and interview questions provided a schema for the categories developed during analysis.

Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are typically associated with quantitative research. However, they do have a place in the qualitative research process. Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) state,

"Although the terms *validity* and *reliability* have most commonly been associated with quantitative research, the concepts of making valid inferences from data and the consistency of the data are also important issues in qualitative research" (p. 451).

In order to ensure that valid inferences were made from the data collected, the researcher utilized the concept of triangulation. The goal behind triangulation is to minimize the incorrect interpretation of data (Stake, 1995). Triangulation is the integration of data from multiple sources in order to confirm or support the inferences drawn within a study. Even though this study utilized the transcripts from the interviews of six new community college presidents as its main data source, field notes and personal reflections were also used in order to assist with the interpretations of the findings.

In order to ensure the credibility of the data collection and analysis process, an audit trail was developed. The audit trail consisted of clear descriptions of the study's design and methodology in order to ensure consistency. The audit trail also included a detailed description of the data collection procedures, coding processes and the data analysis process.

Another approach to achieving reliability and validity is the Lincoln and Guba (1985) concept of trustworthiness. Their concept of trustworthiness revolves around four issues: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility refers to the idea that the conclusions drawn are an appropriate interpretation of the data gathered. Transferability refers to the study's ability to allow the reader to apply findings beyond the limits of the study to their unique situations. Dependability refers to the ability of another researcher to replicate the study and produce similar findings. Confirmability refers to how well the conclusions of the study are supported by the data collected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

This study addressed the concept of creditability through the triangulation of data from field notes, transcripts, and the researcher's reflections. The data was also validated by utilizing the concept of member checking. Dependability and confirmability were addressed through the use of an audit trail. The audit trail provides a clear road map of the entire research project.

<div align="center">Three Stage Date Analysis Process</div>

The data analysis process for this study followed Creswell's (2007) three stage approach. Creswell (2007) states, "data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 148).

Process Stage 1: Data Preparation

Prior to the analysis phase of the research, steps are required to prepare the data to be analyzed. The researcher took a great deal of care to ensure the credibility of the data. Creswell and Miller (2000) believe, "qualitative researchers routinely employ member checking, triangulation, thick description, peer review, and external audits" (p. 124) to ensure creditability of data. Jennifer C. Greene (1994) Associate Professor in Human Services at Cornell University, agrees and states, "procedures such as member checks, peer debriefers, and audits are all utilized by interpretive evaluators to enhance the credibility of their inferences" (p. 537).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe member checking is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Jamie Baxter and John Eyles (1997) of the Department of Geography at McMaster University agree and state "Member checking is arguably one of the most important strategies for enhancing credibility since it involves checking the adequacy of analytic categories/constructs/hypotheses with members of the groups(s) from which the data

were obtained" (p. 515). Upon completion of the coding to remove identifiers, transcripts were returned to their respective participants for member checking in order to establish validity of the data.

The general premise behind member checking is to return the interview transcription to the participant in order to validate accuracy. Creswell and Miller (2000) state

Researchers may have participants view the raw data (e.g., transcriptions or observational field notes) and comment on their accuracy. Throughout this process, the researchers ask participants… whether the overall account is realistic and accurate. In turn, researchers incorporate participants' comments into the final narrative (p. 127).

The researcher sent the transcripts via email to the respective participants. The goal of this process was to assure the data represented the participant's intent or meaning. All participants agreed with the transcripts and no changes were made.

Process Stage 2: Reducing the Data

Familiarization with the data was the first step in the researcher's process of reducing the data for analysis. This was undertaken by a deliberate immersion in all the data. The researcher aspired to see intuitively into the data in order to visualize subtleties within the spoken words of the participants. Familiarization with all the data to draw out the subtleties was achieved by reading the transcribed interviews, field notes and reflective notes without the intent of breaking apart the data into categorizes.

Supporting this concept of a first read without categorizing is noted ethnographer, Micheal H. Agar (1980). He states, "read the transcript in their entirety several times. Immerse yourself in the details, trying to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 103) Searching intuitively within the data comes from Ian Dey (1995) from the

University of Edinburgh School of Social and Political Studies. He believes qualitative analysis is about "insight, intuition, and impression" (p. 78).

After reading the data, the researcher categorized the data initially using the *a priori* categories and then by searching for and capturing any emergent categories. Bruner, Goodnow, and Austin (1972) provide a definition for categorizing data. They write, "to categorize is to render different things equivalent, to group the objects and events and people around us into classes, and to respond to them in terms of their class membership rather than their uniqueness" (p. 16). Lincoln and Guba (1985) agree and believe one should, "devise rules that describe category properties and that can, ultimately, be used to justify the inclusion of each data bit that remains assigned to the category as well as to provide a basis for later tests of replicability" (p. 347).

However, in order to be able to begin the interpretation of the data gathered, it must be condensed into more manageable chunks. Therefore, the data from the transcribed interviews were reduced into manageable chunks within broad themes. For this process, *a priori* themes were derived from the concepts used as the lens in which to view the study. However, the process of analyzing data within a qualitative study also requires constant attention to the emergence of themes which when included, assist in yielding meaningful findings. Therefore, attention was paid to emergence of themes to ensure that all potential data was captured.

Supporting the use of both *a priori* and emerging themes are Miles and Huberman (1994). They state, "in the life of a conceptualization, we need both approaches – and may well need them from several filed researchers – to pull a mass of facts and findings into a wide-ranging, coherent set of generalizations"(p. 17). Further, supporting the use of *a priori* and emerging themes is Sociologist Lyn Richards (1993) from *Royal Melbourne Institute of*

Technology. She supports the concept of having *a priori* and emerging themes by stating it is

"impossible to go theory free into any study" (p. 43); meaning theories need to be present to

form a basis for analyzing yet a qualitative researcher must be cognizant of themes which

emerge.

Miles and Huberman (1994) believe the analysis of data and the development of

categories is inexorably intertwined with the conceptual framework. Figure 1 represents the

categories and the corresponding component of the conceptual framework for this study.

Figure 1. The Concepts Utilized to View the A *Priori* Categories

A priori Category		Lens to view the category
Information Gathering Techniques	------------	The "Learning" component of Ciampa and Watkins (1999) "Framework for Taking Charge"
Challenges	------------	The role of the community college president using Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan's(2001) four generation model
Decision Making Models	------------	Kowalski, Lasley, and Mahoney (2007) Data driven decision making model and Shirley and Lagan-Fox(1996) and Baylor(1997) definitions of intuition based decision making
Strategies to Address Challenges	------------	No specific concept was utilized to view the strategies employed to address challenges.

Role of the Researcher

Dey (1995) believes qualitative analysis is about "insight, intuition, and impression" (p. 78), three characteristics which are unique to each human being. Therefore, engaging in the qualitative research process is a unique experience in which a researcher's lived experiences may color the lens through which to view the data. In large part, the reliability of the results relies heavily on the researcher's ability to respond appropriately to participants in the field, and then be sensitive to the subtle nuances within the data analysis (Eisner, 1991; Patton, 2002). Therefore, presenting the researcher's background, expertise and experiences is essential in order for readers to be aware of the researcher's interpretive scope and framework.

The researcher is a product of the Illinois community college system. The community college provided the researcher the opportunity to improve academically and play intercollegiate basketball. During the two years spent at the community college as a student athlete the researcher developed a passion for the community college system. The passion led the researcher to obtain a Master's Degree in Mathematics in order to teach at a community college.

During the progress towards a Masters Degree in Mathematics, the researcher had the opportunity to work in sales, the "real world," and at a private four-year institution. These experiences provided a framework for how the community college fits into the fabric of American society. Community colleges prepare students for both work in the "real world" and for transfer to a four-year institution.

In 1997 the researcher was appointed to the position of full-time mathematics instructor and assistant basketball coach at Kishwaukee College. The researcher coached for three years and taught for four years. During the fourth year, the Dean of Mathematics, Education, Science, and Health Professions retired. The researcher interviewed and was appointed to the position.

The researcher was in the role of Dean for five years at Kishwaukee College. After five years, the researcher was interested in new challenges and left Kishwaukee College, a small community college in the country, to take a position as Dean of Math, Science, Engineering, and Health Professions at Elgin Community College. Elgin Community College is a larger community college in an urban setting serving a high level of Hispanic students.

A combined eleven years of professional experience in higher education in a wide range of positions has been helpful for the researcher. The experience has allowed the researcher to embrace a broad range of perspectives from a wide range of people. These experiences are relevant because they contribute to the researcher's, "theoretical sensitivity." Strauss and Corbin (1990) state, "Theoretical sensitivity refers to a personal quality of the researcher; it indicates an awareness of the subtleties of meaning of data. One can come to the research situation with varying degrees of sensitivity depending upon previous reading and experience with or relevant to an area" (p. 42). Further, Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe origins of "theoretical sensitivity" in areas such as researcher literature, work experience, and personal experience.

The theoretical sensitivity derived from the researcher's emersion in the field of the community college can be an advantage to the data analysis process. The advantage is knowledge of the structure of community colleges, the vernacular spoken, and a comprehension of the daunting challenges facing new community college presidents. However, the researcher must take caution to make sure the preconceived notions do not overshadow the themes which could arise outside of the paradigms known to the researcher.

Therefore, the researcher took great care to apply the concept of theoretical sensitivity. Restraining from applying personal perspective and experiences to participant perception during

the data analysis process enabled themes to arise around the *a priori* themes present at the start

of the analysis.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to display the data which was gleaned from the participants within the study. Six first time community college presidents were interviewed in their office for approximately one hour. The presidents were extremely accommodating during the face-to-face interviews. Participants were asked a series of questions which focused on how they identified and prioritized the challenges they had encountered as a new president. The questions further focused on the strategies new presidents employed to overcome the challenges they identified during these first few years.

The interview data gleaned depicts the constructed reality of each president. The reality described by the presidents articulated the journey they traveled to identify, prioritize and develop strategies to overcome the challenges they encountered. Julia T. Wood (1982), professor of Humanities at the University of North Carolina, states, "It is through talk that persons define themselves and their relationships" (p. 75). The researcher used the interviews to gain an understanding of each participant's reality. The transcribed words from the interview were categorized according to the *a priori* themes which arose from the study's conceptual framework. The words the presidents used to describe this process painted a vivid picture and provided insight into the struggles and challenges they faced. This chapter will present each participant's responses or their reality.

Research data for this study was voluminous requiring many hours to code and reduce the information into relevant patterns and themes. In addition, it is important to present the reduced pertinent data gleaned from the participants in a cohesive, logical and concise manner. Creswell

(2007) states, "Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 148). This section will articulate the techniques employed for representing the data in tables to prepare for discussion and conclusions.

Stage 3: Representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion

Displaying qualitative data in a table or chart allows the researcher to discuss and draw conclusions relative to the information obtained. The systematic display of data provides an opportunity for the researcher to manipulate the large amount of information associated with the transcribed interview. Further, the systematic display of data creates an environment which allows the connection of concepts that can provide new perspective or insight relative to the research. Systematic display of the data can also tell the researcher no connections exist among elements within a data set (Miles and Huberman, 1984).

This research utilized tables to present data. The research participant's demographic data is shown in Table 12. All six participants were white males between the ages of 47 and 60 with an average age of 54 years. This all male cadre of participants was unintended, as both men and women were eligible as long as they met the selection criteria. A majority of the participants five out of six were promoted to the presidency from their current position within the institution. An examination of the participants who were promoted from within revealed two out of five came from a vice president of instruction (academic affairs) position. The remaining three participants who were promoted from within came from a vice presidency related to fundraising or finance. Interestingly, the one participant who was not promoted from within had no previous

community college experience. However, he was familiar with education since his previous

position was that of a superintendent in a kindergarten – high school (K – 12) system.

Table 12. Participant Demographics								
College Code	State	Age	Gender	Highest Degree held	Previous Position	Promoted from within	Years at College	Length of Pres(Yrs)
IACC 1	IA	47	Male	Ph.D.	VP of Admin and Finance	Yes	6	3
IACC 2	IA	59	Male	Ph.D.	Superintendent K-12	No	1	1
IACC 3	IA	60	Male	Ed.D.	VP of Instruction	Yes	6	3
ILCC 1	IL	52	Male	M.P.A	VP for Admin Affairs	Yes	5	1
I CC 2	IL	59	Male	Ph.D.	VP for Institutional and Community Development	Yes	11	1
ILCC 3	IL	49	Male	Ed.D.	VP for Instruction	Yes	6	1

In order to organize the interview transcripts, tables were created for each president

utilizing the *a priori* themes found in the concepts and theories which formed the study's

conceptual framework. The *a priori* themes are challenges, decision-making, information-

gathering, and strategies. However, in addition to the *a priori* themes, other secondary themes

emerged during the data analysis phase of the research and were captured.

Table 13 displays these secondary emergent themes along with a description of those themes.

Table 13. Secondary Emergent Themes	
Category	Description of the Theme
Hindsight	Arose when participants spoke of actions they took that in hindsight they might do differently.
Like Best	Contains concepts a participant explained they liked most about their position.
Like Least	Contains concepts a participant explained they liked least about their position.
Advice	Contains advice for future new presidents as they start their presidency.

Iowa Community College President 1

For the theme of challenges, Iowa community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 14.

Table 14. Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 1	
College	Quote
IA CC 1	"Currently, originally and continually it is resource funding. That challenge is always a difficult one."
IA CC 1	"Specifically at IA CC 1, there was a need to change the culture. I think in most organizations and institutions, no matter how diligent you are, there will always be communication issues because we are multi-faceted and do so many things."
IA CC 1	"Another challenge would be meeting the needs of the community and learners. It's not about the region within the state education or economy and it's no longer a national economy or education, it's truly global. The challenge is keeping programs up to date and meeting the changes the workforce demands."
IA CC 1	"For too long we had an internal group which had no fresh ideas or challenges. It started with good hires, changing the system around and with leadership."

For the theme of decision making, Iowa community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 15.

Table 15. Decision-Making Identified by Iowa Community College President 1	
College	Quote
IA CC 1	"What I looked at was the needs of the institution and the needs of the community, which were many, and put those two together. You look at the highest needs. We have limited resources both in financial and human resources."
IA CC 1	"We need to look at the highest need and what we are able to provide for the best rate of return."
IA CC 1	"We did some strategic analysis to determine which ones are most important. We need funding. We need to take care of the fiscal side of the house to stay in business."
IA CC 1	"Through the data-gathering process, we looked at what our abilities were and what our resources were for the college in human resources and fiscal resources. We looked at those businesses in the area to see what their needs were and asked people to look beyond the next couple of years."

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Iowa community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 16.

Table 16. Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 1	
College	Quote
IA CC 1	"We took a short-term approach of 12-18 months focusing on what we could do and then, even though it isn't a long term approach, a 3-5-7 year approach on the best use of our resources to meet the needs of our communities."
IA CC 1	"The support systems were not operating, as in registration, admissions, financial or human resources, as effectively as they should have. Education is based on personnel and how dedicated and passionate and how the employees feel they contribute to the institution, and to the broader community. The strategy was to let people know how important their jobs were and how their jobs affected others in the institution but it went further than that in changes."
IA CC 1	"One of the advantages I had was bringing in a new cabinet through internal promotions and external hires. I was able to hire or promote three vice presidents and two executive directors."
IA CC 1	"We proceeded then throughout the organization. When we had attrition and turnover, it was decided to really take our time to hire the right person. It started with my cabinet. We had hired new deans and several new associate deans. We hoped to promote from within, but we found we didn't have the base to do so. Our goal was then to start leadership development programs so that each of us has, at least in the interim, someone to step in and fill our position."
IA CC 1	"We have continuing mandatory training for all our non-bargaining positions. Some of our bargaining positions are also taking advantage of the training.
IA CC 1	"We are sending people to the Iowa State 'click and link' programs which are development programs for employees to learn leadership. We are supporting several people in the Iowa State Ph.D. program."
IA CC 1	"In communication and trust, we broke down the silos."
IA CC 1	"In resource development, we increased our presence by hiring a couple of grant writers, increased staffing in the foundation and increased attention working with our elected officials at the state and national levels."
IA CC 1	"We have hired consultants and lobbyists and put money on the front end to increase awareness with government and private funding. We have worked on this for two years and now we are starting a major gift campaign, the first one the college has had, to raise funds and awareness and to strategically place the college within our business community and working with our partnerships."
IA CC 1	"We are the bridge between K-12 and the workforce and the bridge between K-12 and other forms of higher education. So we put a great deal of effort in this. I hired a retired superintendent to develop dual credit programs where we can offer college credit through the high schools."

Table 16.	Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 1 *continued*
College	Quote
IA CC 1	"In resource development, I listed those areas we invested money in and it is starting to come back to us in federal appropriations, state aide, and working with the other 14 community colleges, as well as private donations and grants. We set up an internal fund, which is a pool of money that is competitively awarded on a semi-annually basis, for departments and divisions to write grants up to $25,000 to fund certain initiatives."

For the theme of information gathering, Iowa community college president 1 did not articulate responses relevant to the theme.

For the secondary themes, Iowa community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 17.

Table 17. Secondary Themes Identified by Iowa President 1		
College	Quote	Theme
IA CC 1	"Just probably an operational thing I would have done differently. We needed to establish and are establishing this college's presence in economic development in this area. I tried to blend credit and non-credit to establish this presence and I wasted 1-1/2 years."	Hindsight
IA CC 1	"I like being a president because I have a part in improving the lives of our students and learners. It isn't just credit students or non-credit students but it is the learners who come back to us for a multitude of reasons for professional development, personal development or training for a new career."	Like Best
IA CC 1	"Most of those things I talked about in this interview are out of my control. I work with the business owners, with the community, the economic developers and our deans and our vice presidents and sometimes with our faculty and front line people but not enough. I don't get to have control in delivering that product. It is important to have good employees. It is up to them to deliver the product in the classroom."	Like Least
IA CC 1	"As they prepare for the presidency as well as they get on board, they need to get involved in their own community and spend a lot of time on their campus."	Advice
IA CC 1	"They also have to be involved with state activities and peers within the state such as those at other community colleges and what they're doing legislatively. Once they establish themselves on the state level, they should look to the national level."	Advice
IA CC 1	"More importantly, establish a relationship with several mentors who are experienced and certainly someone that was or is a community college president and or someone who is a president or leader of another organization and work regularly with them."	Advice
IA CC 1	"Surround yourself with good people. I don't have an academic background so I went out and found a person that does and also shares my passion and beliefs on what the community college mission is and I look to her for guidance."	Advice
IA CC 1	"Don't be afraid to get help, as you can't solve it all yourself. Just surround yourself with good people."	Advice

Iowa Community College President 2

For the theme of challenges, Iowa community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 18.

Table 18. Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IA CC 2	"Getting up to speed on the number of programs at the college."
IA CC 2	"I had problems delegating tasks."
IA CC 2	"A different set of expectations within the position from my past position."
IA CC 2	"I am adjusting to another set of realities in terms of fundraising, public relations and leadership at different levels within the institution."
IA CC 2	"I would like to do that here, but that is a big challenge with 350 full and part-time employees and five campus sites in a five-county area."
IA CC 2	"Communication was identified as a top challenge, not surprisingly, since we are spread out all over creation and we have a large number of staff."
IA CC 2	"We are losing population in the northwest area of Iowa faster than any other part of Iowa."
IA CC 2	"We found out that everyone loves us but they don't know who we are. We are on a mission to educate them about what we do and who we are."
IA CC 2	"I was hoping to hit 4,000 full-time equivalents this year but we're down 21 and most of them were our high school dual enrollment students."

For the theme of decision making, Iowa community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 19.

Table 19. Decision-Making Identified by Iowa Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IA CC 2	"It was left up to me. My previous 23 years was in K-12 in the college's district so I knew many of the people here and probably knew a lot more about the programs here than people who weren't involved in higher education."

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Iowa community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 20.

