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Influencers of Succession Planning Among Rural Community College Chief Executives

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Influencers of Succession Planning Among Rural Community College Chief Executives

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Adult and Lifelong Learning

by

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Abstract

The challenge of maintaining strong leadership within many community colleges has been exacerbated by many factors including demographic shifts, therefore, succession planning is one tool used by institutions to offset the challenge of dealing with aging leaders, retirements, and a limited pool of competent applicants. Many senior administrators have and will continue to retire at rapid rates and fewer well-prepared individuals seem to be available or willing to move into these roles. Higher education literature has explored the future of community colleges during this time of change, some examining critical factors for the future of community colleges by asking questions such as: Who will the next leaders be? Will they be committed to the community colleges' historic mission of ensuring access? How will they be prepared to meet current and future challenges?

This case study was designed to explore the influencers of succession planning and how rural community college leaders identify and develop future leaders. As part of this exploration, the study examined institutional culture and community stakeholders as influencers. Six presidents or chancellors from rural community colleges were chosen for face-to-face interviews using purposive sampling to gain an in-depth understanding of the ways current community college leaders are developing the pipeline of future leaders.

Through qualitative analysis three themes emerged: adaptation and flexibility are primary characteristics needed by future leaders; organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs; and leadership development must include broad organizational exposure.

Recommendations stemming from this study are that presidents and chancellors from other states, geographical locations, or urban areas may have different perspectives regarding

leadership selection and development. Replication of this study in other states, urban institutions, and institutions with different budget levels would allow comparisons of the findings to further the research on this topic. Additional research also might examine individuals who have been identified as potential leaders and may reveal how future leaders are preparing for leadership opportunities.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I am blessed to have so much support and encouragement from home and could not have done this without you.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

“There is nothing more difficult to plan, more uncertain of success, or more dangerous to manage, than the establishment of a new order of government” (Machiavelli, 2003, p. 31).

Change is an inevitable event and community colleges are not immune to it. One of the most monumental challenges an organization faces is a change in leadership (Wright, 2012). Concerns about succession planning and the future of community college leadership exist because of aging leaders, retirements, and a limited pool of competent applicants (Shultz, 2001; Eddy, 2013).

Riggs (2009) stated fewer well-prepared individuals are available and willing to move into community college administrative roles, while veteran administrators are rapidly retiring. Seltzer (2017) reported 61.7 years old as the average age for college presidents, up from 60.7 in 2011, and 59.9 years old in 2006. In 2016 it was reported that 75% of senior administrators plan to retire by 2026 (McKnight, 2017). The American Association of Community Colleges report Executive Leadership Transitioning at Community Colleges (2018) reported in 2016 that more than 50% of the presidents of colleges that award associate degrees reported that they anticipated stepping down within the next five years, yet only 21.2% of those colleges report having a succession plan in place (p. 3).

Adding to the challenge, current community college presidents and those in senior administrative roles are in the same age range meaning retirements are likely to occur across many levels of administration (Duree, 2008). Shultz (2001) reported those that traditionally move into president roles are also approaching retirement. Due to such vast retirements, vacant administrative positions may exceed the number of qualified candidates (Reille & Kezar, 2010). With the applicant pool narrowing and the number of positions growing, community colleges

face increasing challenges in filling leadership positions (Riggs, 2009). The wave of massive retirements will create an immense gap across community colleges through the loss of intimate knowledge of community college missions, values, and culture (Shultz, 2001).

With the leadership shortage increasing, potential leaders must be ready to fill these positions while facing a significant loss of established leadership knowledge. To mitigate this disruption, community colleges are advised to implement succession planning and leadership development programs to assist in these unavoidable transitions (Jackson, 2017). Succession planning creates a smooth transition for colleges experiencing a shift in leadership, yet fewer than twelve percent of community colleges had a succession plan in place when surveyed (Jones-Kavalier & Flannigan, 2008). Successful transitions occur when an effective and orderly transition of power takes place between the outgoing and incoming leader, allowing for continued advancement of the institution (AACC, 2018). Dukes (2016) stated, “Developing leaders is key to the long-term health of an institution” (p. 1). Amy Morrison Goings (2016), a Gen-X president, began her presidency in 2013 at forty years old and shares this:

I feel an immense responsibility to expedite succession planning not only for my college’s leadership positions, but for my state and our national system. Openings are coming fast and furious and I want to ensure that my vice presidents and deans are prepared for future presidential roles. Once they land these jobs, there is little time for on-the-job training. (p. 6)

Problem Statement

Institutions of higher education, specifically community colleges, are experiencing a high rate of turnover due to retirement and position transition. A large number of top administrators, such as presidents, vice presidents, department leaders, and directors have already retired or are nearing retirement (Stripling, 2011). Through the aging of top community college leadership, also known as the graying of the presidency, valuable knowledge and experienced leadership is

being lost which inevitably sooner or later is going to mean there will be successors and new presidents (Stripling, 2011). New individuals must emerge as leaders to fill these gaps and must have the ability and knowledge to be effective leaders with virtually little to no training. As community colleges search for new leadership, it is essential institutions are proactive, as expectations of community college leaders continue to change and evolve (Wallin, Cameron, & Sharples, 2005). While changes in leadership presents many unknowns, they also present unique opportunities to diversify leadership across higher education in America. A diverse pool of talented leaders must be available and willing to move into chief executive roles (Kr. Betts, Urias, & Ke. Betts, 2009). Traditionally, bright and ambitious faculty climbed to department chair positions and continued upward to become chief academic officers and ultimately move into presidential roles. However, retirements of sitting chief academic officers are contributing to the low number of replacements in the pipeline (Bisbee, 2005; Richards, 2016). Additionally, many current chief academic officers are not interested in moving into president positions (Richards, 2016).