Table 20. Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IA CC 2	"We hacked away at the communication issue by talking to our long-time CFO and saying, "How about doing discussions with our president?" "How about doing discussions with our Chief Academic Officer?" People were very appreciative of the information and willing to jump on board and help us in any way they could to become as cost efficient as we can."
IA CC 2	"My background is very much a continuous quality improvement structure. I studied a lot of the Demming concepts. There are a lot of labels put on it, when he created the Japanese miracle after WWII, it was all about empowering the workforce and trusting that people will do the right thing and get themselves involved. That is how I've approached each job."
IA CC 2	"My role is to help develop the synergy of discussion, to help them structure discussion opportunities to say hey, what are our issues?"
IA CC 2	"One of the things we have done is put together a communication team which is college-wide. The team is a vertical slice of the campus encompassing faculty, staff, maintenance, food service, administration and representatives from the five campus locations."
IA CC 2	"The other thing we did was to review the college mission statement and get people engaged in a lengthy discussion about it."
IA CC 2	"Out of that (reviewing the college mission), we established four college-wide goals the college never had."

For the theme of information-gathering, Iowa community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 21.

Table 21.	Information Gathering Techniques Identified by Iowa Community College President 2
College	Quote
IA CC 2	"Every place I've ever been I've always gone out to meet as many staff as I can my first year. I find out from them what they feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. It is a little informal needs-assessment."
IA CC 2	"Each member of the administrative team received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of them in their spaces, not mine."
IA CC 2	"In an organization this size, you can't meet everyone, but you get to say "I'm new to the institution and I need to learn from you. You're a great group of people and this is where the rubber meets the road. What are the two strengths of the institution? What are the two things that need to be improved right away? The last question. Do we have any crises that we need to pay attention to right now?"
IA CC 2	"The simple fact of going out and asking them what they think is a powerful introductory conversation. Then the neat thing is you have to put it in a report in the first year and send it back out to them saying, "This is what you said, this is what we heard, this is what we did," and put it in summary form."

For the secondary themes, Iowa community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 22.

Table 22. Secondary Themes Identified by Iowa President 2		
College	Quote	Theme
IA CC 2	"I think just adjusting to a different board. It was hard for me to adjust to another set of circumstances. The board is good here but it is a different setting. If I did it over again, I might do a little more up front to analyze the relationship between the board and the president and try to be a little more proactive in developing a relationship."	Hindsight
IA CC 2	"The best thing is the feeling that you can be very entrepreneurial. Here the premium is on being nimble."	Like Best
IA CC 2	"I can't think of a single thing. I love this job. If you asked me if I would do this over again knowing what I know, I would in the blink of an eye!"	Like Least
IA CC 2	"Communicate with the workforce of the college. Any new president will encounter a president's cabinet. You certainly must be talking to those people immediately. Each one of those people received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of them in their spaces, not mine."	Advice
IA CC 2	Make absolutely sure you spend a significant amount of time communicating with the board members individually and collectively. Read the landscape and politics with the board. You need to determine if there are internal politics with the board.	Advice

Iowa Community College President 3

For the theme of challenges, Iowa community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 23.

Table 23. Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 3	
College	Quote
IA CC 3	"The first challenge would be the way I was hired. The previous president of IA CC 3, who had been here 25 years and 19 as president, came to my office one morning at the high school and said I want you to be my next Vice President of Instruction, oh hell no, I want you to be the next president of IA CC 3 and so do the trustees."
IA CC 3	"Everyone was agitated, mainly faculty. It is hard to put a handle on it. I don't know if they were rattling the sabers just because of a few. I had quite a few connections and good connections with faculty at IA CC 3 because I was at a high school close by for 11 years."
IA CC 3	"This college has a great reputation but they never did any strategic planning as a college. They had a vision and mission but nothing was tied to it. So the first challenge I had was getting everyone moving to the common focus."
IA CC 3	"The other challenge was that we had people that needed to get off the bus and some people in the wrong seats."
IA CC 3	"The main challenge was getting my administrative team to operate the way I wanted. Each Vice President would talk with the past president and they would make decisions about the departments without input from anyone else. My idea was the Cabinet, which was the executive leadership team, should be discussing everything from personnel to how the departments run because we all have interactions with the areas."
IA CC 3	"One of the biggest challenges was getting something written and going towards an articulated vision and getting the right people in the right places."
IA CC 3	"The two Vice Presidents were out to sabotage me and leaked confidential information. Everyone gets a salary increase and we give bonuses that stay on the salary and they leaked that."
IA CC 3	Parts of Student Services reported to three different Vice Presidents. We put each department up on sticky notes and started moving them around. I wanted to cut down from five Vice Presidents to four. So we played chess. We talked and talked and came back week after week until we came to a resolution.
IA CC 3	It is more challenging to move faculty ahead here than in K-12. There are a lot of things we haven't gotten done this year. I want faculty to be talking about Best Practices and it is hard to get them together. I can get them in small pockets but I want them in a large group.

For the theme of decision-making, Iowa community college president 3 did not articulate responses relevant to the theme.

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Iowa community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 24.

Table 24.	Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Iowa Community College President 3
College	Quote
IA CC 3	"The first year I had them do visions; the second year was strategic actions, priorities to move the visions; and this year we have strategic action priority, we call it a BHAG (Big hairy ass goal), and 25 KPI's which are too many. We now have measures for everything we are doing and we do AQIP as part of the process."
IA CC 3	"We had identified 40-50 people we wanted to give additional opportunities to and we identified 30-35 people that needed to find different seats or get off the bus."
IA CC 3	"The whole cabinet with executive directors, there are 10 of us with me included. We started looking(at the organizational chart) and that got people nervous because we took out the director of marketing, two vice presidents and people saw I was very aggressive on staffing. For the most part it was fairly well accepted because they saw these people were not living up to what they were supposed to do. We took out eight last year and I don't remember the numbers of the other years."
IA CC 3	"When both of the vice Presidents left, it gave us an opportunity to realign our entire system. Parts of Student Services reported to three different vice Presidents."
IA CC 3	"We put out a mixed memo to the entire staff. People didn't feel they were communicated to. It is the most read thing we put out and it comes from me and goes to everybody. I wrote, here is the organizational chart we are thinking about. Give us your input."
IA CC 3	"To get everyone included in this, we started a year ago last August, a phase called engagement to involve and encourage all faculty and staff to think about IA CC 3 and how to move from great to greater. We held information meetings with all departments."
IA CC 3	"In January, I cancelled a day of school and all full-time employees were to meet in Iowa City for a day and were going to talk about IA CC 3."
IA CC 3	"The goal is to have dashboard indicators that will go to your desktop that impact you. It might be the math retention rate college-wide for algebra, the rates of all teachers for the classes you teach and your specific class rates. We have a long way to go."
IA CC 3	"I'm fairly aggressive. Aggressiveness in personnel and having the right people in the right positions is critical. Hire people for your weaknesses. I have always done that."
IA CC 3	"We put in 20 fake applications complete with social security numbers to see how long it would take departments to respond. Half of them responded within two days--that is good. After a month, 25% hadn't been responded to. You need to look at processes."
IA CC 3	"The biggest strategy is getting as many people involved as you can. We don't call it a strategic plan because it is more fluid than a strategic plan."

For the theme of information gathering, Iowa community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 25.

Table 25. Information Gathering Techniques Identified by Iowa Community College President 3	
College	Quote
IA CC 3	"It was just being here the 17 months before I took over. It gave people a chance to talk with me and say we need to change this. I just listened."
IA CC 3	"If you were a Dean you would have gotten a survey with eight questions asking you everything from your curriculum, equipment, building, staff, and questions of where were you thinking of going in the future. What innovations were you thinking about? I spent a day with each Dean."
IA CC 3	"This is how I gather information from looking and talking. I kept my ears and eyes open. I listened a lot – that was the key."

For the secondary themes, Iowa community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 26.

Table 26. Secondary Themes Identified by Iowa President 3		
College	Quote	Theme
IA CC 3	"I wish I found out the vice presidents were jabbing me earlier. I took over in November and they went out in May; but they were already jabbing me before I took over and I didn't know it."	Hindsight
IA CC 3	"The faculty have union time and invited me over a few times for questions and answers about where we're going as an institution. I wish I had taken more opportunity to gather information through this avenue; it would have paid off."	Hindsight
IA CC 3	"Make sure you understand the system before you try to change the system. I thought I understood 95% of it for sure. I understood it and I came from internal and I was across the road for 11 years and had a great relationship with the past president. Sometimes you get a system that is out of control and when you make a decision there are unintended consequences that will kill you."	Advice

Illinois Community College President 1

For the theme of challenges, Illinois community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 27.

Table 27. Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 1	
College	Quote
IL CC 1	"There was some dissatisfaction with the previous president. One of my challenges was keeping the college moving forward on the projects that were identified as important and to begin the healing process by getting people more focused on their responsibility at the college as well as all the great things that were happening instead of worrying about the president and what was happening in the office."
IL CC 1	"People who didn't have daily contact with the president or any reason to have contact were really focused on the perceived problems and the atmosphere at the college. It was negative and one of the challenges was to begin a healing process and begin redeveloping a trust between the employees, the Board and the administration."
IL CC 1	"Another challenge, having had experience working with the board in my previous position, was understanding the balance between internal operations of the college, the external community and working directly with the board as opposed to reporting to the president."

For the theme of decision making, Illinois community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 28.

Table 28. Decision-Making Identified by Illinois Community College President 1	
College	Quote
IL CC 1	"The other one was an experiential thing. My previous position at the college was that of vice president and in that position, while I did have responsibility to the board and make presentations to the board, interacted with the board, and with some of the external constituents, most of my work was internal to the college and not directly to the board, but to the president."
IL CC 1	"It was so apparent, beyond readily apparent because it was expressed. It was thick enough to cut with a knife. I would have to be both unaware of my surroundings and obstinate to ignore it. It was obviously one of the most important things to happen right away to begin the healing process."
IL CC 1	"The second one is more functional. There are also some capital issues. We don't have buildings falling apart but we have needs. As part of the AQIP process, we did a facility assessment and developed a list of priorities that will need to be addressed, major systems and major equipment at the college."

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Illinois community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 29.

College	Quote
Table 29. Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 1	
IL CC 1	"We needed to develop a funding strategy for them and I don't know if they ever had this before. We needed to present the board with what level and how we will fund it. This is critical to the long-term viability of the college. You can't let things fall apart."
IL CC 1	"We are also involved in a project called Foundations of Excellence which is an assessment of the first year student experience, and at the end of the process, we will have developed recommendations to improve that experience."

For the theme of information-gathering, Illinois community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 30.

College	Quote
Table 30. Information Gathering Techniques Identified by Illinois Community College President 1	
IL CC 1	"Information was readily available regarding the first challenge. It was something that was expressed by the college community; it was expressed by the leadership of our senates and unions. You could see the tension everywhere you went on campus."
IL CC 1	"I made efforts to go to the faculty meetings. I meet monthly with the faculty union leader and the faculty senate leaders individually. I meet with them as well as the vice president of educational affairs and we meet and discuss the issues, questions and ask how things are going."
IL CC 1	"I try to be visible as much as possible and make myself available to people who have questions and concerns. I am pretty easy to interact with, at least I think I am, and try not to be intimidating."
IL CC 1	"We did things just to let people know we will celebrate our successes. We started almost immediately with a celebration in our atrium outside the library. We invited the entire college community to punch and cake. We talked about the accomplishments of the past year and what we are going to try to accomplish as we move forward."

For the secondary themes, Illinois community college president 1 brought forth the responses in Table 31.

Table 31. Secondary Themes Identified by Illinois President 1		
College	Quote	Theme
IL CC 1	"I don't feel anything from a strategic standpoint backfired or think oh darn that really turned south."	Hindsight
IL CC 1	"I like the opportunity to develop relationships with more people and more broadly within and outside the institution. That was my past experience as an executive director. You have the opportunity to be in the community with the board among everyone."	Like Best
IL CC 1	"Sometimes the broadness of the responsibilities takes you away from some things which you need to focus on from day to day."	Like Least
IL CC 1	"Probably that they should seek counsel from people in the field. You learn that seasoned veterans or even other new people can help you work through situations you haven't been through before. Anyone who gets to this level is going to be an accomplished person with their own way of approaching things. If you're brand new at this especially from another state, link with the Illinois President's Councils"	Advice

Illinois Community College President 2

For the theme of challenges, Illinois community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 32.

Table 32. Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IL CC 2	"The major challenge was working with the board and the community to heal things. It was a healing sort of thing and since being here 25 years in various positions, I knew about those things and have lived those things from the other side."
IL CC 2	"The fact that the president that left was African-American, there was a perceived split support with the African-American community which isn't large, but it does exist."
IL CC 2	"We depended very heavily on financial support from our foundation which is one of the oldest in the state and in the nation. We had been depending on the foundation for years for money which ended up being operational money. They deemed they couldn't give it to us anymore."
IL CC 2	"Other challenges were the lack of jobs, people leaving the area, the economy seen as poor and attracting the students in the 30-40 range. They aren't coming back for training like they used to do."
IL CC 2	"We faced a horrible challenge with another community college across the river. Once you get up to IL TW 22 it is much easier to get across the river. Iowa doesn't have the out of district or out of state tuition situation like we do in Illinois."

For the theme of decision-making, Illinois community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 33.

Table 33. Decision-Making Identified by Illinois Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IL CC 2	"Having lived through issues and working with the board. They had challenges for me to work on. If I had come in brand new from outside, I think the board would have done the same thing. I had a gut feeling because of being here so long."
IL CC 2	"There was no data, although we are trying to be a data-driven organization. It was very obvious. The data stuff starts to come out when you start looking at enrollments."
IL CC 2	"The healing aspect had to come first. Working with the faculty and the foundation is tenuous, things can go the wrong way quickly. Those were top priorities."

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Illinois community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 34.

Table 34. Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IL CC 2	"In terms of the budget problems, we had to raise tuition the last few years. We tried to be really frugal and people were good about not spending money unless needed."
IL CC 2	"No, just getting out and jumping right into the middle of the battle, talking and listening."
IL CC 2	"We did for a while but we gave up because there is no way we can compete. We are trying to attract more students from the northern border area because that is only 20 miles and there are a few other high schools we work with to try to get students to come to our college. Many of them were coming for nursing but now the community college on our northern border has started its own nursing programs. We are trying to concentrate on our northern neighbors. We can't compete with Iowa."

For the theme of information-gathering, Illinois community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 35.

Table 35. Information Gathering Techniques Identified by Illinois Community College President 2	
College	Quote
IL CC 2	"For a person coming in from the outside, they would have had to rely on the board as the board would have set the direction which they did with me, but you would have to build some relationships quickly to find some of those things out."
IL CC 2	"Just getting out and talking and listening to people. We needed to see what was upsetting the campus stakeholders."

For the secondary themes, Illinois community college president 2 brought forth the responses in Table 36.

Table 36. Secondary Themes Identified by Illinois President 2		
College	Quote	Theme
IL CC 2	"In hindsight we tried to balance the budget and save money by consolidating and not replacing administrative and other staff. This strategy came back to bite us because we have too many people doing too many things."	Hindsight
IL CC 2	"The part I like most is having the ability to guide and help people in the organization move forward. It would be much easier if I had more money to do that. I like to help people think creatively. I want to help people rejuvenate and reinvigorate the place so we're back to where we were when the community college movement began."	Like Best
IL CC 2	"So far I like most of it. The fact that the job is with you 24hours a day is most burdensome."	Like Least
IL CC 2	"The advice is, if you're coming in and you're a new president and you don't know anything about the institution, listen carefully to a wide variety of people and don't be too quick to judge who you should be listening to or get trapped by someone who wants to grab and guide you. Measure everything carefully. Work closely with the board because they are the ones who hire and fire the president."	Advice
IL CC 2	"You have to listen to all of it and listen to the board. Try to find out who in the organization is a good guide. It is not always people at the top who should guide you. You need internal guides and finding out who they are is different in every organization."	Advice

Illinois Community College President 3

For the theme of challenges, Illinois community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 37.

Table 37.	Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 3
College	Quote
IL CC 3	"Some of the challenges involved staffing because we were losing a lot of people to retirement. We were also growing quickly, almost 52% over the last 10 years. Enrollment was increasing until this year. We were getting bigger but had the same size staff."
IL CC 3	"Space needs were an issue to address and for the institution to figure out. Do we have enough space? Is it the right type of space? Do we need to expand? Do we need to expand on this campus, at remote sites?"
IL CC 3	"These were the challenges we faced as well as challenges everyone faces such as declining state funding."
IL CC 3	"I certainly have had challenges in this job such as learning the job and certain aspects of the job. Being a Chief Academic Officer helps a lot because you know that side of the house. I had Student Affairs responsibilities at a previous college which helped me. I have always been interested in the financial side but some of the challenges I have had have been learning about bonds and EAV (Equalized Assessed Value) and how it works and impacts our budget."
IL CC 3	"It has been a challenge for me to establish my relationship with the board. It has gone well but I never worked directly with the board; rather I relied on the president, so this has been new."
IL CC 3	"One of the challenges I faced was trying to learn the different aspects of the college and responsibilities that I didn't have before."
IL CC 3	"There were issues with the hiring process used here. The board just named me the president and did not conduct a search. They had some focus groups in the community to talk about what we should be looking for in the next president and what issues faced the college. Early on they asked me if I would be interested in the job and how serious I was."
IL CC 3	"The downside is it costs money and time and you don't know if it will work. The downside for me is that I can be questioned by people regarding the fact that we didn't do a search; they just hired me and what if we didn't get the best person for the job. You were just convenient. No one has told me that to my face and I don't know if that is a concern but there is an advantage to doing a search."
IL CC 3	"I haven't given the search process much thought since I took over because it doesn't do me any good to worry about it as I have the job and need to do the best I can. It makes it a little harder in the beginning and no one raised an issue with me or with the board. I did hear comments from people saying we should have done a search to see what else was out there."

For the theme of decision-making, Illinois community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 38.

Table 38. Decision-Making Identified by Illinois Community College President 3	
College	Quote
IL CC 3	"We were lucky because as I transitioned into the position, we started the strategic planning process. Our previous plan was from 1997 and not what I believed to be a strategic plan, and it hadn't been updated. We involved community members, board representatives, campus constituents and many of the challenges came up."
IL CC 3	"A lot of the same issues are in the strategic plan that we identified as issues to be addressed and so once the strategic plan was set, we put together the timeline and prioritizing what we would do first. The strategic plan task force and executive committee worked together to prioritize which ones we needed to deal with first."
IL CC 3	"Some of them were prioritized first because they were more pressing in nature. We needed to deal with the space crunch first because we have bonds coming off in 2012 and if we're going to do anything, we needed to start the planning process now. It is time sensitive."
IL CC 3	"Hard data too. We could see the state funding declining. The money we were getting through the state, grants, and equalization had declined over the years. Those are just looking at the facts and figures. It is becoming more of a problem. We saw enrollment continuing to grow, but we had the same number of staff and the numbers we served were growing. It was a mixture of data and feelings."
IL CC 3	"We have really started to hire more people by taking requests from across the campus; prioritizing them within each VP area and having the VPs take it to the executive committee to prioritize them institutionally. Then taking those to the board and discussing why these are most important and why we need to do this and the cost in the long term."

For the theme of strategies for addressing challenges, Illinois community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 39.

Table 39.	Strategies for Addressing Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 3
College	Quote
IL CC 3	"I talked with them quite a bit. I meet with the Executive Committee and the board chair and vice chair once a month between board meetings so we can talk about issues."
IL CC 3	"We have had several special meetings and retreats with the board on single topics. So we have more interaction with each other. I send out quite a bit of communication to the board with updates on things going on I have been involved with. I give them a heads up on issues that will be coming their way in a month or two to let them know what's going on."
IL CC 3	"Each year we get requests for additional staffing and we try to plan out what staffing we need out into the future and what are the more pressing priorities and what can wait. Last year we hired 11 new staff and this year 6-7. Eleven was the most we ever hired."
IL CC 3	"The space will be a bigger thing that will be a much more involved process. We are embarking now with a more detailed space utilization analysis. How many classrooms do we have? How are they used during the day? Not only are they booked during the day but what type of classes. Are we using the classrooms to the maximum? If there is a classroom that seats 30 but only five are in the room, it might be used, but not efficiently."
IL CC 3	"We are looking at a campus master plan and have met with other institutions that have gone through it to get advice from them on how they would do it differently. We have talked to some architects about helping us put together a campus master plan for the future. We have had conversations with people in the community and cities about their expansion and our roll in that."
IL CC 3	"The city has an initiative to upgrade the downtown area. We have talked to those in town to see how we might fit in their plans. Again just trying to talk to people and having conversations with people that are looking to expand themselves and partner with them such as the park districts, hospitals, open business building for sale, etc."
IL CC 3	"Well we are trying not to jack up tuition too much because it affects students quite a bit. We don't have a lot of options when state funding declines."
IL CC 3	"We have a new foundation director. We are really looking to ramp up the foundation. My impression is that the foundation has always had a good feeling about the college but has never been asked to do much in fundraising for us."
IL CC 3	"We are working with the foundation directors and executive director of the foundation to put together that game plan. We have K statements, which are 1-page summaries, we put together on different projects of what we need so the foundation director knows what the needs of the institution are and if he had a donor he has a K statement to look at."

Table 39.	Strategies For Addressing Challenges Identified by Illinois Community College President 3 *continued*
College	Quote
IL CC 3	"I am working with the board and foundation board. We are planning a joint meeting to try to make sure the college's strategic plan is in line with the strategic plan of the foundation. So we are working together and addressing the funding needs of the college."
IL CC 3	"We are also looking at a grant writer and pursuing grants because the pie from the state is only so big and we need to see how to make the pie bigger."

For the theme of information-gathering, Illinois community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 40.

Table 40.	Information Gathering Techniques Identified by Illinois Community College President 3
College	Quote
IL CC 3	"We used a lot of data and also the feedback we had from people on campus and outside campus. A lot of what was identified by the campus came from issues that needed to be addressed. We had campus surveys, meetings and focus groups. Everyone had an opportunity to fill out the survey online."
IL CC 3	"Even in areas that I thought I knew better, I would go cautiously and learn enough to get the information I needed. I did this so I knew the real scope of the issues before changing things. This helped to get the buy in from people so that they knew I'm not just coming in saying you're idiots for doing it this way and we'll do it a different way."

For the secondary themes, Illinois community college president 3 brought forth the responses in Table 41.

College	Quote	Theme
Table 41 Secondary Themes Identified by Illinois President 3		
IL CC 3	"So far there hasn't been anything that stood out. There were things I did before I was president, but as president there hasn't been anything. But since being president there's nothing I've screwed up on yet."	Hindsight
IL CC 3	"I spoke with the past president when I started and said that I didn't want to be a college president because I don't like what they do because it is so external. Over time it changes and as you get older and have more experience, you look at it and its part of the job and it's not that bad. I enjoy it now more than I would have 10 years ago."	Like Best
IL CC 3	"I like being involved in all aspects of the institution. It is fun to be more involved with such aspects as the academic affairs, student affairs, and ESL which is much broader than what I was involved with before."	Like Best
IL CC 3	"I like being involved within the community and bringing back partnerships and opportunities from other organizations. I have always been involved in the decision-making process of the institution; it's just a different level of responsibilities."	Like Best
IL CC 3	"It is scary and nice to say that ultimately when the decision needs to be made; it has to be made by me. Or alternately, when the recommendation has to go to the board, it comes from me to the board and I have to explain it to the board. I like that responsibility to be able to say I think this is the way we need to do it."	Like Best
IL CC 3	"I miss the contact I had with faculty. We have monthly meetings with the vice president of the faculty and I haven't had that for while. I just had a meeting with the faculty and it was weird to be meeting with them."	Like Least
IL CC 3	"We have had other issues where things have happened and hopefully the buck stops here in my office. It is part of the job and I understand that; but it is not one of the fun parts when you have issues where people disagree on how you handled it as an institution. The calls come to me, the emails and people come in person. That has never been my favorite part of the job but it comes with the territory."	Like Least
IL CC 3	"The advice I received was listen first and don't make any sweeping changes right away. I didn't feel it was necessary to make my mark in the first six months of being president. The board was on board with that thinking and didn't look for sweeping changes."	Advice
IL CC 3	"I was lucky because I was in Illinois for a long time and I know people at other institutions. I was involved in the Chicago Area Transferred Administrators Groups, Career Deans Groups and others. I got to know people in other schools which was helpful. I could call people and ask what they would do when they had this situation. I would encourage people to expand their network."	Advice

Table 41 Secondary Themes Identified by Illinois President 3 *continued*		
College	Quote	Theme
IL CC 3	"Once you start looking for more information, perhaps you find out there is some logic in the way it was done and maybe the rationale for doing it this way was valid and now it's time to look at it again. That is advice I would give someone."	Hindsight

Conclusion

This study interviewed six community college presidents to glean information regarding their experiences at the beginning of their presidency. The quotes in this chapter represent the unique answers the six presidents gave to the interview questions.

The interview transcripts were read and all pertinent quotes were categorized. Some of the quotes were categorized into one of the four *a priori* themes. These themes were: challenges, decision making, strategies, and information gathering. The researcher took great care to insure all relevant data was taken into consideration. Any relevant data which did not fit into the *a priori* themes was sorted and placed into the secondary themes. These themes were: hindsight, like best, like least, and advice.

In an overwhelming majority of instances the transcripts from each president yielded data for each of the four *a priori* themes and the four secondary themes. There were two exceptions with this for the *a priori* themes. The first exception was Iowa community college president 1; he did not articulate responses relevant to information gathering. The second exception was Iowa community college president 3; he did not articulate responses relevant to decision making. The only exception for the secondary themes came from Iowa community college president 3; he did not articulate responses relevant to the themes of like best and like least.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Six community college presidents agreed to expound on their journeys through the first three years in their new position. Their insights, derived from interviews centered on how they identified challenges, prioritized those challenges and the strategies they employed to address those challenges. The discussion within this chapter will weave together concepts from participants' responses in order to produce new insights helpful for future community college presidents. This weaving together of the concepts is the 3rd stage of data analysis process.

Process Stage 3: Representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion

Derived directly from the research purpose, the driving questions are used to uncover and elicit the data and information needed to address the purpose. They serve as a blueprint or road map for the researcher in his quest to gather relevant information. Each driving question is linked to an *a priori* theme providing the organizational framework for this section of the study.

Typically, people do not utilize one way of information gathering when trying to determine challenges found in their daily life. Community college presidents are no different. They gather information from a multiplicity of sources. The comments from the participants in this study demonstrated the idea of utilizing multiple data gathering techniques in order to determine the challenges to be addressed at the beginning of their presidency.

Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between the research questions and the *a priori* categories derived from the conceptual framework.

Figure 2. Research Questions And Corresponding *A priori* Theme.

Research Questions		***A priori* Theme**
Question 1: What are the methods new community college presidents use to gather information?	------------	Information Gathering Techniques
Question 2: What are the challenges new community college presidents identify?	------------	Challenges
Question 3: What is the decision making methods new community college presidents employ to prioritize the challenges they identify?	------------	Decision Making Models
Question 4: What are the strategies new community college presidents employ to address the identified challenges?	------------	Strategies to Address Challenges

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was to identify the challenges encountered by new community college presidents, seek to comprehend the information gathering methods utilized by new presidents to identify challenges, and finally, to present the strategies the participants employed to address the identified challenges.

Research Question 1: What are the methods new community college presidents use to gather information?

As found in the literature review, the lens from which to view the theme of information gathering is derived from authors Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) "Framework for Taking Charge" model. Ciampa and Watkins (1999) separate information gathering into two methods, unstructured information gathering and structured information gathering. Unstructured information gathering techniques are methods of collecting information in informal manners. Conversely, structured information gathering techniques are method of collection information in a formal manner. Applying these concepts to the responses given by participants provides a technique to categorize the participant responses relevant to the information gathering process they undertook at the beginning of their presidency.

Tables 42 and 43 represent these informal/unstructured and formal/structured techniques as described in the Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) "Framework for Taking Charge" model. Table 42 describes the unstructured methods of information gathering: (a) being proactive about finding problems; (b) learning with a point of view; (c) listening actively; and (d) cultivating awareness.

Table 42. Ciampa and Watkins Unstructured Information Gathering Approaches	
Method	Description
Being Proactive About Finding Problems	New leader should seek out information rather than passively letting it come to them. "They (leaders) systematically identify and tap into good sources of information, and build internal and external networks of relationships to support intelligence gathering."
Learning With a Point of View	Being prepared is the key to this type of unstructured information gathering. "Learning that is disciplined and shaped by a point of view--which a new leader began to develop prior to entry."
Listening Actively	This method of information gathering is based on actively engaging people while listening. "Listening from others requires insightful questions and active probing of initial responses."
Cultivating Awareness (Non-verbal Cues)	This method of information gathering encourages the leader to watch for non-verbal cues to identify hot-button topics, identify the power players by watching interactions among groups of people, and avoid negative reactions which may shut down frank, straight-forward discussion.

(Ciampa and Watkins,1999, p. 159)

Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) second approach to information gathering is summarized in

Table 43. Table 43 describes the structured methods of information gathering: (a) interviews

and group discussions; (b) case studies; (c) market tours and plant tours; and (d) pilot projects.

Table 43. Ciampa and Watkins Structured Information Gathering Approaches	
Method	Description
Interviews and Group Discussions	This structured technique calls for new leaders to ask the same questions of people to be able to see the organization from different points of view. "Structure interviews with "slices" of the organization are particularly useful as a way to quickly identify problems and opportunities."
Case Studies	Case studies are used to determine decision making paradigms and power holders within the institution. "Case studies can be used to assess patterns of decision-making and to identify sources of power and influence. The new leader might select an important recent decision and probe how it was made, who participated, and who exerted influence at each stage, more or less as an investigative journalist would."
Market Tours and Plant Tours	This structured technique has new leaders meeting customers and front line organizational people as a means of gathering information. "Market tours are opportunities to meet key customers and to interact with salespeople informally between meetings. Customers' complaints and insights become a springboard for discussions of causes and cures as well as product ideas."
Pilot Projects	A pilot project is a living case study. In other words, implement a new project or idea on a trial basis and observe how the project develops. This method forces employees to engage in dialogue to implement the trial project. During this time, "the leader ought to observe the group dynamics of the pilot team at feedback and report meetings…It is important not just to notice who talks most, but also to judge whether people say everything that is on their minds."

(Ciampa and Watkins,1999, pp. 160 - 163)

From the interviews, it was apparent participants utilized both unstructured and structured information gathering methods. However, four of the six presidents principally used unstructured methods to gather needed information about their college at the beginning of their presidency. Specifically, three primary techniques within the unstructured method of

information gathering were most prevalent: (a) listening actively; (b) being proactive about finding problems; and (c) cultivating awareness (non-verbal cues).

Two of the four presidents who used unstructured information gathering also used structured information gathering. Within the structured information gathering method, the only technique utilized was interviews and group discussions. Three of the six participants utilize interviews and group discussions techniques. Table 44 summarizes the participants' information gathering techniques.

Table 44. Information Gathering Techniques Utilized by Participants				
	Unstructured Information Gathering			Structured Information Gathering
President	listening actively	Being proactive about finding problems	cultivating awareness(Non-Verbal Cues)	interviews and group discussions
IA PR 1 *(No Comments)*				
IA PR 2	XX			XX
IA PR 3		XX		XX
IL PR 1		XX	XX	
IL PR 2		XX		
IL PR 3				XX

Unstructured Information Gathering

Ciampa and Watkins (1999) describe listening actively as, "Listening from others requires insightful questions and active probing of initial responses" (p. 159). IA PR 2 demonstrated this by stating, "Every place I've ever been I've always gone out to meet as many staff as I can my first year. I find out from them what they feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. It is a little informal needs-assessment."

This president initiated informal information gathering activities enabling him to actively search for and listen to employees throughout the campus. He listened when employees expounded on problems, and he followed up with insightful questions to deepen his understanding of issues described. He further expounded on his active information gathering as illustrated by:

"In an organization this size, you can't meet everyone, but you get to say 'I'm new to the institution and I need to learn from you. You're a great group of people and this is where the rubber meets the road. What are the two strengths of the institution? What are the two things that need to be improved right away? Do we have any crises that we need to pay attention to right now?"

It appears that IA PR 2 feels that active listening by the president requires some type of feedback about what he learned from those he talked with about the college. He also stated, "The simple fact of going out and asking them what they think is a powerful introductory conversation. Then the neat thing (that I do), is to put into a summary report in the first year and send it back out to them saying, 'This is what you said, this is what we heard, this is what we did."

While IA PR 2 sought information utilizing an informal active listening method, IA PR 3, IL PR 1, and IL PR 2 followed Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) proactive approach to listening. Ciampa and Watkins (1999) describe proactive information gathering as, "They (leaders) systematically identify and tap into good sources of information, and build internal and external networks of relationships to support intelligence gathering" (p. 159).

IA PR 3, IL PR 1, and IL PR 2 comments demonstrated building relationships and listening to the college stakeholders. IA PR 3 stated, "This is how I gather information from

looking and talking. I kept my ears and eyes open. I listened a lot-- that was the key." He further stated, "It was just being here the 17 months before I took over (as president). It gave people a chance to talk with me and say we need to change this. I just listened." IL PR 1 stated, "I try to be visible as much as possible and make myself available to people who have questions and concerns. I am pretty easy to interact with, at least I think I am, and try not to be intimidating." IL PR 2 felt the same stating, "Just getting out and talking and listening to people. We needed to see what was upsetting the campus stakeholders."

While IL PR 1 made himself available to each individual employee, he also approached information gathering from a "group" point of view. He articulated the concept of finding good sources of information by focusing on the main groups on campus. He attended faculty meetings and met with faculty and staff union leaders to gather information about the college. IL PR 1 stated, "I made efforts to go to the faculty meetings. I meet monthly with the faculty union leader and the faculty senate leaders individually. I meet with them, as well as the vice president of educational affairs, and we meet and discuss the issues, questions and ask how things are going." IA PR 3 also supported gathering information from groups. Interestingly, in hindsight, he wished he would have done it more. IA PR 3 stated, "The faculty have union time and invited me over a few times for questions and answers about where we're going as an institution. I wish I had taken the opportunity to gather information through this avenue; it would have paid off".

The final method of unstructured information gathering articulated by IL PR1 was cultivated awareness, the recognition of non-verbal cues. He gathered information through the proactive approach; however, his comments also reflected a keen awareness of what was not said. He was aware and watched for non-verbal cues to identify hot-button topics, identify the power players by watching interactions among groups of people, and avoided his personal

negative reactions which may shut down frank, straight forward discussion.   IL PR 1 stated,

"Information was readily available regarding the first challenge. It was something that was

expressed by the college community; it was expressed by the leadership of our senates and

unions. You could see the tension everywhere you went on campus"   Noting the "tension

everywhere on campus" shows this president was attuned to the non-verbal cues present

throughout campus.

Structured Information Gathering

While the primary information gathering method for presidents was unstructured in

nature some did elect to take a more formal structured approach to information gathering. IA PR

2, IA PR 3 and IL PR 3 sought information through the use of structured information gathering

techniques. Specifically, these three presidents utilized "interviews and group discussions" to

gather information. This structured technique calls for new leaders to ask the same questions of

people in order to see the organization from different points of view. Ciampa and Watkins

(1999) state, "Structured interviews with 'slices' of the organization are particularly useful as a

way to quickly identify problems and opportunities" (p. 160).

IA PR 2 articulated this concept in its most basic format by stating, "Each member of the

administrative team received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of them in

their spaces, not mine." The most fascinating portion of this comment is that IA PR 2 met and

carried out the one-on-one assessment with each member of the administrative team in their

space and not his office. This was to put campus constituents, the administrative team, at ease

and garner as much information as possible.

IA PR 3 described his structured information gathering as more of a survey and sent the

same survey questions to everyone he was going to interview before meeting with them. IA PR

3 stated, "If you were a dean, you would have gotten a survey with eight questions asking you everything from your curriculum, equipment, building, staff, and questions of where were you thinking of going in the future. What innovations were you thinking about? I spent a day with each dean." This president engaged in a more formal process since he specifically asked each dean the same eight questions. This technique helped him identify and prioritize the challenges which were surfacing throughout the campus.

IL PR 3 also utilized interviews and group discussions in a formal manner to identify and prioritize challenges while they where revising their strategic plan. IL PR 3 stated, "We used a lot of data and also the feedback we had from people on campus and outside campus. A lot of what was identified by the campus came from issues that needed to be addressed. We had campus surveys, meetings and focus groups. Everyone had an opportunity to fill out the survey online." The meetings and focus groups provided this president with the information needed to identify and prioritize challenges at the start of his presidency.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges new community college presidents identify?

The lens from which to view the theme of challenges is derived from Leila Gonzalez Sullivan's (2001) four generation model of community college presidents. Sullivan (2001) labeled the four generations of community college leaders as, "the founding fathers, the good managers, the collaborators, and the millennium generation," (p. 559). Table 45 shows a summary of Gonzalez-Sullivan's four generation model and the corresponding characteristics.

Table 45. Leila Gonzalez Sullivan's Four Generation Model		
Generation	Name	Characteristics
1st Generation	Founding Father	These presidents were in charge of starting colleges.
2nd Generation	The Good Manager	These presidents carried on the role of the "Founding Fathers" and expanded the community college mission.
3rd Generation	The Collaborators	These presidents inherited an increasingly more complex system dealing with issues of institutional control.
4th Generation	The Millennium Generation	These are the presidents currently taking charge, focusing on fundraising, building trust, providing a vision, and developing relationships

Utilizing Sullivan's four generation model, this research traced the forces which are shaping the current role of Millennium Generation community college presidents. The discussion of the challenges encountered by the participants in the study were viewed through the perspective of the Millennium Generation presidents. All of the comments from the study participants fell within one of these four roles: fundraising; building trust; providing a vision; and developing relationships. Table 46 displays the four roles of the community college presidents and which participants articulated challenges related to those roles.

Table 46. The Four Roles of a Community College President and the President Who Articulated Challenges With Those Roles.				
President	Challenges Related to Fundraising	Challenges Related to Building Trust	Challenges Related to Providing a Vision	Challenges Related to Developing Relationships
IA PR 1	XX	XX	XX	XX
IA PR 2	XX	XX		XX
IA PR 3		XX	XX	
IL PR 1		XX		XX
IL PR 2	XX			XX
IL PR 3	XX	XX		

Challenges Related to Fundraising

The literature on fundraising as a function of the role and responsibility of a community college president is directly connected to the dwindling state and federal funding as well as other fiscal constraints. The dwindling funding is forcing colleges to identify alternate sources of revenue to cover financial shortfalls or face reducing services to balance the budget. Presidents have been charged with taking the lead to secure needed revenue. Statements from IA PR 2, IA PR 1, IL PR 3, and IL PR 2 articulated the need for fundraising in reference to the dwindling federal and state funding.

IA PR 2 reflected on the realities of being president which includes the role of fundraising. He stated, "I am adjusting to another set of realities in terms of fundraising, public relations and leadership at different levels within the institution." IA PR 2 framed his idea of fundraising by stating "The best thing is the feeling that you can be very entrepreneurial. Here the premium is on being nimble."   He believes to supplement the dwindling resources, one must be entrepreneurial, and one method is through fundraising. IA PR 2 then articulated the fact that the college had recently received a large donation from a company in the community. The

donation provided students a unique learning environment, the purchase of state-of-the-art equipment, for one of the college's premium programs.

IA PR 1 and IL PR 3 also articulated the problem of dwindling funding. IA PR 1 stated, "Currently, originally and continually it is resource funding. This challenge is always a difficult one." IL PR 3 stated, "These were the challenges we faced as well as challenges everyone faces, such as declining state funding." Further, IL PR 3 articulated how he was facilitating the integration of the work of the college's foundation within the strategic plan. IL PR 3 stated, "I am working with the board and foundation board. We are planning a joint meeting to try to make sure the college's strategic plan is in line with the strategic plan of the foundation. So, we are working together and addressing the funding needs of the college."