Historically, community college presidents were tasked with creating the right campus climate, allowing students and staff the opportunity to fulfill their full potential within the college community as well as communicate the mission to various constituencies including students, employees, board members, legislators, and the community. While these needs still exist, future community college presidents cannot be mirror images of their predecessors and will face different and complex issues from those of the past and must focus on trends in population demographics, declining enrollments, employment needs, state and federal legislation, budgets and performance analytics (Boyd, 2010). In a 2001 leadership survey administered to community college presidents, Shultz (2001) found that “presidents believe that

the skills needed to lead colleges in the future will remain constant but there will be more emphasis on the ability to be flexible, to understand technology, and to seek business-and industry partnerships” (p. 1). More recently, presidents from associate degree granting institutions reported in the 2017 American College President Survey areas of importance for future leaders are budget/financial management (65.2%), fundraising (43.3%), enrollment management (34.2%), assessment of student learning (31.6%), and accreditation (31%) (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017).

At present, there is limited information available regarding how community colleges are preparing for the leadership shortage and how current leaders identify, select, and prepare the pipeline of replacements. Bowen (2008) was surprised by the number of institutions having no succession planning process in place. The American College President Study serves as the most comprehensive, in-depth, and frequently cited source of information about the college presidency and the higher education leadership pipeline reported of sitting presidents of associate degree granting institutions who responded 78.8% lack an established succession plan at their institution (Gagliardi et al., 2017). If institutions of higher education, including community colleges, are to remain viable, their success may hinge on the recruitment and development of leaders (Richards, 2016).

Sitting presidents avoid discussing retirement plans because of potential implications associated with campus change. Change avoidance contributes to presidential exits being unplanned with little to no protocol in place for the transition (Stripling, 2011). Green (1988) reported higher education has historically placed little value on developing an internal leadership pipeline.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to understand the influencers of succession planning among rural community college leaders and these leaders select and develop future leaders. Additionally, the study will investigate the role of culture and stakeholder expectations in leadership development for rural community colleges. The current landscape of leadership development will be explored within a single state located in the southern region of the United States. While the qualitative study will not be generalizable to the larger population of community colleges across the county, it will provide data that could be used to shape a quantitative study that could be generalizable to a greater number of cases.

Significance of the Study

Many senior leaders of community colleges are planning for retirement and a limited pool of qualified individuals to lead colleges is perceived to exist. Conger and Fulmer (2003) stated “what could be more crucial to a company’s long-term health than the choice and cultivation of its future leaders?” (p. 1). The increased need to develop new leaders in large quantities moves colleges and universities to reconsider how they currently identify and develop leaders and cease overlooking and developing internal talent (Snowden, 2012).

A fractured pipeline for future leadership and an absent or flawed succession planning process distracts many colleges from focusing on their primary missions of educating and preparing students (AACC, 2018). Bisbee (2007) indicated “replacing effective leaders with effective leaders requires a commitment from the institution to first identify potential leaders and then provide ongoing support and development opportunities” (p. 80). Institutions are faced with the challenge of not only replacing current leaders, but the process of investing in the pipeline of leadership which potentially touches the community at large. Community colleges make a

significant impact on their local communities, in terms of both human and economic impact (Pink, 2018). Serving as the lifeblood of such communities, two thirds of all public community colleges serve rural communities by driving economic opportunity and providing access to higher education (VanIngen-Dunn, 2016). The findings of this study may provide a foundation for community colleges to view the significance of succession planning and leadership development as they relate to the unique culture and mission of the community college.

Research Questions

The primary research question that guides this study is what role do community college chief executives play in identifying and developing future leaders from within?

The following sub questions are proposed to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

How does institutional culture influence leadership selection and development?

How do community stakeholders influence leadership selection and development?

Rationale for Methodology

Because this research focuses on the philosophy of leadership development and succession planning by community college leadership, qualitative design is appropriate. Qualitative research provides the researcher the ability to capture people's stories, gleaning a more descriptive understanding of why something is happening or how things work (Patton, 2014). Qualitative research is well-suited for studies where an understanding of knowledge is sought; of the events including situations and actions with which they are involved; understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions; or understanding the process by which the events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). Qualitative research is appropriate when thoughts, feelings, beliefs,

values, and assumptive worlds are involved and the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). This study explored the commonalities and differences between leadership development among rural community colleges within a southern state in the U.S. and involved understanding the diverse cultural forces that influence current community college leaders' succession planning. The research question led to discovery of if and how current community college leaders are selecting and developing future leaders. An exploratory multi-case study design was used to gain a rich understanding of leadership development and succession planning strategies used within community colleges across a rural Southern state.

The researcher's role in qualitative research is instrumental to the success of the study (Crewell, 2013). The researcher must be actively involved in the data collection process and hone the ability to be reflective in the report. Interviews were chosen as the primary source of data collection to obtain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of current rural community college chief executives and the methods they use in selecting and developing future talent. Interviews allowed the ability to ask open-ended questions, gathering responses that might not have been possible through quantitative research. Through the process, I was able to look deeper into responses and probe areas that seemed to be enlightening. This study used purposive sampling to select information rich cases by limiting the selection of respondents to those with experience leading rural community colleges. Six community college presidents or chancellors were interviewed, all having experience serving in the chief executive role of a rural community college. Participants met the following criteria: representation from system member colleges and non-system member colleges, female, participants who have only worked at a single institution, participants that come from unique backgrounds such as law and military, participants that have

earned a doctorate and those who have not, and participants who have served in leadership positions outside the state being examined. Interviews provided most of the data, but critical documents and other artifacts related to the leadership development process were examined as needed. These artifacts include but are not limited to items such as curricula of professional development, job descriptions, and leadership programs used by the colleges who participated in this study.

Assumptions

The three primary assumptions that are inherent to this study include: the methodology used in the study is appropriate for data collection and analysis of respondents' perceptions; participants selected for the study honestly and candidly shared their perceptions when responding to the interview questions; and responses from the interview questions might be representative of other rural community colleges where data is being collected.

Definition of Key Terms

Chancellor/President: person who assumes responsibilities of chief executive officer for the institution (Mackey, 2008).

Community College: a community college is an accredited, publically-funded, 2-year, post-secondary institution that primarily offers an associate's degree as the highest degree (Boyd, 2010).

Rural community college: public two-year institutions with an address outside the 100 largest standard or consolidated metropolitan statistical areas across the U.S. (Sherbini, 2012).

Succession planning: the ongoing process of identifying future leaders in an organization and developing them so that they are ready to move into leadership roles (Calareso, 2013).

Chapter 1 Summary

Chapter One provides information regarding the background of succession planning in community colleges. The purpose of the study, problem statement, and research questions are stated. The significance of the study, rationale for the selected methodology, assumptions of the study, and definitions of key terms are explained. Chapter Two presents a literature review of future leadership for community colleges, leadership development, and succession planning as a means to close the gap.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

The purpose of this study is to understand the phenomenon of how community college leaders use succession planning to identify, select, and develop the talent pipeline for future leadership. The review of literature is divided into six sections with topics covering a) theoretical framework, b) the modern community college, c) succession planning, d) internal versus external candidates, e) methods of leadership development, and f) leadership development programs for community colleges.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

While an ideal leadership style or trait may not exist, it has been noted that leaders accomplish work through the work of others and leaders influence followers to achieve common goals within an organization (Jackson, 2017). Adaptive leadership focuses not on the leader but on actions of leading and will be the framework used to guide this study. Adaptive leadership processes allow individuals and organizations the ability to cope with and manage changing conditions (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linksy, 2009). Over the past twenty years, the role of community college chief executives has evolved into a multidimensional role requiring adaptive and nimble leadership skills with the ability to assemble the right team (McCafferty, 2019). According to Randall & Coakley (2007) organizational culture is very much tied to an organization's ability to adapt. An organization's rituals, norms, and protocols are all cultural ingredients, and adaptive leadership requires an understanding of the culture.

Leadership succession can cause feelings of fear, stress and conflict with an organization (Parks, 2018). Leadership succession relates to adaptive challenges as adaptive issues are not well defined, are complex in nature, and solutions are not known in advance. When adaptive issues exist, there are generally many different stakeholders involved, each with his/her own

interpretation of the issues at hand. Leaders who foster an adaptive culture enable their organizations to meet ongoing series of adaptive challenges. Building a leadership pipeline is essential to long-term adaptability and people learn to lead on the job. Leaders who make a real commitment to individualized leadership development provide their employees a clear sense of their individual potential and such leaders select from the talent closest at hand and focus on developing that talent. Adaptive leaders understand their most important responsibility is getting the right people in the right roles doing the right jobs (Randall & Coakley, 2007). Adaptive organizations hone the ability to tackle adaptive challenges and build a healthy pipeline of talent through openness, commitment to learning, and shared responsibility for the organization's future (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linksy, 2009).

The Modern Community College

In 1901 the community college model was developed as an extension of high school education and has evolved over the following 118 years experiencing rapid growth in enrollment, in the number of community colleges in operation, and in the number programs offered. Originally, community colleges were developed as open-admission junior colleges designed to offer the first two years of a baccalaureate degree and now have evolved into comprehensive institutions serving the educational needs of every type of community (Harkins, 2017). Boggs (2003) felt community colleges have widely broadened access to higher education and training opportunities for individuals who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to attend college due to economic, mobility, or social barriers. Community colleges operate in every state across the U.S., employ open door access, and provide educational opportunities to half of all students beginning a college career (Harkins, 2017). Community colleges may encompass adult education, contract services, lifelong learning, and numerous other short-term training

opportunities, including general education diploma preparation, senior citizen workshops, recreational programs, and children's activities (Bornheimer, 2010).