IL PR 2 had a unique challenge related to the problem of declining funding and the concept of fundraising. IL CC 2 had become overly dependent on dollars annually and freely given to the institution by the college Foundation. These Foundation funds were being utilized to supplement the education fund to provide general operating dollars for the college. The Foundation made an executive decision to discontinue this practice of donating to the general education fund of the college. This change caused significant financial hardship for the college. IL PR 2 stated, "We depended very heavily on financial support from our Foundation which is one of the oldest in the state and in the nation. We had been depending on the Foundation for years for money which ended up being operational money. They deemed they couldn't give it to us anymore."

Challenges Related to Building Trust

The literature on building trust pertains to a president's relationships with the internal constituencies of the college. Donald Goff (2002), president of Roane State Community

College, stated presidents should, "inspire trust in their followers to move forward during a period in which higher education is recreating itself" (p. 571). Gonzalez-Sullivan (2001) stated, "leaders in the 21st century will have to inspire trust in their follower" (p. 571).

The challenge of building relationships based on trust surfaced in three distinct areas. The first challenge revolved around the participants' ability to build trusting relationships with college employees. The second challenge was associated with the participants' ability to build trusting relationships was with the board of trustee members. The final challenge arose from the process the participants went through to be appointed president.

IA PR 2 articulated the challenge of building trust with campus constituents in order to feel confident delegating tasks. IA PR 2 stated, "I had problems delegating tasks." He felt problems and issues with communication between him and the employees hindered his ability to build relationships and therefore, severely limiting his confidence to delegate important tasks. The college he oversaw was based in multiple towns with multiple campus sites spanning a large geographic region. IA PR 2 stated, "Communication was identified as a top challenge, not surprisingly, since we are spread out all over creation and we have a large number of staff." He wanted to go out, meet people, and build trusting relationships but the large geographic area of his college made this actually impossible. Illustrating this, he stated, "I would like to do that here, but that is a big challenge with 350 full- and part-time employees and five campus sites in a five-county area."

IA PR 1 also articulated the problems and issues surrounding communication and how this can challenge the relationship building role of a president. IA PR 1 stated, "Specifically at IA CC 1, there was a need to change the culture. I think in most organizations and institutions, no matter how diligent you are, there will always be communication issues because we are multi-

faceted and do so many things." This president felt a shift in the culture of the college was essential in order to provide quality educational opportunities to district residents. However, lack of communication, curtailed relationship building.

IL PR 1 and IL PR 3 both articulated the challenge of building trust with the board at their respective colleges. IL PR 1 stated, "Another challenge, having had experience working with the board in my previous position, was understanding the balance between internal operations of the college, the external community and working directly with the board, as opposed to reporting to the president." This president had previous experience working with boards but while serving in another position. He felt in his new position as president, developing a relationship with his current board in order to effectively lead the college was a challenge.

IL PR 3 articulated a very similar type of challenge he encountered while trying to build a relationship with his board. IL PR 3 stated, "It has been a challenge for me to establish my relationship with the board. It has gone well, but I never worked directly with the board; rather I relied on the president, so this has been new."

The final challenge associated with the participants' ability to build trusting relationships arose from the experiences two of the participants encountered when appointed president. IL PR 3's and IA PR 3's comments expressed the challenges which materialize as a result of their hiring process.

IL PR 3 described the hiring process he went through and stated,

There were issues with the hiring process used here. The board just named me the president and did not conduct a search. They had some focus groups in the community to talk about what we should be looking for in the next president and what issues faced the college. Early on they asked me if I would be interested in the job and how serious I was.

IL PR 3 further described the process by stating,

> The downside is it costs money and time and you don't know if it will work. The
> downside for me is that I can be questioned by people regarding the fact that we didn't do
> a search; they just hired me and what if we didn't get the best person for the job. You
> were just convenient. No one has told me that to my face and I don't know if that is a
> concern, but there is an advantage to doing a search.

This comment by IL PR 3 suggests how the hiring process can undermine a new president's ability to build trusting relationships among campus employees. If campus stakeholders believe a new president was a convenient choice for the college, rather than the best choice, what confidence do they have in his leadership? Further, campus employees may be unwilling to trust a person who was appointed by a board without input from the college community. Campus employees may believe a president's sole loyalty is to the board. IL PR 3 summarized his thoughts on the hiring process by stating,

> I haven't given the search process much thought since I took over because it doesn't do
> me any good to worry about it as I have the job and need to do the best I can. It makes it a
> little harder in the beginning and no one raised an issue with me or with the board. I did
> hear comments from people saying we should have done a search to see what else was
> out there.

IA PR 3 relates a similar story associated with his hiring process. However, the difference is the board was not the instigator of the process; rather the past president took the lead in the process. IA PR 3 stated,

> The first challenge would be the way I was hired. The previous president of IA CC 3,
> who had been here 25 years and 19 as president, came to my office one morning at the

high school and said I want you to be my next Vice President of Instruction, oh hell no, I

want you to be the next president of IA CC 3 and so do the trustees. Everyone was

agitated, mainly faculty. It is hard to put a handle on it. I don't know if they were rattling

the sabers just because of a few. I had quite a few connections and good connections

with faculty at IA CC 3 because I was at a high school close by for 11 years.

Challenges Related to Providing a Vision

A community college president sets a vision for the college. Goff (2002) and Gonzalez-

Sullivan (2001) articulated this concept and believe presidents should inspire their campus

employees and move them into the next century. Patsy Fulton-Calkins and Charlie Milling

(2005) list "making connections: vision" as a key responsibility of community college

presidents.

IA PR 1 and IA PR 3 discussed the challenges they encountered while developing a

vision for their campus. IA PR 1 related the challenge of vision building to the concept of

globalization. The globalization phenomena had caused IA CC 1 to rethink how the college does

business. IA PR 1 stated,

Another challenge would be meeting the needs of the community and learners. It's not

about the region within the state education or economy and it's no longer a national

economy or education, it's truly global. The challenge is keeping programs up to date and

meeting the changes the workforce demands.

 The challenge IA PR 1 had with promoting a global vision was derived from the composition of

the college's faculty and staff. IA PR 1 believed the college employed quality people, yet they

had stagnated due to lack of forward thinking. IA PR 1 stated, "For too long we had an internal

group which had no fresh ideas or challenges."

IA PR 3 also encountered challenges as he promoted his vision for the college. His challenges were twofold; one was campus employees and the other was the campus culture. While both of these concepts were intertwined, it was apparent they were separate in nature. IA PR 3 stated,

> This college has a great reputation, but they never did any strategic planning as a college. They had a vision and mission, but nothing was tied to it. So the first challenge I had was getting everyone moving to the common focus.

This quote demonstrates IA CC 3's lack of acceptance of a president who had a focus on developing a vision for the college. This president believed college faculty, staff, and administrators required training in order to start the process of visionary thinking. He did this by closing the school for a day and inviting every employee to a strategic planning meeting. However, IA PR 3 inherited a culture where visionary thinking was not valued, and despite the training, college stakeholders continued to resist the concept of visionary thinking. IA PR 3 stated, "The other challenge was that we had people that needed to get off the bus and some people in the wrong seats," meaning even after training campus employees still did not embrace the visionary thinking process this president touted.

An example where visionary thinking was not embraced came from the president's own administrative team. IA PR 3 stated,

> The main challenge was getting my administrative team to operate the way I wanted. Each vice president would talk with the past president and they would make decisions about the departments without input from anyone else. My idea was that the Cabinet, which was the executive leadership team, should be discussing everything from personnel to how the departments run because we all have interactions with the areas.

 This quote exemplified the silo style thinking IA PR 3 was trying to avoid.

In addition to the challenges with his administrative team IA PR 3, had challenges with the faculty.   IA PR 3 stated,

> It is more challenging to move faculty ahead here than in K-12. There are a lot of things we haven't gotten done this year. I want faculty to be talking about best practices and it is hard to get them together. I can get them in small pockets, but I want them in a large group.

The comment articulates the frustration he felt trying to engage faculty in the visionary thinking he was accustomed to in his previous position. The faculty engaged in the silo style thinking similar to the president's administrative team.

Challenges Related to Developing Relationships (External)

The literature on developing relationships as a significant component of the role of a community college president has a focus on building external constituency relationships such as business and industry partnerships. Christopher Shults (2001) stated, "Presidents believe that the skills they need in the future will remain constant but that there will be more emphasis on the ability to be flexible, to understand technology, and to seek business-and industry partnerships" (p. 1). Supporting Shults, Patsy Fulton-Calkins and Charlie Milling (2005) list, "forging business and industry connections" (p. 233) as part of the role of a community college president.

The participants in the study commented on challenges relating to developing relationships with external constituencies of the college. Significantly, only one president specifically mentioned the concept of building relationships with business and industry while others mentioned these relationships only in the most general terms. IA PR 1 commented on the

challenge he faced building relationships with business and industry through the Business and Industry Department of the college. IA PR 1 stated

> We needed to establish and are establishing this college's presence in economic development in this area. We had a business and industry department that basically offered some services and a "take or leave it" attitude. If someone needed specific training, the department might or might not do it. They were not out selling or offering a service or meeting the needs of the area or thinking strategically. What they did is they went out and hired some retired person who knew how to do the training. The strength of an organization is people and the strength of a community is people and it is how well educated and trained they are. I knew this was a priority for myself and had to put it on the back burner. Most of what we do is on the credit side. I tried to blend the credit and non-credit and I wasted 1-1/2 years.

IA PR 2, IL PR 1, and IL PR 2 did not comment on the challenges of building relationships with business and industry. However, these presidents did speak in general terms of the challenges of building relationships with external constituents within their community college district. IA PR 2 stated, "We found out that everyone loves us but they don't know who we are. We are on a mission to educate them about what we do and who we are." Thus the president and the college were on a mission to develop relationships with district residents. Further, he believed relationship building was imperative due to the population decline in his district, "We are losing population in the northwest area of Iowa faster than any other part of Iowa." He believed developing relationships with district residence would have a positive impact on enrollment. IA PR 2 stated, "I was hoping to hit 4,000 FTE this year, but we're down 21 and most of them were our high school dual enrollment students." He believed building

relationships with the community could reverse the enrollment decline and forge a network which would benefit the college.

IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 referred to external relationship building in the context of healing "wounds" opened during past presidential administrations. IL PR 1 stated,

There was some dissatisfaction with the previous president. One of my challenges was keeping the college moving forward on the projects that were identified as important and to begin the healing process by getting people more focused on their responsibility at the college as well as all the great things that were happening instead of worrying about the president and what was happening in the office.

IL PR 1 was particularly referring to the perception the external community had about the college. Building relationships with external constituents was a key focus at the beginning of his presidency. IL PR 1 further stated,

People who didn't have daily contact with the president or any reason to have contact were really focused on the perceived problems and the atmosphere at the college. It was negative, and one of the challenges was to begin a healing process and begin redeveloping a trust between the employees, the Board and the administration.

IL PR 2 espoused a similar story where the community was focusing on perceived problems at the college. This perception of problems then spread throughout the campus. The perceived problem created an atmosphere in the college discouraged visionary thinking. IL PR 2 also related this perception of college problems back to the previous president. IL PR 2 stated, "The fact that the president that left was African-American, there was a perceived split support with the African-American community which isn't large, but it does exist." Commenting on the

challenge of building external relationships to overcome the perceived split in support, IL PR 2 stated,

> The major challenge was working with the board and the community to heal things. It was a healing sort of thing and since being here 25 years in various positions, I knew about those things and have lived those things from the other side.

Research Question 3: What are the decision making methods new community college president employ to prioritize the challenges they identify?

This study utilizes data driven decision making and intuition based decision making theories in order to analyze how and in what ways new community college presidents make decisions.   Specifically, the study makes use of Kowalski, Lasley and Mahoney (2007) definition of data driven decision making (DDDM). They define DDDM as, "collecting, connecting, creating, and confirming" (p. 103). Table 47 provides an explanation of each of these concepts with their respective definition.

Table 47. Kowalski, Lasley, Mahoney's Model of Data Driven Decision Making	
Activity	Explanation
Collecting	"Compilation of important data"
Connecting	"Analyzing the data from different perspectives or combining it with other data"
Creating	"Creating is doing. It is taking action on what you find"
Confirming	"Did the program or practice make a difference?"

(Kowalski, Lasley, Mahoney, 2007, p. 111- 114)

Providing one of the definitions for intuition based decision making germane to this study are Shirley and Langan-Fox (1996).   After reviewing the literature on intuition, they state intuition is a "feeling with certitude on the basis of inadequate information and without

conscious awareness of rational thinking" (p. 564). The second definition for intuition based decision applicable for this study was advanced by Amy Baylor (1997). Her intuition model has three components, "immediacy, sensing relationships, and reasoning" (p. 188). Table 48 provides definition of each of the model's three components. Both of these models serve to assist in analysis of data obtained from the study's participants.

Table 48. Amy L Baylor (1997) Model of Intuition	
Component	Definition
Immediacy	"the role of timing, … mind popping,… getting to the truth all at once, without the time consuming effort of deliberation that is also a source of error."
Sensing relationships	"reflects the formulation of connections, an intrinsic property of intuition."
Reasoning	"ironically incorporates analytical process while functioning in contrast to them."

(Baylor, 1997, p. 188)

Data Driven Decision Making

IL PR 1, IA PR 1, and IL PR 3 comments indicated that they used data to support their decisions. The process they utilized to narrow the challenges facing their colleges into action plans were based on characteristics similar to Kowalski, Lesley, and Mahoney (2007) definition of DDDM.

Their decision making process was based on a compilation data from a variety of sources. IA PR 1 stated,

What I looked at was the needs of the institution and the needs of the community, which were many, and put those two together. You look at the highest needs. We have limited resources both in financial and human resources. Through the data-gathering process, we looked at what our abilities were and what our resources were for the college in human resources and fiscal resources. We looked at those businesses in the area to see what their needs were and asked people to look beyond the next couple of years."

Similar IL PR 3 articulated,

> We were lucky because as I transitioned into the position, we started the strategic
> planning process. Our previous plan was from 1997 and not what I believed to be a
> strategic plan and it hadn't been updated. We involved community members, board
> representatives, campus constituents and many of the challenges came up."

After compiling data from their institutions, district residence, and community business,
each of these presidents articulated how they analyzed the data. IA PR 1 stated,

> We need to look at the highest need and what we are able to provide for the best rate of
> return.   We did some strategic analysis to determine which ones are most important. We
> need funding. We need to take care of the fiscal side of the house to stay in business.
> Through the data-gathering process, we looked at what our abilities were and what our
> resources were for the college in human resources and fiscal resources. We looked at
> those businesses in the area to see what their needs were and asked people to look beyond
> the next couple of years.

IL PR 3 utilized the strategic planning committee's recommendations which were based
on variety of data sources to prioritize his list of challenges. IL PR 3 stated

> A lot of the same issues are in the strategic plan that we identified as issues to be
> addressed and so once the strategic plan was set, we put together the timeline and
> prioritizing what we would do first. The strategic plan task force and executive
> committee worked together to prioritize which ones we needed to deal with first.

IL PR 3 continued to explain that the committee determined which ones need to be done first by
analyzing college needs and hard data.

Some of them were prioritized first because they were more pressing in nature. We

needed to deal with the space crunch first because we have bonds coming off in 2012 and

if we're going to do anything, we needed to start the planning process now. It is time

sensitive. Hard data too, we could see the state funding declining. The money we were

getting through the state, grants, and equalization had declined over the years. Those are

just looking at the facts and figures. It is becoming more of a problem. We saw

enrollment continuing to grow, but we had the same number of staff and the numbers we

served were growing. It was a mixture of data and feelings.

IL PR 1 utilized the college's accreditation process in order to analyze data to determine

the challenges facing the college. IL CC 1 is an AQIP school and one of their AQIP projects was

to assess the space challenges at the college. IL PR 1 stated,

The second one is more functional. There are also some capital issues. We don't have

buildings falling apart but we have needs. As part of the AQIP process, we did a facility

assessment and developed a list of priorities that will need to be addressed, major systems

and major equipment at the college.

Intuition Based Decision Making

Intuition based decision making was also used by the participants of the study in order to

identify and prioritize the challenges they encountered at the beginning of their presidency. IA

PR 2, IL PR 1, and IL PR 2 shared how they incorporated the elements of intuition based

decision making in meeting the challenges they encountered. The comments by IA PR 2, IL PR

1, and IL PR 2 exhibited the characteristic found in research done by Shirley and Langan-Fox

(1996) and Baylor (1997). Specifically, in their research, the characteristic these presidents

exhibited was "feeling with certitude" (Shirley and Langan-Fox 1996, p. 564) and the characteristic of "immediacy" (Baylor 1997, p. 188). IL PR 1 stated,

> It was so apparent, beyond readily apparent because it was expressed. It was thick enough to cut with a knife. I would have to be both unaware of my surroundings and obstinate to ignore it. It was obviously one of the most important things to happen right away to begin the healing process.

IL PR 2 articulated the same experience as IL PR 1. IL PR 2 stated, "The healing aspect had to come first. Working with the faculty and the foundation is tenuous; things can go the wrong way quickly. Those were top priorities."

IL PR 2 summed up his intuitive decision making process with the following statement, "There was no data, although we are trying to be a data-driven organization. It was very obvious. The data stuff starts to come out when you start looking at enrollments." IL PR 2 comments relate directly to Shirley and Langan-Fox's (1996) concept of a "feeling with certitude" (p. 564).

Not unexpectedly, an additional type of perspective on decision making emerged from these new presidents, one regarding experience or expertise. Comments IA PR 2, IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 on the decision making process not only incorporated a data driven perspective and/or intuitive perspective but also an experiential perspective. IA PR 2 stated,

> It was left up to me. My previous 23 years was in K-12 in the college's district so I knew many of the people here and probably knew a lot more about the programs here than people who weren't involved in higher education.

IL PR 1 comments were similar containing an element of decision making based on past experience and knowledge. When IL PR 1 referred to deciding which challenges to address he stated, "The other one was an experiential thing."

IL PR 2 also incorporated both intuitive and experience with regards to his decision making. IL PR 2 feels he not only relied on his intuitive or "gut feeling" decision making but also on past experiences and stated,

> Having lived through issues and working with the board. They had challenges for me to work on. If I had come in brand new from outside, I think the board would have done the same thing. I had a gut feeling because of being here so long.

Having been at the community college where he is now president for a number of years gave him insight into challenges found there, yet he determined what challenges to address based on intuitive decision making.

Research Question 4: What are the strategies new community college presidents employ to address the identified challenges?

The goal of the study is to present the strategies new community college presidents utilized in order to address the challenges they encountered. The study was not intended to evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies. Therefore, the study did not include an evaluative component to analyze the strategies utilized by study participants to address challenges. In order to provide a more comprehensive structure for this section of the discussion, it is organized by participant.   The strategies shared by these new presidents correspond to the challenges as described in Research Question 2.

Iowa President 1 (IA PR 1) Challenges and Strategies

IA PR 1 articulated three main challenges he encountered at the beginning of his presidency. His challenges included: supplementing dwindling state funding; poor institutional communication; and changing the campus cultural mindset from a district perspective to a global

perspective. According to IA PR 1, the general approach to addressing these challenges was described in the following statement. "We took a short-term approach of 12-18 months focusing on what we could do and then, even though it isn't a long term approach, a 3-5-7 year approach on the best use of our resources to meet the needs of our communities."

During his first 12–18 month as president, IA PR 1 developed and implemented strategies that would impact his community college (IA CC 1). The first strategy IA PR 1 focused on was utilizing a two-prong approach to supplement the shrinking state funding. One approach would generate additional revenue through increasing enrollment by partnering with the K-12 system in his district. IA PR 1 stated,

> We are the bridge between K-12 and the workforce and the bridge between K-12 and other forms of higher education. So we put a great deal of effort in this. I hired a retired superintendent to develop dual credit programs where we can offer college credit through the high schools.

A second approach to generating more revenue was to aggressively seek funding from grants and legislators. IA PR 1 stated, "In resource development, we increased our presence by hiring a couple of grant writers, increased staffing in the foundation and increased attention working with our elected officials at the state and national levels." IA PR 1 made the decision to spend the money to hire consultants and lobbyist for assistance stating,

> We have hired consultants and lobbyists and put money on the front end to increase awareness with government and private funding. We have worked on this for two years and now we are starting a major gift campaign, the first one the college has had, to raise funds and awareness and to strategically place the college within our business community and working with our partnerships.