Community colleges educate 40% of all undergraduate students in the United States and serve three core missions including helping students transfer to a four-year university, providing career education, and building foundational abilities for students low in gateway skills (Budd, 2018). Bill Pink (2018), President of Grand Rapids Community College, emphasized the important role community colleges play within local economics as being the fabric of their work and stating their focus of community shows significance by being embedded in the name of community colleges. Community colleges play a substantial role in workforce development, employment and economic prosperity, health and family stability. Community college leaders must ensure alignment of the college's mission with the needs of the local economy by seeking external alliances with K12 education and business stakeholders (Pink, 2018; VanIngen-Dunn, 2016). Community colleges assist in building a stronger and more competitive workforce through providing employers with highly skilled well-prepared employees that are ready to make immediate contributions to their field (Dastmozd, 2014). For millions of students, especially those in rural areas, the choice is not between a community college and a four-year institution; it is between the community college or nothing (Harkins, 2017).

A Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the college president, governs the community college. Some states have created systems where an institution chancellor reports to the system president and the system president reports to the board. Boards typically approve such items as budgets, programs, personnel appointments, construction, and strategic plans. The board relies on the president/chancellor to carry out the daily operations of the institution. Board members

may be elected, appointed, or sometimes appointed by the governor of the state (Bornheimer, 2010).

Sixty percent of all community colleges exist in rural areas and therefore experience a unique set of challenges (Sherbini, 2012). Rural areas are known to experience “poverty, illiteracy, a graying population, dying small towns, a shortage of trained workers, substandard housing, high unemployment, above-average school dropout rates, substance abuse, and the lack of adequate health care and child care” (Reichard, 1995, p. 17). Harkins (2017) described rural areas as “low population density, low total populations, low per-capita income, low levels of educational attainment, slow job growth, high poverty, high unemployment, and high rates of illiteracy” (p. 37). According to Hill and Moore (2000) “globalism, job scarcity, and changing technologies are factors that have challenged, and will continue to challenge, rural America” (p. 350). Due to the remote locations of many rural institutions, many relationships across institutions are long-standing often with many staff members being family, presenting a unique challenge for leaders (Eddy, 2013). Presidents leading rural institutions must provide the education needed for students to transfer to four-year institutions, educate the workforce, and serve as leaders in local economic development efforts, but with fewer resources and limited economic options. Geographic isolation and stagnant economies often force the population elsewhere, leading to a challenge of declining student enrollment (Harkins, 2017).

From the 1960s to 1980s, community colleges experienced a burst in existence with the number of community colleges in the nation growing from 412 to 1,058 (Bornheimer, 2010). The “baby-boomer” generation that helped to establish such a robust community college system is now ready to retire (Harkins, 2017). An average of 600 college and university presidential changes occur each year across the United States (Nakutis, 2016). The American Association of

Community Colleges (AACC, 2012) surveyed community college chief executive officers in 2012 and reported that the median age of respondents was sixty years old; 75% of respondents expressed plans to retire within the next ten years, 43% within the next five years, and 15% within the next eleven to fifteen years. The American Association of Community Colleges reported in 2016 more than 50% of community college presidents anticipated stepping down within the next five years, yet only 21.2% of these colleges reported having a succession plan in place (AACC, 2018). A lack of succession and transition planning is more than just a problem; it places an institution at a higher level of risk (AACC, 2018).

Community colleges have not experienced the need for so many new leaders since the tremendous 1960s-1980s growth periods placing the American community college system at a critical turning point (Snowden, 2012). Shutlz (2001) stated such retirements are critical because “inestimable experience and history, as well as an intimate understanding of the community college mission, values, and culture, will disappear, leaving an enormous gap in the collective memory and leadership of community colleges” (p. 2).

Much of the existing research focuses on vacant presidency roles; however, a surge of retirements are likely to occur at all levels of administration and even faculty. Despite the pipeline to presidency dwindling, academia continues to neglect utilizing succession planning (Snowden, 2012). Chief academic officers have traditionally fed into the presidential position but many feel presidential activities and external duties, such as fundraising and politics, are not congruent with academia, leading these groups to lose interest in seeking the role of president (Richards, 2016). The 2017 American College President Study reported 65% of presidents cited spending the majority of time on budget and financial management, followed by fundraising

(58%), external communication (19.5%), and government relations (14.8%) and 77% reported serving on two or more external boards (Gagliardi et al., 2017).

Succession Planning

Baby boomers are retiring from leadership positions which yields the need to replace baby boomers with viable, skilled leaders. Gathering baby boomer's collective experiences before they retire may shape the next generation of leaders within organizations (Coleman, 2016). Boerner (2015) conducted a qualitative study in 2015, interviewing five current and one retired community college presidents regarding their perceptions of the mounting leadership crisis, succession planning, and efforts to build a leadership pipeline across the nation. Janice Gilliam, president of Northeast State Community College, a public community college based in Blountville, Tennessee, participated in the study and stated, "Succession planning is yet another opportunity for colleges already navigating a variety of reforms to innovate, but how each college does that depends on its culture, history, resources, and needs" (p. 21). Kathleen Hetherington of Howard Community College, a community college in Columbia, Maryland, stated, "Creating a robust channel of talent helps put her and others at ease about future transitions and building that pipeline makes sure people don't get focused on what's going to happen if so-and-so leaves" (Boerner, 2015, p. 21).

Colleges are now operating in a dynamic fast-paced environment. Previous approaches of leadership and accompanying skills can no longer match such an environment; therefore, future leaders must be able to easily adapt while being highly competent and effective to compete and survive in the future. Change and challenges in today's society require leaders to be adaptive with specialized skills and abilities exceeding what was required of leaders forty years ago (Richards, 2016).

Henri Fayol, a famous theorist who developed principles of management based on personal work experience, was an initial champion of the use of succession planning, and suggested leadership replacement planning as a way to avoid organizational failures stemming from recruiting underprepared individuals to occupy leadership roles. Succession planning was developed through the emphasis Fayol placed on planning and the need for organizations to invest in their personnel through training and professional development (Snowden, 2012).

Leadership transitions that follow established processes and include involvement from the campus community are considered to be more effective and impactful versus transitions where swapping or simple replacement of leadership occurs (AACC, 2018). Succession planning can be described as a series of steps used by organizations to fulfil employment needs, for all employees, especially senior leadership positions or simply stated, succession planning means ensuring replacement candidates for key positions are trained and available at the right time. Succession planning has been likened to passing the baton, emphasizing the transition from one leader to the next (Snowden, 2012). A key component of succession planning involves internal development with the goal of creating a pool of future leaders from those who are already part of an organization (Cavanaugh, 2017). Originating in the 1980s in the business and industry sector, succession planning was narrow in scope, focusing on the development of selected individuals to fill selected positions. Over the years, succession planning has evolved into a practice focusing on a leadership development process designed to identify and nurture talent in multiple positions to ensure an organization's sustainability (Snowden, 2012).

A succession plan should provide the necessary steps an organization should follow to continue fulfilling its mission and remain in operation during the selection of qualified human capital. It is imperative that the mission and vision of an organization remain intact, even during

leadership transitions (Calareso, 2013). Succession planning is much more than selecting the top leader, and includes the practice of developing talent across all levels of an organization (Atwood, 2007). “An active and continual succession management plan is vital to organizational sustainability because it provides the bench strength for crises, keeps the dots connected, and delivers the internal pipeline” (Chavez, 2011, p.15). A successful succession planning process involves the philosophy of recruiting the best talent possible, then ensuring professional development opportunities emphasizing leadership skills exist (Cavanaugh, 2017). Succession planning involves two important steps: a plan to select the right people and then a process to retain, promote, and train the right people to fill vacant positions (Galagan, 2010). Succession plans are beneficial to institutions because they promote loyalty and stability (Calareso, 2013). Through implementation of succession planning, an atmosphere focusing on preserving the history and culture of the institution is formed (Berke, 2005). Employees identified as potential leaders are placed in a pool and then provided the necessary guidance through varying leadership training programs to ensure success, creating an asset for the institution. The focus is on intentional and well-planned leadership formation rather than a random and serendipitous process. Internal candidates in the pipeline know the mission, goals, and culture of the organization. During any leadership transition a learning curve in regards to the new responsibilities is expected, but a seamless transition in respect to organizational support of core values occurs (McMaster, 2013).

It is important to select future leaders whose skills align with future goals and changing needs. In a staffing management article, Gale (2013) provided suggestions for creating a roadmap to succession planning by placing focus on assessing employees’ current performance and identifying any skill or experience gaps for their future roles, asking employees about their

career goals to ascertain whether or not they want the role they will be groomed for, create training, mentoring and leadership opportunities for top talent to close the gaps, and work with the chief executive and often the board to create a list of two to three candidates for every top position.

Developing succession talent may help the best individuals in establishing skills necessary for future positions. The goal of succession planning is to engage in a process providing transitional leadership for an organization and help potential leaders gain needed managerial skills. Incorporating a succession plan helps organizational leaders assure stability, engage leadership in a review of the organization's talent, give more attention to diversity, encourage the reconsideration of organizational systems and structure, and align various units within an organization. The topic of leadership succession planning may cause considerable emotion, fear, stress, conflict, questions, and may create potential discomfort between boards and executives; however, a well-established succession plan can increase enthusiasm for work, reduce anxiety, and guard against selection bias during hiring processes (Coleman, 2016).

The Argument for Internal versus External Candidates

The development of an internal talent pipeline, also known as succession planning, is not a formal practice in higher education across the United States. Succession planning may be perceived as making an inferred promise to internal candidates, and may prevent institutions from viewing an external candidate that may be more talented (Trickel, 2015). Higher education institutions across the United States commonly practice external search and hiring processes rather than internal building and advancement (Richards, 2016). Much of the time, institutions and governing boards feel a sense of confidence that a broader search will provide the best candidates for leadership positions, which somewhat compromises succession planning of

internal candidates. In some instances, institutions are looking for an innovative leader who can bring greater dimension to the institution, particularly in a period of exponential growth, a global environment, and technological advances. An internal candidate may be too dependent on organizational culture and goals, and therefore perceived as entrenched in existing institutional policies and procedures. Additionally, internal candidates that have been openly recognized for leadership potential may be resented by peers, creating an ongoing morale problem and unfairly compromising that individual's position (Trickel, 2015).