IA CC 1 is beginning to reap the rewards of the grant writers, consultants, and lobbyists. Additional revenue is beginning to come back to the college in a variety of forms. IA PR 1 stated,

> In resource development, I listed those areas we invested money in and it is starting to come back to us in federal appropriations, state aid, and working with the other 14 community colleges, as well as private donations and grants.

The second challenge IA PR 1 encountered at the beginning of his presidency was poor communication across the campus. His general strategy to address the problem was to break down the silos that exist on campus. IA PR 1 stated, "In communication and trust, we broke down the silos." In order to do this, IA PR 1 articulated the concept across campus that everyone's job was important. Further, he believed each employee should have knowledge of what activities and initiatives other employees were engaged in throughout the institution. IA PR 1 stated,

> The support systems were not operating, as in registration, admissions, financial or human resources, as effectively as they should have. Education is based on personnel and how dedicated and passionate they are and how the employees feel they contribute to the institution, and to the broader community. The strategy was to let people know how important their jobs were and how their jobs affected others in the institution; but it went further than that in changes.

IA PR 1 believed if employees saw the importance and the inter-connectedness of their jobs, then communication would naturally flow throughout the campus.

The final set of strategies employed by IA PR 1 was to combat the challenges found in the district, and move the college towards a more global perspective. In order to do this, IA PR 1

realized he needed new thinking from the people in high ranking, executive positions. His opportunity to move the college forward into a more global perspective came through retirement and attrition of those that held those positions when he assumed his presidency. IA PR 1 stated, "One of the advantages I had was bringing in a new cabinet through internal promotions and external hires. I was able to hire or promote three vice presidents and two executive directors." The executive team was only the beginning, IA PR 1 stated, "We proceeded then throughout the organization. When we had attrition and turnover, it was decided to really take our time to hire the right person. It started with my cabinet." Therefore, after personnel in the administrative cabinet changed, the college made a commitment to ensure more global thinkers would be hired. In order to bring current employees "up to the mark" in their position, mandatory training was instituted. IA PR 1 stated,

> We had hired new deans and several new associate deans. We hoped to promote from
> within, but we found we didn't have the base to do so. Our goal was then to start
> leadership development programs so that each of us has, at least in the interim, someone
> to step in and fill our position.

To continue promoting a global perspective throughout the college, IA PR 1 stated, "We have continuing mandatory training for all our non-bargaining positions. Some of our bargaining positions are also taking advantage of the training." The college appears to be very generous with the training opportunity provided to employees. IA CC PR 1 stated, "We are sending people to the Iowa State 'click and link' programs which are development programs for employees to learn leadership. We are supporting several people in the Iowa State Ph.D. program."

Iowa President 2 (IA PR 2) Challenges and Strategies

IA PR 2 expounded on the three challenges he encountered upon becoming president. Those challenges were: declining district population, poor institutional communication, and the enormous task for him to get "up to speed" with the wide variety of programs and services the college offered. The overarching goal he employed to overcome these challenges was to develop the college's ability to effectively communicate with internal and external stakeholders.

IA PR 2 believed dynamic discussion was essential to identifying challenges. He stated, "My role is to help develop the synergy of discussion, to help them structure discussion opportunities to say hey, what are our issues." He believed this was important because, by developing synergies and fostering discussions, solutions to problems will arise. IA PR 2 stated,

My background is very much a continuous quality improvement structure. I studied a lot of the Demming concepts. There are a lot of labels put on it, when he created the Japanese miracle after WWII, it was all about empowering the workforce and trusting that people will do the right thing and get themselves involved. That is how I've approached each job.

It is apparent IA PR 2 believes communicating through effective discussion leads to personal and professional empowerment. This scope of empowerment is the key to developing strategies to overcome the challenges facing his particular college.

In order to engage the college in this philosophy of empowerment, IA PR 2 took three specific actions. The first action was to develop a communication team. The team was comprised of employees from a variety of different departments, covering a multitude of levels from administrator to entry-level worker. IA PR 2 stated,

One of the things we have done is put together a communication team which is college-wide. The team is a vertical slice of the campus encompassing faculty, staff, maintenance, food service, administration and representatives from the five campus locations.

IA PR 2's second action was to develop open forums. These open forums were used to educate internal and external college stakeholders about the operations of the college. The fundamental idea for use of the forums was as people will contribute to the success of the college if they (the stakeholders) knew more about the operations of the college. IA PR 2 stated,

We hacked away at the communication issue by talking to our long-time CFO and saying, "How about doing discussions with our president?" "How about doing discussions with our Chief Academic Officer?" People were very appreciative of the information and willing to jump on board and help us in any way they could to become as cost efficient as we can.

The final action IA PR 2 took in order to engage the college in this philosophy of empowerment was related to updating the community college mission. He believed that by engaging college stakeholders in lengthy discussions about the mission of the college, strategies to solve challenges would begin to emerge. IA PR 2 stated, "The other thing we did was to review the college mission statement and get people engaged in a lengthy discussion about it." The results for IA CC 2 were four goals which encompassed the challenges the college faced and provided a framework for consistent communication across the campus. IA PR 2 stated "Out of that (reviewing the college mission), we established four college-wide goals the college never had, these were the development of academic outcomes, growing enrollment, developing new programs, and guaranty our financial stability by growing the college's fund balance."

Iowa President 3 (IA PR 3) Challenges and Strategies

IA PR 3 articulated three challenges he encountered during the beginning of his presidency which were the process of his hiring, lack of long range visionary planning, and an inefficient organizational structure. The first challenge was related to the hiring process he underwent to become the college president. IA PR 3 had a close relationship with the previous college president so when the previous college president was close to retirement, he simply appointed IA PR 3 to be the next president of the college. This selection process caused a great deal of disturbance and some anger among faculty and staff throughout the campus. IA PR 3 stated, "Everyone was agitated, mainly faculty. It is hard to put a handle on it. I don't know if they were rattling the sabers just because of a few." After his appointment, no strategy to overcome this challenge was enacted. Rather, IA PR 3 let the agitation slowly fade and focused his energies on the other two challenges he encountered at the beginning of his presidency.

The second challenge articulated by IA PR 3 was the college's lack of long range visionary planning for the institution. IA PR 3 stated, "This College has a great reputation, but they never did any strategic planning as a college. They had a vision and mission but nothing was tied to it. So the first challenge I had was getting everyone moving to the common focus." In order to move people in the same direction, IA PR 3 instituted a three year process to engage employees in the institutional planning process. IA PR 3 stated,

> The first year I had them do visions; the second year was strategic actions, priorities to
> move the visions; and this year we have strategic action priority, we call it a BHAG (big
> hairy ass goal), and 25 KPI's (key performance indicators) which are too many. We now
> have measures for everything we are doing and we do AQIP as part of the process.

Ultimately, IA PR 3 wanted to have measures sent directly to employee's desktop computers so they could easily monitor their goals. IA PR 3 stated,

The goal is to have dashboard indicators that will go to your desktop that impact you. It

might be the math retention rate college-wide for algebra, the rates for all teachers of the

classes you teach and your specific class rates. We have a long way to go.

In order to ensure inclusion in the development of a new college vision, IA PR 3 held a variety of information sessions. IA PR 3 even took the bold step of closing the college for a day and hosting a meeting to talk about long range planning for the institution. IA PR 3 stated,

To get everyone included in this, we started a year ago last August, a phase called

engagement to involve and encourage all faculty and staff to think about IA CC 3 and

how to move from great to greater. We held information meetings with all departments.

IA PR 3 stated, "In January, I cancelled a day of school and all full-time employees were to meet in Iowa City for a day and were going to talk about IA CC 3." IA PR 3 succinctly summarized his strategy for developing a college wide vision with the comment, "The biggest strategy is getting as many people involved as you can."

Developing a college vision was not the only challenge IA PR 3 encountered. He was also met with an organizational structure which did not function as efficiently as he desired. IA PR 3 believed that some employees were not meeting their work expectations and other employees were simply not in the right positions. IA PR 3 stated, "I'm fairly aggressive. Aggressiveness in personnel and having the right people in the right positions is critical." Continuing, he stated, "We had identified 40-50 people we wanted to give additional opportunities to and we identified 30-35 people that needed to find different seats or get off the bus."

His strategy to overcome this organizational structure challenge was to hire people that could strengthen some of the college's weak areas. This strategic hiring was for the highest administrative positions and, specifically, was in relation to his strengths and weaknesses.   IA PR 3 stated, "Hire people for your weaknesses. I have always done that". IA PR 3 eliminated two vice presidents and a director of marketing due to job performance issues. IA PR 3 stated, "When both of the vice presidents left, it gave us an opportunity to realign our entire system. Parts of Student Services reported to three different vice presidents."

In order to realign the system, IA PR 3 enlisted the help of his remaining leadership team and, eventually, the entire college.

> The whole cabinet, with executive directors, there are 10 of us with me included. We
>
> started looking(at the organizational chart) and that got people nervous because we took
>
> out the director of marketing, two vice presidents and people saw I was very aggressive
>
> on staffing.

After the cabinet and IA PR 3 developed a new organizational chart, the idea was presented to the college as a whole. IA PR 3 stated,

> We put out a mixed memo to the entire staff. People didn't feel they were communicated
>
> to. It is the most read thing we put out and it comes from me and goes to everybody. I
>
> wrote, here is the organizational chart we are thinking about. Give us your input.

IA PR 3 utilized this contribution to make final adjustments to the new organizational chart. He felt that the sharing of the new organizational chart with all college employees would assist in gaining acceptance for the new structure.

Illinois President 1 (IL PR 1) Challenges and Strategies

IL PR 1 articulated two challenges when he assumed the role of president at IL CC 1. The first was the negative atmosphere which had engulfed the campus and the second was the institution of a quality improvement plan. The previous president had made unilateral decisions which had inflamed many of the faculty and staff. The challenge for the new president was to begin the healing process with faculty and staff in order to keep the college moving towards its goals. The negative atmosphere had paralyzed the college and halted forward progress towards accomplishment of the majority of the college goals. IL PR 3 stated, "There was some dissatisfaction with the previous president. One of my challenges was keeping the college moving forward on the projects that were identified as important." In order to begin the healing process and restart the forward progress of the college, IL PR 1 began to refocus the faculty and staff's individual attention back to their responsibilities. IL PR 1 accomplished this, "by getting people more focused on their responsibility at the college as well as all the great things that were happening instead of worrying about the president and what was happening in the office."

At the same time, the college was in the beginning stage of developing a comprehensive campus repair and improvement plan. The plan was part of the AQIP accreditation process in order to insure long range viability of the college. While the campus was far from total disrepair, campus improvements needed to be identified and prioritized. IL PR 1 stated,

> We needed to develop a funding strategy for them and I don't know if they ever had this before. We needed to present the board with what level and how we will fund it. This is critical to the long-term viability of the college. You can't let things fall apart.

In other words, working through the AQIP project, IL PR 1 developed, with the assistance of many, a prioritized list of needed improvement projects. The prioritized list was presented to the board so that appropriate long term funding could be allocated.

Illinois President 2 (IL PR 2) Challenges and Strategies

IL PR 2 expounded on three challenges he encountered when assuming the role of the presidency at IL CC 2, the healing of past wounds, a financial crisis, and a competitive challenges from a college across the state boarder. The first challenge was to begin a college-wide healing process. College stakeholders were full of discontent as a result of actions taken by the previous president. An added dimension to the discontent stemmed from the fact that the previous president was African-American. His departure caused a perceived split between the college and the African-American community within the college's district.

When asked how he approached the healing process, IL PR 2 stated, "Just getting out and jumping right into the middle of the battle, talking and listening." In other words, IL PR 2 engaged campus stakeholders in dialogue about the healing process. This straightforward approach fit this president well since he was a long time employee of the college. Over the course of his employment, he had developed strong relationships with campus stakeholders, both on and off campus. The relationships enabled him to bring the community back together to focus on the future success of the college.

The second challenge IL PR 2 found was the financial crisis gripping the college. This community college had a long-term atypical fiscal relationship with its Foundation. The college's Foundation annually provided money to meet operating expenses. Unfortunately, the Foundation was now in the process of refining its strategic plan and actually began to reduce the funding it was giving IL CC 2. Making the situation worse was the economic outlook of the

region. IL PR 2 stated, "Other challenges were the lack of jobs, people leaving the area, the economy seen as poor and attracting the students in the 30-40 range. They aren't coming back for training like they used to do." In order to combat the dwindling funding from tuition and from the Foundation, IL PR 2 stated, "In terms of the budget problems, we had to raise tuition the last few years. We tried to be really frugal and people were good about not spending money unless needed."

Throughout the healing process and the financial crises, the college encountered a competitive challenge from another college across the state border. The college across the state border did not charge out-of-state tuition. Geographically, IL CC 2 was located on the opposite side of the community college district from the state border. Therefore, any student who lived close to the Illinois – Iowa state line went to the community college in Iowa rather than IL CC 2. IL PR 2 stated,

> We faced a horrible challenge with another community college across the river. Once you get up to Town 1 it is much easier to get across the river. Iowa doesn't have the out-of-district or out-of-state tuition situation like we do in Illinois.

> IL PR 2 tried to develop a strategy to address this challenge, but in the end, realized he could not compete with the college across the state border. IL PR 2 decided not to spend resources, time, and energy in fighting this loosing battle and stated,

> We did for a while but we gave up because there is no way we can compete. We are trying to attract more students from the northern border area because that is only 20 miles and there are a few other high schools we work with to try to get students to come to our college. Many of them were coming for nursing but now the community college on our

northern border has started its own nursing programs. We are trying to concentrate on our

northern neighbors. We can't compete with our western border.

Illinois President 3 (IL PR 3) Challenges and Strategies

IL PR 3 expounded on five challenges when assuming the role of the presidency at IL CC

3. These five challenges were the amount of space on campus to serve the community, staffing

issues, decreased state funding, building relationships with board members, and overcoming a

challenging hiring process. The first challenge related to the amount of space available on

campus to serve the residents within the district. Enrollment at the college had increased

significantly over the past ten years and, as a result, there was a great deal of competition for

space on campus. IL PR 3 chose to address this challenge with multiple strategies. His first

strategy was to utilize the data available to him in order to maximize space usage. IL PR 3

stated,

> The space will be a bigger thing that will be a much more involved process. We are
>
> embarking now with a more detailed space utilization analysis. How many classrooms do
>
> we have? How are they used during the day? Not only are they booked during the day,
>
> but what type of classes? Are we using the classrooms to the maximum? If there is a
>
> classroom that seats 30 but only five are in the room, it might be used, but not efficiently.
>
> IL PR 3 also chose to address this challenge by developing a long-range campus master

plan. The intent was to a have long range strategy to enlarge the physical plant (campus) as

enrollment increased. IL PR 3 stated,

> The city has an initiative to upgrade the downtown area. We have talked to those in town
>
> to see how we might fit in their plans. Again just trying to talk to people and having

conversations with people that are looking to expand themselves and partner with them
such as the park districts, hospitals, open business building for sale, etc.

The final approach IL PR 3 took to address the space challenge on campus was to engage district agencies in discussion to develop solutions. IL PR 3 stated,

The city has an initiative to upgrade the downtown area. We have talked to those in town
to see how we might fit in their plans. Again just trying to talk to people and having
conversations with people that are looking to expand themselves and partner with them
such as the park districts, hospitals, open business building for sale, etc.

A problem closely related to inadequate campus space was the challenge of staffing. The increased enrollment forced IL CC 3 to add to the number of faculty and staff across the campus. With limited space resources, determining which area was to acquire new faculty and/or staff and how to accommodate them was an enormous issue. IL PR 3's strategy was to take a campus wide approach to staffing issues. IL PR 3 stated,

Each year we get requests for additional staffing and we try to plan out what staffing we
need out into the future and what are the more pressing priorities and what can wait. Last
year we hired 11 new staff and this year 6-7. Eleven was the most we ever hired.

Similar to many community colleges across the country, enrollment at IL CC 3 was increasing, yet state funding was decreasing.   While space and staffing were challenges, funding was also a challenge at the college. In order to overcome the funding challenge, IL CC 3 chose to utilize its college Foundation and employ grant writers rather than increase tuition. IL PR 3 stated, "Well, we are trying not to jack up tuition too much because it affects students quite a bit. We don't have a lot of options when state funding declines." Articulating the strategy of developing a strong college Foundation, IL PR 3 stated,

We have a new foundation director. We are really looking to ramp up the foundation. My

impression is that the foundation has always had a good feeling about the college, but has

never been asked to do much in fundraising for us.

I am working with the board and foundation board. We are planning a joint meeting to try

to make sure the college's strategic plan is in line with the strategic plan of the

foundation. So, we are working together and addressing the funding needs of the college.

 During the time IL PR 3 was addressing issues related to space, staffing, and decreased

funding, he was also faced with the challenges of establishing his relationship with the board.

He had some limited experience working with a board, but had previously had the college

president as a buffer.   His strategy to overcome this challenge was to develop a dialogue with all

the board members. IL PR 3 stated, "I talked with them quite a bit. I meet with the executive

committee, the board chair, and vice chair once a month between board meetings so we can talk

about issues." Further, he stated,

We have had several special meetings and retreats with the board on single topics. So we

have more interaction with each other. I send out quite a bit of communication to the

board with updates on things going on I have been involved with. I give them a heads up

on issues that will be coming their way in a month or two to let them know what's going

on.

The final challenge articulated by IL PR 3 related to the hiring process he experienced.

He was appointed president of the college by the board without going through a formal

presidential search. Interestingly, IL PR 3 chose not to address this challenge. He believed

there was nothing he could do about the perception the college stakeholders had about him and

the search process. IL PR 3 stated,

I haven't given the search process much thought since I took over because it doesn't do

me any good to worry about it as I have the job and need to do the best I can. It makes it a

little harder in the beginning and no one raised an issue with me or with the board. I did

hear comments from people saying we should have done a search to see what else was

out there.

<div align="center">Secondary Themes</div>

While designing this research, *a priori* themes were derived from the study's conceptual

framework. However, these were not the only themes which emerged throughout the analysis of

the data. Secondary themes did surface. Table 49 displays the secondary themes emerging from

the data.

Table 49. Secondary Themes Emerging From the Data	
Category	**Description**
Hindsight	This theme arose when participants spoke of actions they took that in hindsight they might have done differently.
Like Best	This theme contains concepts participants explained they liked most about their position.
Like Least	This theme contains concepts participants explained they liked least about their position.
Advice	This theme contains advice for future new presidents as they start their presidency.

Hindsight

The secondary theme of Hindsight refers to a participant's reflection on his strategies

utilized to address the challenges identified at the beginning of his presidency. Each president

inherited a unique set of challenges when he accepted the position and each elected to utilize

unique strategies to address them.

Not surprisingly, almost every participant expressed a desire or wish that they would have executed a somewhat different strategy when addressing an identified challenge. IA PR 1 and IL PR 2 in hindsight would have organized the college differently than the structure they put into place at the beginning of their presidency. IA PR 1, reflecting on his attempt to blend credit and non-credit, stated,

Just probably an operational thing I would have done differently. We needed to establish and are establishing this college's presence in economic development in this area. I tried to blend credit and non-credit to establish this presence and I wasted 1-1/2 years.

IL PR 2 reflected on the organizational plan he implemented related to his staffing strategy. He felt his attempt to save money by not filling vacant positions saved money, but dramatically reduced employees' overall productivity. On reflection, he felt faculty and staff could not efficiently maintain a high level of quality work relative to the high work load. IL PR 2 stated,

In hindsight, we tried to balance the budget and save money by consolidating and not replacing administrative and other staff. This strategy came back to bite us because we have too many people doing too many things.

Similar to IA PR 1 and IL PR 2, IA PR 3 encountered organizational structure issues at the beginning of his presidency. IA PR 3 had two vice presidents in his cabinet engaged in activities to undermine his credibility. Unfortunately, IA PR 3 did not see it immediately and, consequently, their activities somewhat slowed the college's progress with regards to organizational structure changes and college wide strategic planning process. IA PR 3 stated,

I wish I found out the vice presidents were jabbing me earlier. I took over in November

and they went out in May; but they were already jabbing me before I took over and I

didn't know it.