The most common pathway to the presidency has remained the same since 1986, and continues to be through the traditional route of chief academic officer, the vice president figure that leads all academic initiatives, at 43%. A 2017 study conducted by the TIAA Institute and American Council of Education found the number of non-traditional presidents was 20% as compared to 15% in 2011 (ACE, 2017). According to the *ACE College President Survey 2017*, many colleges have considered at least one candidate outside academia for leadership positions (ACE, 2017). While these individuals have typically served in a leadership capacity, they must adapt and learn the culture of education when assuming the presidency role (Richards, 2016).

Business and industry favor internal candidates because they believe long-term performance is improved with less strategic changes, whereas outside candidates typically take steps that clash with historic company culture or purposely drive strategic changes geared toward changing existing company culture. Higher education institutions tend to place focus on external candidates, believing this approach leads to finding the best talent available, which often leads to investments for professional development of internal talent being reaped by outside institutions (Cavanaugh, 2017). Wrighten (2018) found it is more important a candidate exhibit the right

leadership skills and often community college leaders who came from careers outside of education bring a unique perspective.

Academic groups are often resistance to change and object to leaders with corporate or non-academic backgrounds, fearing such a leader may disregard key principles of higher education, such as academic traditions and shared governance. Faculty often feel non-traditional candidates lack familiarity with the culture and traditions of academia, the full participation of all faculty members, and feel a college campus is a complex environment that can only be understood by someone with decades of academic experience (Wrighten, 2018). Eddy (2013) noted rural leaders examined in her study were more often promoted from within, educational backgrounds varied as compared to leaders across the nation, and the majority of participants followed the traditional pathway from academics to the role of president. Failure rates of chief executive officers from outside are often increased due lacking an understanding of institutional culture (Cavanaugh, 2017). Academic leaders coming from outside higher education that lack an understanding of higher education often treat education as a commodity to trade. (Hanson, 2015). Most internal candidates understand organizational culture, can assimilate into new positions within the institution, have been recognized for their strengths, and possess knowledge of operational history (Trickel, 2015). Many argue that internal promotions create a better organizational culture through continued leadership by an individual who has experience with and an understanding of the organization. Inside leaders have said to have success in leading organizations from good to great; however, first these potential leaders must be identified and then developed (Richards, 2016).

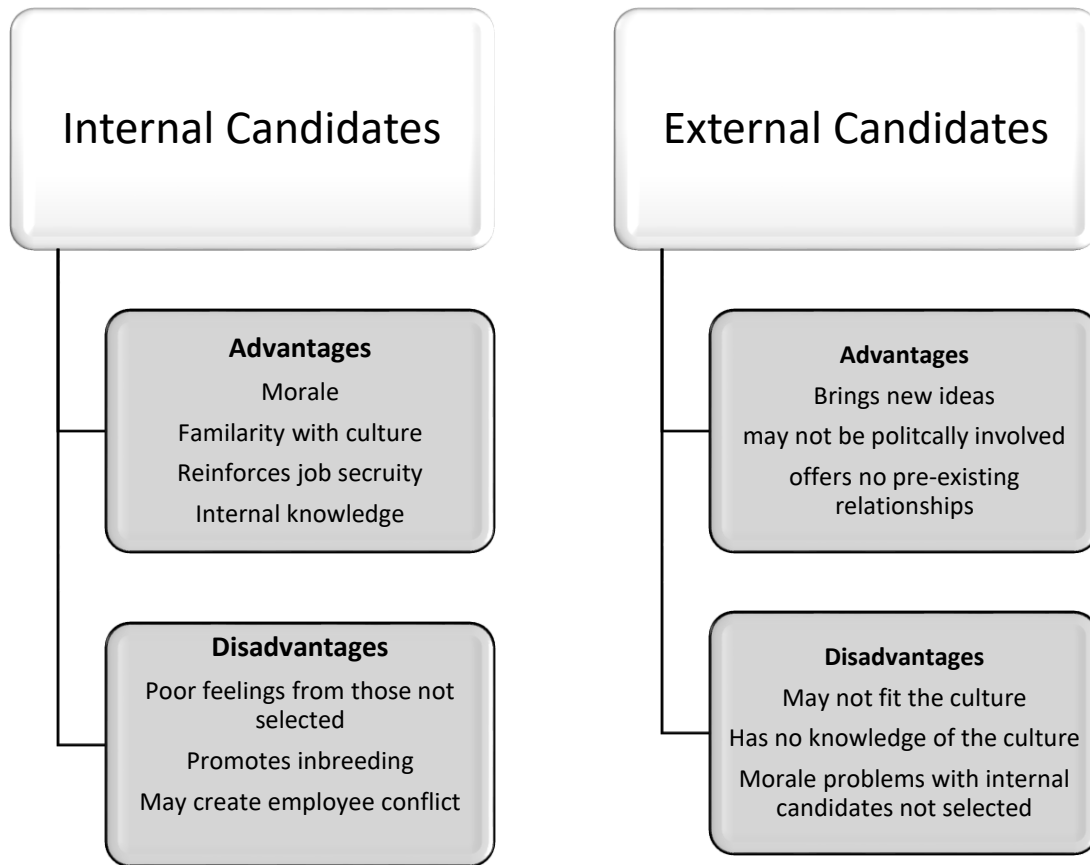


Figure A: Advantages and Disadvantages of External and Internal Candidates (Parks, 2018)