In addition to reflecting on the different path he would have taken with his two vice

presidents, IA PR 3 reflected on his relationship building with faculty. In essence, he was

chosen by the board and previous president to be the new president. Campus stakeholders,

especially faculty, were agitated when he took over the presidency. In hindsight, he wished he

would have done more relationship-building early on in his presidency. IA PR 3 stated,

The faculty have union time and invited me over a few times for questions and answers

about where we're going as an institution. I wish I had taken more opportunity to gather

information through this avenue; it would have paid off.

Similar to IA PR 3, IA PR 2 reflected on his relationship building. However, IA PR 2

reflected on his relationship with the board rather than relationships with the faculty. IA PR 2

stated,

I think just adjusting to a different board. It was hard for me to adjust to another set of

circumstances. The board is good here, but it is a different setting. If I did it over again, I

might do a little more up front to analyze the relationship between the board and the

president and try to be a little more proactive in developing a relationship.

Liked Best When Assumed Their Presidency

The secondary theme of Like Best refers to what participants explained they liked most

about their position. Two participants expressed a high level of satisfaction when interacting

with college stakeholders, both internal and external. This seems to correspond to the role of a

community college president as defined by the current literature related to relationship-building, both internally and externally.

IL PR 3 had to develop his desire to engage in external relationship-building. Early on in his career, he was not interested in building relationships with external stakeholders. Rather, he enjoyed networking with internal college employees and administrators from other colleges. However, as his career progressed, he slowly grew to enjoy the external relationship-building with district educational providers, business and industry leaders, and political figures. IL PR 3 stated,

> I spoke with the past president when I started and said that I didn't want to be a college president because I don't like what they do because it is so external. Over time it changes and as you get older and have more experience, you look at it and its part of the job and it's not that bad. I enjoy it now more than I would have 10 years ago. I like being involved within the community and bringing back partnerships and opportunities from other organizations. I have always been involved in the decision-making process of the institution; it's just a different level of responsibilities.

IL PR 1 also expressed enjoyment in building relationships with external college stakeholders.

> I like the opportunity to develop relationships with more people and more broadly within and outside the institution. That was my past experience as an executive director. You have the opportunity to be in the community with the board among everyone.

In addition to deriving satisfaction from the development of relationships, participants in the study enjoyed watching their community college transform peoples' lives. The comments of

IA PR 1 and IL PR 2 reflected a deep desire to help students and employees obtain their goals.

IA PR 1's comments focused on students. He stated,

> I like being a president because I have a part in improving the lives of our students and
> learners. It isn't just credit students or non-credit students but it is the learners who come
> back to us for a multitude of reasons for professional development, personal development
> or training for a new career.

IL PR 2's comments focused on college employees. He stated,

> The part I like most is having the ability to guide and help people in the organization
> move forward. It would be much easier if I had more money to do that. I like to help
> people think creatively. I want to help people rejuvenate and reinvigorate the place so
> we're back to where we were when the community college movement began.

Besides enjoying relationship-building and watching the college transform peoples' lives,

one president enjoyed the comprehensive nature of the job. IL PR 3 had held a multitude of

positions within the community college system. However, no position required him to be so

involved in such a diverse range of tasks as the presidency. IL PR 3 stated,

> I like being involved in all aspects of the institution. It is fun to be more involved with
> such aspects as the academic affairs, student affairs, and ESL which is much broader than
> what I was involved with before.

Further, he also enjoys the level of responsibility inherent with involvement in such a diverse

range of tasks. IL PR 3 stated,

> It is scary and nice to say that ultimately when the decision needs to be made, it has to be
> made by me. Or alternately, when the recommendation has to go to the board, it comes

from me to the board and I have to explain it to the board. I like that responsibility to be

able to say I think this is the way we need to do it.

A final and simple comment made by IA PR 3 summarizes what many believe to be the

key behind the success of community colleges. IA PR 3 stated, "The best thing is the feeling that

you can be very entrepreneurial. Here the premium is on being nimble." These statements

indicate that, in order to build relationships and observe student and employee success, a

president must be creative and entrepreneurial.

Liked Least When Assuming Their Presidency

The secondary theme of Like Least refers to what participants explained they liked least

about their position. Interestingly, what one president liked most, other presidents liked the

least. IL PR 3 liked the broad responsibilities of his position. On the contrary, IL PR 1 and IL

PR 2 both disliked this broad scope (accountability and responsibility) related to the position.

They both articulated a feeling of isolation; that the broadness of the position took them away

from working with frontline college employees, such as faculty and support staff. In other

words, they had so many diverse responsibilities 24 hours a day, 7 days a week that they could

not focus and affect change in any one specific area. IL PR 1 stated, "Sometimes the broadness

of the responsibilities takes you away from some things which you need to focus on from day to

day." IL PR 2 stated, "So far I like most of it. The fact that the job is with you 24 hours a day is

most burdensome."

IA PR 1 and IL PR 3 did not have an aversion to the broad responsibilities of the

position, nonetheless, they dislike how the diverse activities drew them away from interacting

with the frontline employees, such as faculty and support staff. IA PR 1 stated,

Most of those things I talked about in this interview are out of my control. I work with the business owners, with the community, the economic developers and our deans and our vice presidents and sometimes with our faculty and frontline people but not enough. I don't get to have control in delivering that product. It is important to have good employees. It is up to them to deliver the product in the classroom.

IL PR 3 likes the broadness of the position, but does concede the diverse activities take him away from interacting with faculty and staff. He stated,

I miss the contact I had with faculty. We have monthly meetings with the vice president of the faculty and I haven't had that for awhile. I just had a meeting with the faculty and it was weird to be meeting with them.

A final concept articulated by IL PR 3 regarding what he likes least about the position relates to the level of responsibility thrust upon a president. Ultimately, all decisions at the college are a reflection on the president. This at times can be a burdensome responsibility. IL PR 3 stated,

We have had other issues where things have happened and hopefully the buck stops here in my office. It is part of the job and I understand that; but it is not one of the fun parts when you have issues where people disagree on how you handled it as an institution. The calls come to me, the emails and people come in person. That has never been my favorite part of the job, but it comes with the territory.

Advice for New Community College Presidents

The secondary theme of Advice contains recommendations for future new presidents as they start their presidency. The participants' advice can be separated into three distinct categories. Those categories are: relationships with the board; listening; and mentoring.

IA PR 2's comments related to building relationships with the board. He advocates for interacting individually with board members to learn the nature of the politics of the board. IA PR 2 stated,

> Make absolutely sure you spend a significant amount of time communicating with the board members individually and collectively. Read the landscape and politics with the board. You need to determine if there are internal politics with the board.

Tied closely to learning about the board politics requires a significant amount of listening. Listening is the second category within the theme of Advice. IL PR 3, IA PR 3, IL PR 2, and IA PR 2 articulated the importance of listening before developing a strategy to address a challenge. IL PR 3 stated,

> The advice I received was listen first and don't make any sweeping changes right away. I didn't feel it was necessary to make my mark in the first six months of being president. The board was on board with that thinking and didn't look for sweeping changes.

Further supporting the concept of listening before acting, IL PR 3 stated,

> Once you start looking for more information, perhaps you find out there is some logic in the way it was done and maybe the rationale for doing it this way was valid and now it's time to look at it again. That is advice I would give someone.

Supporting IL PR 3 was IA PR 3. He stated,

> Make sure you understand the system before you try to change the system. I thought I understood 95% of it for sure. I understood it and I came from internal and I was across the road for 11 years and had a great relationship with the past president. Sometimes you get a system that is out of control and when you make a decision, there are unintended consequences that will kill you.

Also supporting IL PR 3 was IL PR 2, who stated,

> The advice is, if you're coming in and you're a new president and you don't know
> anything about the institution, listen carefully to a wide variety of people and don't be too
> quick to judge who you should be listening to or get trapped by someone who wants to
> grab and guide you. Measure everything carefully. Work closely with the board because
> they are the ones who hire and fire the president.

> You have to listen to all of it and listen to the board. Try to find out who in the
> organization is a good guide. It is not always people at the top who should guide you.
> You need internal guides and finding out who they are is different in every organization.

IA PR 2's comments on listening and communicating specifically call for new presidents
to be walking managers; the old tried but true concept of managing-by-walking-around. This
puts people at ease, which, in turn, encourages them to tell a new president more about the
college. IA PR 2 stated,

> Communicate with the workforce of the college. Any new president will encounter a
> president's cabinet. You certainly must be talking to those people immediately. Each one
> of those people received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of
> them in their spaces, not mine.

The participants within the study articulated strong views on the crucial importance on
becoming involved with state and national organizations. The purpose for the involvements in
these organizations is to stay current with political and educational trends in community colleges.
These groups can also help new community college presidents develop relationships with veteran
presidents who could act as mentors.

IA PR 1 and IL PR 3 both articulated the need to have strong connections with state and federal organizations. IA PR 1 stated,

> They (future presidents) also have to be involved with state activities and peers within the state such as those at other community colleges and what they're doing legislatively. Once they establish themselves on the state level, they should look to the national level.

IL PR 3 stated,

> I was lucky because I was in Illinois for a long time and I know people at other institutions. I was involved in the Chicago Area Transferred Administrators Groups, Career Deans Groups and others. I got to know people in other schools which was helpful. I could call people and ask what they would do when they had this situation. I would encourage people to expand their network.

Advocating specifically for developing a strong mentor system, IL PR 1 stated,

> Probably, new presidents, they should seek counsel from people in the field. You learn that seasoned veterans or even other new people can help you work through situations you haven't been through before. Anyone who gets to this level is going to be an accomplished person with their own way of approaching things. If you're brand new at this, especially from another state, link with the Illinois President's Councils. More importantly, establish a relationship with several mentors who are experienced and certainly someone that was or is a community college president and/or someone who is a president or leader of another organization and work regularly with them.

IA PR 1 further stated, "Don't be afraid to get help, as you can't solve it all yourself. Just surround yourself with good people."

Summarizing Secondary Themes

The following secondary themes emerged during the data analysis: Hindsight, Liked Best, Liked Least, and Advice. Reflection on the theme of Hindsight shows that half of the participants within the study would have addressed the challenges they encountered early in their new presidency in a different manner. Three of the participants reflected on their strategies of staffing and the effects it had on their colleges. Each one of the presidents believed that, in hindsight, their staffing plan could have been executed more efficiently. In addition to the staffing, one president believed he should have spent more time interacting with faculty to enhance his relationship with them.

The participants focused on three areas within the theme of Like Best. The first area was the relationship building that took place with internal and external constituents of the college. The participants within the study either grew to enjoy this portion of the presidency or enjoyed it from the beginning. The second area under the theme of Like Best was the enjoyment that presidents received when they watched students and employees achieve their personal goals. The final area within the theme of Like Best was the comprehensive nature of the presidency. There is a distinct dichotomy associated with this theme; the study participants either liked the comprehensive responsibility of the position the best or the least.

The participants focused on three areas within the theme of Like Least. One president struggled with prioritizing the day-to-day operations of the college, since the responsibilities were so broad. The second area of focus within the theme of Like Least was the isolation that some participants felt. One president missed the daily interactions he had with faculty as a vice president. Another president struggled with the fact he was not on the front lines, selling the school like faculty and student service workers. The final area of focus within the theme of Like

Least was the high level of responsibility associated with the position. When faced with certain situations, one president found that the decision-making process was often daunting.

The final secondary theme was the concept of Advice. This area emerged when participants were giving advice to aspiring presidents. The first component of advice was to develop a positive, cordial working relationship with your board. Presidents should engage the board in discussion by listening to their suggestions. The new president should provide the board with quality data and information to either act on their suggestions or assist them to reshape or realign their suggestions to better meet the vision and mission of the college. The second area of advice was related to actively listen to all the campus stakeholders. A majority of the participants encouraged future presidents to listen first and act second. This is somewhat confusing since the study participants also gave the advice to act quickly and decisively. The final piece of advice was related to mentoring. This involved actively seeking out a mentor, someone who has more experience as a president. This mentor is one a new president can engage in discussions, solicit information and direction from on a particular topic or issue or use as a trustworthy sounding board. The position can be overwhelming and a mentor can be of valuable assistance to a new president.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The American Community College system is in a state of transition: a large number of long time veteran presidents are retiring or resigning, causing an increase in the number of new first time presidents. These new presidents are being thrust into a highly complex, political position, often unaware of the challenges they are facing. The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college presidents encounter, how these challenges were prioritized, and the strategies used to address them at the beginning of their presidency. By identifying the challenges, discovering how and in what ways one sets priorities, and using various strategies to address each of the priorities, new, and useful insights will be provided for future new community college presidents.

The introduction in Chapter 1 previewed the growing leadership crisis in the American Community College system. Many community college presidents are retiring or resigning, leaving a leadership vacuum. Many of those in higher level administrative positions, viewed as successors to retiring presidents, are retiring themselves. The lack of qualified candidates for these open presidential positions provided the motivation for this study.

Chapter 2 included the literature review which provided a framework for the study. The study's conceptual framework includes two decision-making theories, plus concepts related to the role of community college presidents and information gathering. Specifically within the paradigm of decision making, two theories were utilized: data-driven decision making and intuition based decision making. Authors Kowalski, Lasley and Mahoney's (2007) data driven

decision making theory, and Shirley and Langan-Fox's (1996) and Baylor's (1997) intuition based decision making theory were used in the study.

Contributing to the eclectic set of concepts within the conceptual framework was an information gathering model. A new community college president cannot identify, prioritize, and strategize solutions to challenges without information. Ciampa and Watkins' (1999) approach to organizational information gathering was utilized in the study to analyze the ways in which new presidents gathered information.

The final concept utilized in the conceptual framework, lay within the literature on the role of the community college president. Utilizing Sullivan's (2001) four generation model of the community college president, the study tracked how the role of the community college has changed over the past century. Because of this change, the current generation of presidents is focused on four specific roles: fundraising, building trust, vision, and relationship building. These four roles were used to provide a context to the challenges encountered by new community college presidents.

Chapter 3 described the design and methodology employed for this qualitative inquiry. This research utilized a qualitative case study situated in the interpretive paradigm. This design provided an opportunity to gather information from multiple perspectives, and weave those perspectives together, in order to develop insight for new community college presidents. A purposeful and convenient sampling technique was used to identify six new community college presidents. These first time community college presidents had been in there positions for three years or less and came from a community college in Iowa or Illinois.

Chapter 4 outlined the data collection and analysis techniques utilized within the study. In order to ensure the credibility of the data collection and analysis process, an audit trail was

developed. The audit trail consisted of clear descriptions of the study's design and methodology. The audit trail also included a detailed description of the data collection procedures, coding processes, and the data analysis process.

The main data collection technique utilized was face-to-face "elite" interviews. Field notes, which contained both observations and reflections, were used to assist with the interpretation of the data. Assisting in the coding of the data were *a priori* themes derived from the concepts within the conceptual framework. The data analysis process for this study also uncovered emergent themes which were utilized when coding.

Chapter 5 displayed the data gleaned from the interviews of the study participants. The tables were organized by president then by *a priori* and emergent themes. In an overwhelming majority of instances, the transcripts from each president yielded data for each of the four *a priori* themes, as well as the four secondary themes.   In order to maintain anonymity of the study, the participants identifying names were removed from the transcripts and no complete transcripts were included. However, Appendix G contains a summary of the participant's responses to the interview questions.

Chapter 6 discussed the findings interweaving quotes from the interview transcripts to answer the study's four research questions. In addition, the four secondary themes that arose during the data analysis process were addressed. These discussions revealed new insights and fresh perspectives which can be used by new community college presidents.

Conclusions

There is no doubt a leadership crisis does exist in community colleges due to a variety of reasons. To maintain quality leadership within the community college system, retention of first time presidents is a key. It is important for new presidents be prepared to handle the often

overwhelming nature of the community college presidency. This research provided insights

gleaned from new presidents which can assist the next generation of community college

presidents.

The purpose of this study was to identify the challenges new community college

presidents encounter, how these challenges are prioritized, and the strategies used to address

them at the beginning of their presidency. The research was guided by four questions.

Research Question 1: What are the methods new community college presidents use to gather

information?

A majority of participants within this study utilized unstructured information gathering

methods.   IA PR 2, IA PR 3, IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 all approached information gathering from a

primarily unstructured point of view.   IA PR 2, IA PR 3 utilized both structured and

unstructured information gathering. IA PR 2, IA PR 3 along with IL PR 3 sought information

through interviews and group discussions.

It was apparent that no matter which information gathering techniques were utilized by

the participants, the goal of each president was similar: to identify and prioritize challenges they

encountered at the beginning of their presidency. Interestingly, it was clear these presidents

believed gathering information must be done immediately on assuming their new position. With

this feeling of "immediacy," they all felt there was really no time to waste.

In addition, most of the presidents felt their information gathering must be purposefully

obtained from all the campus stakeholders. These information gathering strategies allowed the

presidents, in essence, to triangulate information sources on campus and thus assisted with the

validation of what they were hearing.   However, it appeared some of the participants believed

gathering information from a broad range of campus constituents portrayed a president who was inclusive in nature and felt this impression might help him in the future.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges new community college presidents identify?

Each participant expounded on a variety of challenges they encountered during their first community college presidency. Leila Gonzalez-Sullivan's (2001) model, specifically the millennium generation, assisted to shed light on the role of today's community college president. According to Gonzalez-Sullivan's (2001), the millennium generation roles included: fundraising; building trust; providing a vision; and developing relationships. In this study, all of the participant's comments fell within one of these four roles.

The role of fundraising linked the concept of dwindling state funding and financial constraints to the need to develop alternate funding streams. IA PR 2, IA PR 1, IL PR 2, and IL PR 3 articulated the challenges of dwindling state and federal funding and the integration of fundraising to offset this loss of revenue. However, only IA PR 2 specifically spoke of the opportunity to be entrepreneurial in his approach to fundraising.

IL PR 2 faced a unique challenge in terms of fund raising. Unlike most colleges, his school had been receiving money annually from the college's Foundation. When the Foundation chose not to continue funding the college's annual education fund IL PR 2 faced a double challenge. Federal and state funding was dwindling and this unique alternate funding source was also ending.

Fundraising to replace lost revenue was not the only challenge the new president encountered. The role of building trust with internal college constituents also surfaced throughout the study. The concept of building trust manifested in three distinct areas: trust with

college employees; trust with College Board members; and trust issues related to the presidential hiring process.

IA PR 1 and IA PR 2 articulated the challenge of building trust with campus employees. Not surprisingly, they attributed issues related to communication as a major barrier to one's ability to build trust. IL PR 1 and IL PR 3 both commented on the challenges they encountered while trying to build relationships with the board of their respective college. They both had experience with boards in the past yet they always had a president buffering them from direct contact with a board.

The challenge of building an internal relationship of trust after a hiring process which some perceive as less than fair also surfaced among the participants. IL PR 3 and IA PR 3 both articulated stories about the search process they underwent which stirred a great deal of suspicion in their presidency. One new president was contacted by the college's board and offered the position with no search. The other president was contacted by the college's sitting president and introduced to the college employees as the new president. IL PR 3 experienced what he perceived were comments about his appointment but no open hostility towards his presidency. IA PR 3 experienced what he perceived as open hostility towards his presidency. The hostility came in the form of faculty agitation and verbalization associated with the process of his appointment.

In addition, to trust building with internal constituents, study participants encountered challenges related to their role of providing a vision for the college. IA PR 1 and IA PR 3 articulated challenges while promoting a vision for their college. IA PR 1 related his difficult to providing a vision to the changing global economy. His college had great employees yet they had been at the college for so long they lacked the ability to be visionary thinkers in the new

global society. IA PR 3 encountered the challenge of providing a vision due to the college culture and employees. His campus had never engaged in visionary long range thinking. This president provided the training to all employees in order to initiate the process of long range visionary thinking. However, some employees did not grasp the concept, nor did they accept or like the concept and shortly left the college.

For this study, the final role of the community college president was that of building relationships with external constituencies. IA PR 1, IA PR 2, IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 all expressed challenges building relationships with external constituencies. IA PR 1 was the only president to specifically mention the concept of building relationships with the business and industry section of the college's district. IA PR 2 saw the challenge of connecting with external constituents as a means of enrollment growth. He found the college district residents "loved" his college, yet no one knew what the college offered the community. The challenges IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 encountered when building external relationships dealt with overcoming issues left by the college's past president. Both of these new presidents spent a significant amount of time and energy repairing bad relationships created by the past president.

Research Question 3: What are the decision making methods new community college president employ to prioritize the challenges they identify?

This research employed data driven and intuition based decision making as part of study's conceptual framework in order to gain a better understanding of how participant prioritized challenges at the beginning of their presidency. Participant comments tended to show new presidents predominantly relied on either data or intuition as they made those initial decisions when assuming their first presidency.

Interestingly, only one participant's comments reflected an affinity for both data driven and intuition based decision making. IL PR 1 reflected the intuitive decision making process by sensing the challenges on campus and seeing the immediacy of addressing those challenges. However, he indicated data was an important element to incorporate as he made his first decisions as a president. He articulated this by illustrating how he utilized a data driven project within the AQIP process to make decision regarding space on his campus.

Finally, three presidents IA PR 2, IL PR 1, and IL PR 2 articulated the integration of experience into their decision making process. These three people shared employing their past experiences to guide their decisions.

Research Question 4: What are the strategies new community college presidents employ to address the identified challenges?

As the participants assumed their first presidency they quickly began the process of identifying and prioritizing challenges. Each participant experienced a unique set of issues to address; however, there were three similarities among their strategies: the collaborative nature of the solutions; employment of committed communication strategies; and a willingness to quickly address the issues.

In general, each participant strove to provide solutions, which were collaborative in nature, with the specific intent to engage a broad range of college stakeholders. IA PR 1 engaged the K – 12 school system to increase college enrollment which, in turn, had a positive impact on the college's budget. IA PR 3 scrupulously included the entire college in the development of a long-range strategic plan and a new organizational structure. IL PR 3 engaged

the college employees, district residents, and local government entities in order to solve the space issues on campus.

A second general component to the strategies articulated by the participants related to the problem of communication. Each president articulated, in some manner, the need to effectively communicate with the intention of address challenges.   IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 both commented on how communication was a key to begin the healing process required on a college campus. IL PR 2 and IL PR 3 articulated how important communication was in order to build strong relationships with their boards. IA PR 1 and IA PR 2 believed communication was a key component in solving many of their colleges' problems.

The final general concept linking the strategies engaged by each participant was their willingness to quickly address challenges. Even when the strategies were controversial, each participant seemed undeterred in their quest to address prioritized challenges.   An example of this willingness to address challenges can be seen in IA PR 3's actions. As IA PR 3 made changes to the campus organizational chart, employees on campus were nervous and expressed their concern about the reorganization. However, even in the face of this anxiety and apprehension, IA PR 3 continued to make changes to the organizational structure until it met his needs. IL PR 1 and IL PR 2 also demonstrated unflinching courage as they implemented their strategies to heal the divided, which had arisen from past actions. The recognition of a need for change by these presidents, and the decisive quick actions taken, was a common thread among all the participants.

In summary, the interpretive qualitative case study design allowed the researcher to weave together multiple perspectives from participants within the study. These woven together perspectives provided insight for new community college presidents. Specifically, if a person is

seeking employment as a community college president for the first time, this research can provide guidance as to the challenges he or she may encounter during the first three years in the position. Further, not only were the challenges identified, but methods for gathering information, strategies to address the identified challenges, advice for new community college presidents, components of the position new presidents liked least and liked most, and hindsight into decisions one would consider doing differently, were also included in this study.

The concept of focusing on only one or two of the roles of the community college president was evident throughout the interviews completed for this study. IA PR 3's focus was geared more towards developing a vision for the college, so each person had yearly goals to obtain. His college was well-funded so, while fundraising was a part of his role, it was not his central focus. On the contrary, IL CC 2 had a well-developed long range plan as a result of the accreditation process, therefore, IL PR 2 could put his focus on fundraising and relationship building, related to the challenges he encountered.

An Allegory for New Community College Presidents

Allegory's have been in use for many hundred's of years and are seen as an extended metaphor providing an explanatory venue. This narrative incorporates the study's findings and meanings. This allegory involves a continuous parallel of understanding captured within the story so that the events are seen as so closely related as to be equivalent to the story events.

The modern day community college president can be thought of as a driver of a public transportation bus. The bus represents access for city residents to a better life. The bus can deliver residents to a variety of destinations, such as employment and education. Similarly, the community college provides people with access to education, giving them the opportunity of enhanced employment and a better quality of life.

The passengers riding the bus equate to the students, board members, employees, and businesses served by the community college. Bus routes are long and typically pass through diverse neighborhoods, serving people and businesses with a variety of needs. Similarly, the community college serves district residents and businesses with varied needs and educational goals. Access to education and training for district residents is a trademark of the community college.

Further, the passengers on the bus, who represent the board members, students, employees, and businesses connected to the community college, also carry with them many unique challenges. These are the challenges a new community college president must identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to undertake. However, the passengers on the bus do not represent the only challenges to new community college presidents. Rather, they represent only the internal factors which test new community college presidents.

Weather and road conditions affect the way a bus driver operates the bus. These represent the external challenges encountered by new community college presidents. They equate to challenges such as reduced state funding, changing political climate, and increased competition among educational institutions. Similar to the internal challenges, a new community college president must also identify, prioritize, and develop strategies to deal with these challenges as well.

Bus drivers (community college presidents) steer the bus according to the needs of the passengers in conjunction with the external conditions. The driver has four options to go forward, backward, left or right. These four directions represent the four roles of the modern day community college president: fundraising; building trust; providing a vision; and developing relationships. Depending on the bus passengers and the external conditions, the bus driver may

have to take a detour or spend more time going in one direction than usual. This is similar to a community college president. Depending on the challenges identified and the external conditions, a community college president may have to focus on fundraising and building a vision more than building trust and developing relationships.

<center>The Allegory's Connection to New Community College Presidents</center>

The connection between the bus driver and the community college president relates to the skills required of each position. In order to effectively drive the bus, the driver must know the capabilities of the bus and be knowledgeable of his skill level. If a driver is unaware of these two components, the likelihood of an accident is greatly increased. Similarly, a community college president must be aware of his leadership ability and the college's ability to follow his leadership. Further, if the college cannot follow a president's leadership, more than likely the president will not have a successful tenure at the college.

<center>Limitations of the Study</center>

The goal of this research was to provide new community college president's constructive information and insights relative to where they can obtain information, set priorities for the challenges they encounter and develop appropriate strategies to address them. Thus, the quality and criteria of trustworthiness throughout each stage of this study is essential if new presidents are to be comfortable in utilizing these findings.

Donald R. Cooper, professor at Florida Atlantic University, and Pamela S. Schindler, faculty member at Wittenberg University (2003), states quality research is one which,

> Generates dependable data, being derived by practices that are conducted professionally
> and that can be used reliably for managerial decision-making. In contrast, poor research

is carelessly planned and conducted, resulting in data a manager can't use to reduce his or her decision-making risks (p. 14).

William A. Firestone of Rutgers University (1990) believes quality research is research which moves truth beyond common sense, "The major justification for the research enterprise is that we have the time and skills to develop approximations of the truth that have a firmer warrant than common sense" (p. 123). Utilizing these definitions presented by Cooper and Schindler (2003) and Firestone (1990), quality research provides results which can be used in decision-making pertinent to the community college field.

The researcher chose to focus the study on community colleges in Iowa and Illinois. This consideration might have limited the findings where those new presidents from different parts of the country could have had different experiences due to geographic location. The study participants who responded and fit the selection criteria were all males. Perhaps the study findings would have differed if the participant selection criteria were restructured to designate having men and women in equal numbers.

Another limitation, which is inherent in research is researcher bias. Patton (2002) asserts,

Because qualitative inquiry depends, at every stage, on the skills, training, insights and capabilities of the researcher, qualitative analysis ultimately depends on the analytical intellect and the style of the analyst. The human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis. (p. 372).

Throughout the study, the researcher consistently reflected particularly on the data collection and analysis methods used to ensure decisions and subsequent interpretations were not made based on personal basis.

Implications for Future Research

The goal of the research was to provide useful information for new community college presidents to utilize as they begin their first presidency. The findings obtained in this study can be used for comparisons in future studies involving similar types of participants. Because of the recent recognition of the leadership crisis in community colleges, little information exists regarding the information needed by presidents to make timely and accurate decision.

Traditionally, the implicit question that exists at the end of any research study is "what other questions or issues does this particular research raise?" While this study brought forth exploratory answers to the research questions posed, further questions still remain to be addressed, explored and answered. Therefore, future research topics might include the following:

1. What are the problems and issues faced by new female community college presidents?

2. Do the problems and issues facing new Latino and African-American community college presidents differ from their Caucasian counterparts?

3. How and in what ways do the community college presidents with over 10 years experience handle challenges presented as compared to new presidents?

Progressing beyond gender, race, culture, and past employment, the concept of preparation for the presidency poses an interesting research question. Many experts articulate the belief that a doctorate degree is the passport to executive-level leadership in higher education. However, during the data collection process, no participant articulated how their past education, their doctorate degree, provided a foundation for their every day decision-making

process. Therefore, choices for future studies related to preparation for new community college presidents could be:

1) What training or knowledge best prepares new community college presidents for the challenges they encounter during the first three years of the presidency?

2) What type of past experience is indispensable in order to have the depth of knowledge required to identify, prioritize, and strategize the challenges facing new community college presidents?

A final area for further research would be to examine the effectiveness of the decisions made by new community college presidents. It was apparent from the interviews with the six participants that they encountered numerous challenges at the beginning of their presidency and spoke of those having the most importance. The effectiveness of the strategies they chose when attending to these identified challenges is significant. Therefore, choices for future studies related to evaluation of the new president's ability to utilize appropriate strategies for the challenges could be:

1. Did the new president choose the appropriate challenges to address?

2. Did the new presidents' strategies effectively address the challenges identified?

It is this researcher's hope that more research will be conducted on the complexities of the community college presidency, thus leading to a better understanding of the requirements and skills needed by those desiring to assume this important position.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form – Participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October 2007 to May 2009. This form outlines the purpose of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Anthony Miksa, a doctoral student at National-Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand that this study is entitled Identifying and Addressing the Issues Faced by New Community College Presidents. The purpose of the study is to identify challenges new community college presidents encounter and how they address them within the first two years in office.

I understand that my participation will consist of audio-taped interviews, one interview lasting 1–2 hours in length with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 1 - 2 hours in length. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.   I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without prejudice until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that only the researcher, Anthony Miksa, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, but my identity will in no way be revealed. I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information garnered from the study will be of benefit to new community college presidents

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Anthony Miksa, 620 Castlewynd Dr, Loves Park, IL 61111 (815) 978-9449, Email address: amiksa@elgin.edu

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by me, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca Sue Lake, National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60603, 312-261-3534; Email address: *rebecca.lake@nl.edu* or *rslake1@comcast.net*

Participant's Signature _____   Date_____

Researcher's Signature _____   Date_____

APPENDIX B

Confidentiality Agreement –Data Transcriptionist

This confidentiality form articulates the agreement made between Anthony Miksa, the researcher, and [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY OF A PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIBER].

I understand and acknowledge that by transcribing the audiotapes provided to me by Rebecca S. Lake, that I will be exposed to confidential information about the research study and the research participants. In providing transcription services, at no time will I reveal or discuss any of the information of which I have been exposed.

In addition, at no time will I maintain copies of the electronic or paper documents generated. Further, upon completing each transcription, I agree to provide the electronic and paper documents to the researcher:

Anthony Miksa
620 Castlewynd Dr.
Loves Park, IL 61111
Email address: amiksa@elgin.edu

I understand that a breach of this agreement as described above could result in personal and professional harm to the research participants for which I will be held legally responsible.

Transcriptionist's Signature _____ Date_____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date_____

APPENDIX C

E-mail to Potential Participants

From: Miksa, Anthony
Sent:
To:
Subject: Research Request

Dr. XXX,

I am a doctoral student at National Louis University in Chicago. My dissertation is titled Identifying and Addressing Challenges Faced by New Community College presidents. I want to interview six first time presidents who have been in their position for three years or less two from Illinois, and Iowa.

If you have been in your position for three years or less and are a first-time college president would you be interested in being interview? I would like to conduct interviews around the last week of March. The questions I am currently considering asking are attached. The interview will be no longer than an hour and all responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you for your time.

Tony Miksa
Dean of the Math, Science, Engineering, and Health Professions
Elgin Community College
amiksa@elgin.edu

APPENDIX D

Participant Demographic Survey

1. Sex: Male or Female

2. Age _____

3. College _____

4. Ethnicity

       Asian or Pacific Islander_____
       American Indian or Alaskan _____
       Black, non-Hispanic _____
       Hispanic _____
       White, non-Hispanic _____

5. What are your degrees and where did you earn them?

       Degree_____
       University _____

       Degree _____
       University_____

       Degree _____
       University_____

6. What were the previous two positions you held before this presidency?

       College _____
       Position _____
       Years _____

       College _____
       Position _____
       Years _____

7. Were you ever a full-time tenure track faculty member? (Yes/No)

       College _____
       Subject _____
       Years _____

APPENDIX E

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

2. What do you like least about being a president?

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

APPENDIX F

E-mail to Participants for Member Check of Transcript

From: Miksa, Anthony
Sent:
To:
Subject: Research Request

Dr. XXX,

Thank you for participating in my study. Attached is the transcript from our interview on XXX.
Please review and let me know if there are any inaccuracies.

Thank you for your time.

Tony Miksa
Dean of the Math, Science, Engineering, and Health Professions
Elgin Community College
amiksa@elgin.edu

APPENDIX   G

Summarized Interview Transcripts for Iowa President 1

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
"Currently, originally and continually it is resource funding. That challenge is always a difficult one."
"Specifically at IA CC 1, there was a need to change the culture. I think in most organizations and institutions, no matter how diligent you are, there will always be communication issues because we are multi-faceted and do so many things."
"Another challenge would be meeting the needs of the community and learners. It's not about the region within the state education or economy and it's no longer a national economy or education, it's truly global. The challenge is keeping programs up to date and meeting the changes the workforce demands."
"For too long we had an internal group which had no fresh ideas or challenges. It started with good hires, changing the system around and with leadership."

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
At this college I was the vice president for three years before assuming the presidency. I had some history of the college. Prior to joining the college, I was in K-12 education and prior to that, business and industry. I had used some of the services of the college. I had a background with the community and the college so I didn't come into a situation without knowing the problems.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
"What I looked at was the needs of the institution and the needs of the community, which were many, and put those two together. You look at the highest needs. We have limited resources both in financial and human resources."
"We need to look at the highest need and what we are able to provide for the best rate of return."
"We did some strategic analysis to determine which ones are most important. We need funding. We need to take care of the fiscal side of the house to stay in business."
"Through the data-gathering process, we looked at what our abilities were and what our resources were for the college in human resources and fiscal resources. We looked at those businesses in the area to see what their needs were and asked people to look beyond the next couple of years."

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
"We took a short-term approach of 12-18 months focusing on what we could do and then, even though it isn't a long term approach, a 3-5-7 year approach on the best use of our resources to meet the needs of our communities."
"The support systems were not operating, as in registration, admissions, financial or human resources, as effectively as they should have. Education is based on personnel and how dedicated and passionate and how the employees feel they contribute to the institution, and to the broader community. The strategy was to let people know how important their jobs were and how their jobs affected others in the institution but it went further than that in changes."
"One of the advantages I had was bringing in a new cabinet through internal promotions and external hires. I was able to hire or promote three vice presidents and two executive directors."
"We proceeded then throughout the organization. When we had attrition and turnover, it was decided to really take our time to hire the right person. It started with my cabinet. We had hired new deans and several new associate deans. We hoped to promote from within, but we found we didn't have the base to do so. Our goal was then to start leadership development programs so that each of us has, at least in the interim, someone to step in and fill our position."
"We have continuing mandatory training for all our non-bargaining positions. Some of our bargaining positions are also taking advantage of the training.
"We are sending people to the Iowa State 'click and link' programs which are development programs for employees to learn leadership. We are supporting several people in the Iowa State Ph.D. program."
"In communication and trust, we broke down the silos."
"In resource development, we increased our presence by hiring a couple of grant writers, increased staffing in the foundation and increased attention working with our elected officials at the state and national levels."
"We have hired consultants and lobbyists and put money on the front end to increase awareness with government and private funding. We have worked on this for two years and now we are starting a major gift campaign, the first one the college has had, to raise funds and awareness and to strategically place the college within our business community and working with our partnerships."
"We are the bridge between K-12 and the workforce and the bridge between K-12 and other forms of higher education. So we put a great deal of effort in this. I hired a retired superintendent to develop dual credit programs where we can offer college credit through the high schools."

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
"Just probably an operational thing I would have done differently. We needed to establish and are establishing this college's presence in economic development in this area. I tried to blend credit and non-credit to establish this presence and I wasted 1-1/2 years."

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
"I like being a president because I have a part in improving the lives of our students and learners. It isn't just credit students or non-credit students but it is the learners who come back to us for a multitude of reasons for professional development, personal development or training for a new career."
"Most of those things I talked about in this interview are out of my control. I work with the business owners, with the community, the economic developers and our deans and our vice presidents and sometimes with our faculty and front line people but not enough. I don't get to have control in delivering that product. It is important to have good employees. It is up to them to deliver the product in the classroom."

2. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
"Most of those things I talked about in this interview are out of my control. I work with the business owners, with the community, the economic developers and our deans and our vice presidents and sometimes with our faculty and front line people but not enough. I don't get to have control in delivering that product. It is important to have good employees. It is up to them to deliver the product in the classroom."

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
"As they prepare for the presidency as well as they get on board, they need to get involved in their own community and spend a lot of time on their campus."
"They also have to be involved with state activities and peers within the state such as those at other community colleges and what they're doing legislatively. Once they establish themselves on the state level, they should look to the national level."
"More importantly, establish a relationship with several mentors who are experienced and certainly someone that was or is a community college president and or someone who is a president or leader of another organization and work regularly with them."
"Surround yourself with good people. I don't have an academic background so I went out and found a person that does and also shares my passion and beliefs on what the community college mission is and I look to her for guidance."
"Don't be afraid to get help, as you can't solve it all yourself. Just surround yourself with good people."

Summarized interview transcripts for Iowa President 2

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
Getting up to speed on the number of programs at the college.
I had problems delegating tasks.
A different set of expectations within the position from my past position.
I am adjusting to another set of realities in terms of fundraising, public relations and leadership at different levels within the institution.
I would like to do that here, but that is a big challenge with 350 full- and part-time employees and five campus sites in a five-county area. (Referring to going out and meeting people)
Communication was identified as a top challenge, not surprisingly, since we are spread out all over creation and we have a large number of staff.
We are losing population in the northwest area of Iowa faster than any other part of Iowa.
We found out that everyone loves us but they don't know who we are. We are on a mission to educate them about what we do and who we are.
I was hoping to hit 4,000 fte this year but we're down 21 and most of them were our high school dual enrollment students.

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
Every place I've ever been I've always gone out to meet as many staff as I can my first year. I find out from them what they feel are the strengths and weaknesses of the institution. It is a little informal needs-assessment.
Each member of the administrative team received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of them in their spaces, not mine.
In an organization this size, you can't meet everyone, but you get to say "I'm new to the institution and I need to learn from you. You're a great group of people and this is where the rubber meets the road. What are the two strengths of the institution? What are the two things that need to be improved right away? The last question. Do we have any crises that we need to pay attention to right now?"
The simple fact of going out and asking them what they think is a powerful introductory conversation. Then the neat thing is you have to put it in a report in the first year and send it back out to them saying, "This is what you said, this is what we heard, this is what we did," and put it in summary form.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
It was left up to me. My previous 23 years was in K-12 in the college's district so I knew many of the people here and probably knew a lot more about the programs here than people who weren't involved in higher education.