Methods of Leadership Development

“A national issue in higher education is leadership development—preparing the pipeline to fill the executive positions” (Donohue, 2011, p. 6). The learning curve for new presidents is steep and requires development to prepare the candidate for the transition (Richards, 2016). Leadership is a term discussed often, with varying opinions on one definition of the word. No matter the definition used, leadership involves many facets and the process of reaching a common definition may help an institution in employee retention through advancement opportunities within the institution (Sims, 2009). Coleman (2016) explored methods used by executive managers to prepare employees for leadership positions. He stated,

Leadership is the art of equipping employees for career advancement. Effective leaders provide vision and motivation to a team in an effort to work toward the same goal. Leaders should provide employees with training, tools, time, energy, and emotional intelligence, which they can realize their full potential both personally and professionally (p. 17).

Through a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant titled Leading Forward, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) addressed the shortage and national need for community college leaders. Through quantitative and qualitative data collection, the AACC Board of Directors approved six Competencies for Community College Leaders in 2005. In 2013 the list was revisited resulting in the publication of a second edition containing five revised competencies which are described below:

Above all the effective community college leader works to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the college. The community college leader will fully understand, be committed to, and advocate for the college across varying levels, including local, state, and national. Through organizational strategies, the college leader strives to ensure a quality institution through the success of the student body and support of the college's mission. The college leader ensures ethical processes and supports both human and physical resources of the institution. The college leader will maintain honest and open communication toward all stakeholders, both internal and external, through clear listening, speaking, and writing. The safety and security of students and staff members are vital to the leader. The college leader will remain responsive to the needs of internal and external stakeholders through collaborative, ethical, and mutually beneficial relationships (Associate of Community Colleges, 2013, p. 6-11).

Harkins (2017) discussed the importance of leadership training for rural community college presidents, including trust-building; serving as a transparent, open, and accessible leader; and knowing the culture and history of the local area and its residents. Cavan (1995) also mentioned leadership qualities crucial for a successful rural community college president, such as “the ability to understand and articulate the importance of institutional charisma and personality, the articulation of a vision, the pursuit of strategic planning, and the ability to collaborate with other agencies by building coalitions” (p. 14), and stated the president must “bring together, in a nonthreatening way, all the power of the political community to support the

mission of the community college for the betterment of the total community” (p. 13). The Saratoga Institute’s Leadership Development Report (1998) stated,

Identifying the next generation of leaders requires the effective skills of current leaders. Choosing leaders who are astute, informed, strategic, and who have strong character and interpersonal skills requires leaders with those same skills. It has become a crucial task of leadership to select and develop the men and women who will be their successor. Potential leaders exist throughout organizations, yet the process of identification and development is often inadequate or too late. (p. 55)

Leadership Development Programs for Community College Leaders

“The single biggest way to impact an organization is to focus on leadership development. There is almost no limit to the potential of an organization that recruits good people, raises them up as leaders and continually develops them” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 185). The primary leadership development tools found from a review of literature include sponsored leadership development programs, grow your own programs (GYO), mentoring, and terminal degrees.

Sponsored Leadership Development Programs

Most often these programs are typically short in length, on-site, are offered by non-profit organizations, and range in cost from \$1,500 to \$18,000 (Wrighten, 2018). The majority of these programs require an application process, tuition, and many require a nomination or membership to the group. Some popular programs are described in the following paragraphs.

The American Council on Education Fellows program is a twelve-month program uniquely structured to allow fellows to spend an extended period of time on other campuses, working with the president and senior leadership team. This extended learning experience enables Fellows to observe firsthand how another institution and its senior administrators lead the institution and deal with change. Fellows are mentored by a team of experienced institutional leaders, usually the president and vice presidents. The participant’s home institution must be a member of ACE for an individual to apply (ACE, 2019).

The Aspen Presidential Fellowship for Community College Excellence is a year-long fellowship which includes three in-person residential seminars plus structured mentoring by experienced community college presidents and the development of a strategic leadership vision through a capstone project. Participants are typically nominated by their supervisor, and the fellowship centers on three broad themes: leading for impact, leading transformational change, and partnership for collective action (The Aspen Institute, 2019).

The American Association of Community Colleges' Future Presidents Institute is a three day program providing hand-on experience for midlevel community college leaders aspiring to presidency (Sherbini, 2012). The institute does not require an application program, but participants must register to take part in the institute (AACC, 2019).