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
We hacked away at the communication issue by talking to our long-time CFO and saying, "How about doing discussions with our president?" "How about doing discussions with our Chief Academic Officer?" People were very appreciative of the information and willing to jump on board and help us in any way they could to become as cost efficient as we can.
My background is very much a continuous quality improvement structure. I studied a lot of the Demming concepts. There are a lot of labels put on it, when he created the Japanese miracle after WWII, it was all about empowering the workforce and trusting that people will do the right thing and get themselves involved. That is how I've approached each job.
My role is to help develop the synergy of discussion, to help them structure discussion opportunities to say hey, what are our issues?
One of the things we have done is put together a communication team which is college-wide. The team is a vertical slice of the campus encompassing faculty, staff, maintenance, food service, administration and representatives from the five campus locations.
The other thing we did was to review the college mission statement and get people engaged in a lengthy discussion about it.
Out of that (reviewing the college mission), we established four college-wide goals the college never had.

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
I think just adjusting to a different board. It was hard for me to adjust to another set of circumstances. The board is good here but it is a different setting. If I did it over again, I might do a little more up front to analyze the relationship between the board and the president and try to be a little more proactive in developing a relationship.

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
The best thing is the feeling that you can be very entrepreneurial.   Here the premium is on being nimble.

2. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
I can't think of a single thing. I love this job. If you asked me if I would do this over again knowing what I know, I would in the blink of an eye!

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
Communicate with the workforce of the college. Any new president will encounter a president's cabinet. You certainly must be talking to those people immediately. Each one of those people received a one-on-one when I did the assessment. I met with most of them in their spaces, not mine.
Make absolutely sure you spend a significant amount of time communicating with the board members individually and collectively. Read the landscape and politics with the board. You need to determine if there are internal politics with the board.

Summarized interview transcripts for Iowa President 3

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
The first challenge would be the way I was hired. The previous president of IA CC 3, who had been here 25 years and 19 as president, came to my office one morning at the high school and said I want you to be my next Vice President of Instruction, oh hell no, I want you to be the next president of IA CC 3 and so do the trustees.
(Referring to the hiring process) Everyone was agitated, mainly faculty. It is hard to put a handle on it. I don't know if they were rattling the sabers just because of a few. I had quite a few connections and good connections with faculty at IA CC 3 because I was at a high school close by for 11 years.
This college has a great reputation but they never did any strategic planning as a college. They had a vision and mission but nothing was tied to it. So the first challenge I had was getting everyone moving to the common focus.   The other challenge was that we had people that needed to get off the bus and some people in the wrong seats.
The main challenge was getting my administrative team to operate the way I wanted. Each Vice President would talk with the past president and they would make decisions about the departments without input from anyone else. My idea was the Cabinet, which was the executive leadership team, should be discussing everything from personnel to how the departments run because we all have interactions with the areas.
One of the biggest challenges was getting something written and going towards an articulated vision and getting the right people in the right places.
The two Vice Presidents were out to sabotage me and leaked confidential information. Everyone gets a salary increase and we give bonuses that stay on the salary and they leaked that.
Parts of Student Services reported to three different Vice Presidents. We put each department up on sticky notes and started moving them around. I wanted to cut down from five Vice Presidents to four. So we played chess. We talked and talked and came back week after week until we came to a resolution.
It is more challenging to move faculty ahead here than in K-12. There are a lot of things we haven't gotten done this year. I want faculty to be talking about Best Practices and it is hard to get them together. I can get them in small pockets but I want them in a large group.

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
It was just being here the 17 months before I took over. It gave people a chance to talk with me and say we need to change this. I just listened.
If you were a Dean you would have gotten a survey with eight questions asking you everything from your curriculum, equipment, building, staff, and questions of where were you thinking of going in the future. What innovations were you thinking about? I spent a day with each Dean.
This is how I gather information from looking and talking. I kept my ears and eyes open. I listened a lot – that was the key.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
The only two issues we worked on at first were personnel and the 5-year vision and getting it written down for people to look at.

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
The first year I had them do visions; the second year was strategic actions, priorities to move the visions; and this year we have strategic action priority, we call it a BHAG (Big hairy ass goal), and 25 KPI's which are too many. We now have measures for everything we are doing and we do AQIP as part of the process.
We had identified 40-50 people we wanted to give additional opportunities to and we identified 30-35 people that needed to find different seats or get off the bus.
The whole cabinet with executive directors, there are 10 of us with me included. We started looking(at the organizational chart) and that got people nervous because we took out the director of marketing, two vice presidents and people saw I was very aggressive on staffing. For the most part it was fairly well accepted because they saw these people were not living up to what they were supposed to do. We took out eight last year and I don't remember the numbers of the other years. When both of the vice Presidents left, it gave us an opportunity to realign our entire system. Parts of Student Services reported to three different vice Presidents.
We put out a mixed memo to the entire staff. People didn't feel they were communicated to. It is the most read thing we put out and it comes from me and goes to everybody. I wrote, here is the organizational chart we are thinking about. Give us your input.
To get everyone included in this, we started a year ago last August, a phase called engagement to involve and encourage all faculty and staff to think about IA CC 3 and how to move from great to greater. We held information meetings with all departments.
In January, I cancelled a day of school and all full-time employees were to meet in Iowa City for a day and were going to talk about IA CC 3.
The goal is to have dashboard indicators that will go to your desktop that impact you. It might be the math retention rate college-wide for algebra, the rates of all teachers for the classes you teach and your specific class rates. We have a long way to go.
I'm fairly aggressive. Aggressiveness in personnel and having the right people in the right positions is critical. Hire people for your weaknesses. I have always done that.
We put in 20 fake applications complete with social security numbers to see how long it would take departments to respond. Half of them responded within two days--that is good. After a month, 25% hadn't been responded to. You need to look at processes.
The biggest strategy is getting as many people involved as you can. We don't call it a strategic plan because it is more fluid than a strategic plan.

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
I wish I found out the vice presidents were jabbing me earlier. I took over in November and they went out in May; but they were already jabbing me before I took over and I didn't know it.
The faculty have union time and invited me over a few times for questions and answers about where we're going as an institution. I wish I had taken more opportunity to gather information through this avenue; it would have paid off.

General Questions

6. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
I'm over 60. The motivation is that I can make a difference.

7. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
The number of meetings but I enjoy it because it's my job.

8. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
Make sure you understand the system before you try to change the system. I thought I understood 95% of it for sure. I understood it and I came from internal and I was across the road for 11 years and had a great relationship with the past president. Sometimes you get a system that is out of control and when you make a decision there are unintended consequences that will kill you.

Summarized interview transcripts for Illinois President 1

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
There was some dissatisfaction with the previous president. One of my challenges was keeping the college moving forward on the projects that were identified as important and to begin the healing process by getting people more focused on their responsibility at the college as well as all the great things that were happening instead of worrying about the president and what was happening in the office.
People who didn't have daily contact with the president or any reason to have contact were really focused on the perceived problems and the atmosphere at the college. It was negative and one of the challenges was to begin a healing process and begin redeveloping a trust between the employees, the Board and the administration.
Another challenge, having had experience working with the board in my previous position, was understanding the balance between internal operations of the college, the external community and working directly with the board as opposed to reporting to the president.

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
Information was readily available regarding the first challenge. It was something that was expressed by the college community; it was expressed by the leadership of our senates and unions. You could see the tension everywhere you went on campus.
I made efforts to go to the faculty meetings. I meet monthly with the faculty union leader and the faculty senate leaders individually. I meet with them as well as the vice president of educational affairs and we meet and discuss the issues, questions and ask how things are going.
I try to be visible as much as possible and make myself available to people who have questions and concerns. I am pretty easy to interact with, at least I think I am, and try not to be intimidating.
We did things just to let people know we will celebrate our successes. We started almost immediately with a celebration in our atrium outside the library. We invited the entire college community to punch and cake. We talked about the accomplishments of the past year and what we are going to try to accomplish as we move forward.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
The other one was an experiential thing. My previous position at the college was that of vice president and in that position, while I did have responsibility to the board and make presentations to the board, interacted with the board, and with some of the external constituents, most of my work was internal to the college and not directly to the board, but to the president.
It was so apparent, beyond readily apparent because it was expressed. It was thick enough to cut with a knife. I would have to be both unaware of my surroundings and obstinate to ignore it. It was obviously one of the most important things to happen right away to begin the healing process.
The second one is more functional. There are also some capital issues. We don't have buildings falling apart but we have needs. As part of the AQIP process, we did a facility assessment and developed a list of priorities that will need to be addressed, major systems and major equipment at the college.

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
We needed to develop a funding strategy for them and I don't know if they ever had this before. We needed to present the board with what level and how we will fund it. This is critical to the long-term viability of the college. You can't let things fall apart.
We are also involved in a project called Foundations of Excellence which is an assessment of the first year student experience, and at the end of the process, we will have developed recommendations to improve that experience.

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
I don't feel anything from a strategic standpoint backfired or think oh darn that really turned south.

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
I like the opportunity to develop relationships with more people and more broadly within and outside the institution. That was my past experience as an executive director. You have the opportunity to be in the community with the board among everyone.

2. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
Sometimes the broadness of the responsibilities takes you away from some things which you need to focus on from day to day.

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
Probably that they should seek counsel from people in the field. You learn that seasoned veterans or even other new people can help you work through situations you haven't been through before. Anyone who gets to this level is going to be an accomplished person with their own way of approaching things. If you're brand new at this especially from another state, link with the Illinois President's Councils

Summarized interview transcripts for Illinois President 2

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
The major challenge was working with the board and the community to heal things. It was a healing sort of thing and since being here 25 years in various positions, I knew about those things and have lived those things from the other side.
The fact that the president that left was African-American, there was a perceived split support with the African-American community which isn't large, but it does exist.
We depended very heavily on financial support from our foundation which is one of the oldest in the state and in the nation. We had been depending on the foundation for years for money which ended up being operational money. They deemed they couldn't give it to us anymore.
Other challenges were the lack of jobs, people leaving the area, the economy seen as poor and attracting the students in the 30-40 range. They aren't coming back for training like they used to do.
We faced a horrible challenge with another community college across the river. Once you get up to IL TW 22 it is much easier to get across the river. Iowa doesn't have the out of district or out of state tuition situation like we do in Illinois.

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
For a person coming in from the outside, they would have had to rely on the board as the board would have set the direction which they did with me, but you would have to build some relationships quickly to find some of those things out.
Just getting out and talking and listening to people. We needed to see what was upsetting the campus stakeholders.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
Having lived through issues and working with the board. They had challenges for me to work on. If I had come in brand new from outside, I think the board would have done the same thing. I had a gut feeling because of being here so long.
There was no data, although we are trying to be a data-driven organization. It was very obvious. The data stuff starts to come out when you start looking at enrollments.
The healing aspect had to come first. Working with the faculty and the foundation is tenuous, things can go the wrong way quickly. Those were top priorities.

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
In terms of the budget problems, we had to raise tuition the last few years. We tried to be really frugal and people were good about not spending money unless needed.
No, just getting out and jumping right into the middle of the battle, talking and listening.
We did for a while but we gave up because there is no way we can compete. We are trying to attract more students from the northern border area because that is only 20 miles and there are a few other high schools we work with to try to get students to come to our college. Many of them were coming for nursing but now the community college on our northern border has started its own nursing programs. We are trying to concentrate on our northern neighbors. We can't compete with Iowa.

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
In hindsight we tried to balance the budget and save money by consolidating and not replacing administrative and other staff. This strategy came back to bite us because we have too many people doing too many things.

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
The part I like most is having the ability to guide and help people in the organization move forward. It would be much easier if I had more money to do that. I like to help people think creatively. I want to help people rejuvenate and reinvigorate the place so we're back to where we were when the community college movement began.

2. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
So far I like most of it. The fact that the job is with you 24hours a day is most burdensome.

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
The advice is, if you're coming in and you're a new president and you don't know anything about the institution, listen carefully to a wide variety of people and don't be too quick to judge who you should be listening to or get trapped by someone who wants to grab and guide you. Measure everything carefully. Work closely with the board because they are the ones who hire and fire the president.
You have to listen to all of it and listen to the board. Try to find out who in the organization is a good guide. It is not always people at the top who should guide you. You need internal guides and finding out who they are is different in every organization.

Summarized interview transcripts for Illinois President 3

Interview Questions

General Theme: Determine how you gathered information, determine how you prioritized information to form challenges, and determine your solutions

1. What challenges have you faced as president?

Quote
Some of the challenges involved staffing because we were losing a lot of people to retirement. We were also growing quickly, almost 52% over the last 10 years. Enrollment was increasing until this year. We were getting bigger but had the same size staff.
Space needs were an issue to address and for the institution to figure out. Do we have enough space? Is it the right type of space? Do we need to expand? Do we need to expand on this campus, at remote sites?
These were the challenges we faced as well as challenges everyone faces such as declining state funding.
I certainly have had challenges in this job such as learning the job and certain aspects of the job. Being a Chief Academic Officer helps a lot because you know that side of the house. I had Student Affairs responsibilities at a previous college which helped me. I have always been interested in the financial side but some of the challenges I have had have been learning about bonds about EAV and how it works and impacts our budget.
It has been a challenge for me to establish my relationship with the board. It has gone well but I never worked directly with the board; rather I relied on the president, so this has been new.
One of the challenges I faced was trying to learn the different aspects of the college and responsibilities that I didn't have before.
There were issues with the hiring process used here. The board just named me the president and did not conduct a search. They had some focus groups in the community to talk about what we should be looking for in the next president and what issues faced the college. Early on they asked me if I would be interested in the job and how serious I was.
The downside is it costs money and time and you don't know if it will work. The downside for me is that I can be questioned by people regarding the fact that we didn't do a search; they just hired me and what if we didn't get the best person for the job. You were just convenient. No one has told me that to my face and I don't know if that is a concern but there is an advantage to doing a search.
I haven't given the search process much thought since I took over because it doesn't do me any good to worry about it as I have the job and need to do the best I can. It makes it a little harder in the beginning and no one raised an issue with me or with the board. I did hear comments from people saying we should have done a search to see what else was out there.

2. How did you determine the issues in question #1 were challenges?

Quote
We used a lot of data and also the feedback we had from people on campus and outside campus. A lot of what was identified by the campus came from issues that needed to be addressed. We had campus surveys, meetings and focus groups. Everyone had an opportunity to fill out the survey online.
Even in areas that I thought I knew better, I would go cautiously and learn enough to get the information I needed. I did this so I knew the real scope of the issues before changing things. This helped to get the buy in from people so that they knew I'm not just coming in saying you're idiots for doing it this way and we'll do it a different way.

3. How did you prioritize the challenges in question #1?

Quote
We were lucky because as I transitioned into the position, we started the strategic planning process. Our previous plan was from 1997 and not what I believed to be a strategic plan, and it hadn't been updated. We involved community members, board representatives, campus constituents and many of the challenges came up.
A lot of the same issues are in the strategic plan that we identified as issues to be addressed and so once the strategic plan was set, we put together the timeline and prioritizing what we would do first. The strategic plan task force and executive committee worked together to prioritize which ones we needed to deal with first.
Some of them were prioritized first because they were more pressing in nature. We needed to deal with the space crunch first because we have bonds coming off in 2012 and if we're going to do anything, we needed to start the planning process now. It is time sensitive.
Hard data too. We could see the state funding declining. The money we were getting through the state, grants, and equalization had declined over the years. Those are just looking at the facts and figures. It is becoming more of a problem. We saw enrollment continuing to grow, but we had the same number of staff and the numbers we served were growing. It was a mixture of data and feelings.
We have really started to hire more people by taking requests from across the campus; prioritizing them within each VP area and having the VPs take it to the executive committee to prioritize them institutionally. Then taking those to the board and discussing why these are most important and why we need to do this and the cost in the long term.

4. What strategies did you use to meet the challenges from question #1?

Quote
I talked with them quite a bit. I meet with the Executive Committee and the board chair and vice chair once a month between board meetings so we can talk about issues.
We have had several special meetings and retreats with the board on single topics. So we have more interaction with each other. I send out quite a bit of communication to the board with updates on things going on I have been involved with. I give them a heads up on issues that will be coming their way in a month or two to let them know what's going on.
Each year we get requests for additional staffing and we try to plan out what staffing we need out into the future and what are the more pressing priorities and what can wait. Last year we hired 11 new staff and this year 6-7. Eleven was the most we ever hired.
The space will be a bigger thing that will be a much more involved process. We are embarking now with a more detailed space utilization analysis. How many classrooms do we have? How are they used during the day? Not only are they booked during the day but what type of classes. Are we using the classrooms to the maximum? If there is a classroom that seats 30 but only five are in the room, it might be used, but not efficiently.
We are looking at a campus master plan and have met with other institutions that have gone through it to get advice from them on how they would do it differently. We have talked to some architects about helping us put together a campus master plan for the future. We have had conversations with people in the community and cities about their expansion and our roll in that.
The city has an initiative to upgrade the downtown area. We have talked to those in town to see how we might fit in their plans. Again just trying to talk to people and having conversations with people that are looking to expand themselves and partner with them such as the park districts, hospitals, open business building for sale, etc.
Well we are trying not to jack up tuition too much because it affects students quite a bit. We don't have a lot of options when state funding declines.
We have a new foundation director. We are really looking to ramp up the foundation. My impression is that the foundation has always had a good feeling about the college but has never been asked to do much in fundraising for us.
We are working with the foundation directors and executive director of the foundation to put together that game plan. We have K statements, which are 1-page summaries, we put together on different projects of what we need so the foundation director knows what the needs of the institution are and if he had a donor he has a K statement to look at.
I am working with the board and foundation board. We are planning a joint meeting to try to make sure the college's strategic plan is in line with the strategic plan of the foundation. So we are working together and addressing the funding needs of the college.
We are also looking at a grant writer and pursuing grants because the pie from the state is only so big and we need to see how to make the pie bigger.

5. Can you give an example of a strategy from #4 that in hindsight you would have done differently?

Quote
So far there hasn't been anything that stood out. There were things I did before I was president, but as president there hasn't been anything. But since being president there's nothing I've screwed up on yet.

General Questions

1. What do you like most about being a president?

Quote
I spoke with the past president when I started and said that I didn't want to be a college president because I don't like what they do because it is so external. Over time it changes and as you get older and have more experience, you look at it and its part of the job and it's not that bad. I enjoy it now more than I would have 10 years ago.
I like being involved in all aspects of the institution. It is fun to be more involved with such aspects as the academic affairs, student affairs, and ESL which is much broader than what I was involved with before.
I like being involved within the community and bringing back partnerships and opportunities from other organizations. I have always been involved in the decision-making process of the institution, it's just a different level of responsibilities.
It is scary and nice to say that ultimately when the decision needs to be made, it has to be made by me. Or alternately, when the recommendation has to go to the board, it comes from me to the board and I have to explain it to the board. I like that responsibility to be able to say I think this is the way we need to do it.

2. What do you like least about being a president?

Quote
I miss the contact I had with faculty. We have monthly meetings with the vice president of the faculty and I haven't had that for while. I just had a meeting with the faculty and it was weird to be meeting with them.
We have had other issues where things have happened and hopefully the buck stops here in my office. It is part of the job and I understand that; but it is not one of the fun parts when you have issues where people disagree on how you handled it as an institution. The calls come to me, the emails and people come in person. That has never been my favorite part of the job but it comes with the territory.

3. What advice would you give to a new president?

Quote
The advice I received was listen first and don't make any sweeping changes right away. I didn't feel it was necessary to make my mark in the first six months of being president. The board was on board with that thinking and didn't look for sweeping changes.
I was lucky because I was in Illinois for a long time and I know people at other institutions. I was involved in the Chicago Area Transferred Administrators Groups, Career Deans Groups and others. I got to know people in other schools which was helpful. I could call people and ask what they would do when they had this situation. I would encourage people to expand their network.
Once you start looking for more information, perhaps you find out there is some logic in the way it was done and maybe the rationale for doing it this way was valid and now it's time to look at it again. That is advice I would give someone.