Presidents Academy Summer Institute is a three day institute open to individuals employed at AACC member institutions. The institute focuses on issues of critical importance to success in the role of the community college president such as providing a mix of interaction with content experts and case studies that result in the development/acquisition of ready-to-use skill sets that participants can apply at their respective campuses. The institute also provides opportunities for new presidents to develop mentor-mentee relationships with seasoned presidents, placing focus on immediate challenges and opportunities that these presidents are facing on their campuses (AACC, 2019).

Grow Your Own Programs

Grow Your Own (GYO) programs target current employees and are developed within an institution or state system. These programs focus on leadership development, leadership theory, and leadership styles (Wrighten, 2018). GYO programs typically emphasize a holistic approach, focusing on personal growth through the acquisition of leadership skills and may be appropriate

for rural community colleges (Sherbini, 2012). GYO programs may be more effective in some aspects than an advanced degree or large scale development programs because GYO programs can be customized to a college or state's characteristics, culture, goals and specific needs. Some studies have found GYO programs are not geared toward senior leadership but rather provide an opportunity for mid-level administrators, faculty and staff (Wrighten, 2018).

Eighty-six percent of community colleges reported operating some form of GYO leadership training, and such programs usually operate under the direction of college administration (Bornheimer, 2010). Many institutions with less resources utilize statewide leadership programs (Wrighten, 2018). Some examples of existing statewide programs include:

The Louisiana Community and Technical College System created by its Board of Supervisors to promote leadership studies.

The Kentucky Community and Technical College System program created to develop a learning institution culture.

The Asilomar Leadership Skills Seminar offering personal and professional growth to employees of California's community colleges.

Arkansas Community College Leadership program created to develop leadership skills while incorporating peer engagement across all two year colleges within the state.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a collaborative approach that pairs experienced senior leaders with less experienced individuals to guide and help them achieve career goals, build relationships, make sense of experiences, adjust to a new culture, or orientate into a new role. Goals for mentees often include aspirational outcomes such as development of leadership skills and increased self-confidence. Goals for mentors include the potential that mentoring relationships could turn into

professional peer relationships. Desired organizational outcomes included an increased sense of motivation and connection to the work (Bonebright, 2014). Mentoring may occur within an institution, or outside the institution. One example of an external program is the AACRAO Mentor Committee launched in 2010 for new professionals. Prospective mentees volunteer at the conference and list their current positions, institutions, and areas of interest for mentoring. Mentees are then paired with seasoned professionals in their field by experience, region, and institution type (Kutchner & Kleschick, 2016).

Mentoring is a popular strategy for leadership development that is cost effective and personal. In addition to skills acquisition, mentoring may also improve the mentee's understanding of organizational vision, mission, goals, and objectives for effective leadership. The mentoring experience has been shown to enhance one's ability to identify as a leader, practice reflexivity, build relationships, initiate change, and learn from modeled behavior (Parks, 2018; Hanson, 2015). It is important to note that these skills have been identified in many studies as those needed to be an adaptive leader. Bonebright (2014) identified long-term goals related to creating new organizational cultures are more supportive and inclusive which increases the leadership capacity of the organization, builds stronger collaborative networks, and supports the organization's mission and values, all of which tie to adaptive leadership.

Higher education leaders have expressed the value in sharing learned experiences with colleagues who are developing their careers (Hanson, 2015). Boggs (2003) stated "mentoring programs are an effective way to inspire and prepare future leaders" (p. 22). Kutchner and Kleschick (2016) wrote "mentoring in higher education is a powerful and critical process for institutional and personal growth. Shared learning experiences are invaluable not only for the mentee but also for the mentor, the institution, and the profession. Mentoring enables a seasoned

professional to pass knowledge to another via a formal or informal process. A qualitative study of standing rural community college presidents by Eddy (2013), noted that mentors play a central role in the learning processes and mentors often help answer questions or assist in navigating new challenges. Eddy (2013) also noted that observation, or learning by watching, was an important part of the learning process stating, “Mentors are a critical linchpin in tapping individuals for leadership positions, but also in modeling behavior” (p. 36).

Terminal Degrees (doctoral programs)

According to Eddy (2013), eighty-eight percent of community college presidents across the nation hold a doctoral degree. Terminal degrees, or a form of advanced academic preparation for academic scholars and practitioners, are becoming more popular for all college leaders. “The number of people earning doctoral degrees is at an all-time high, and doctoral programs continue to grow in popularity as more people return to higher education in order to secure additional academic credentials to help them advance in their existing careers, or to facilitate a change in careers” (Blessinger & Stockley, 2016, p. 6). Due to increased demand for doctoral education, the types of doctoral degrees offered and the way programs are delivered have become more diverse, many focusing on higher education and community college leadership. Delivery of such programs has been modified to meet the needs of working professionals by offering nontraditional schedules, accelerated courses, online instruction, and a cohort model structure. (Wrighten, 2018). Many programs offer online course offerings combined with personal mentorships focusing on theory, practice, scholarly foundations, critical thinking, problem-solving dexterity and research skills that transfer to the leadership challenges faced in community college positions (Bornheimer, 2010). Such skills are critical for adaptive leadership, as adaptive leaders must think critically, and utilize research skills to solve an array of problems.

Chapter 2 Summary

Chapter Two presents a literature review of the changing community college landscape, succession planning, and leadership development to fill the pipeline. The changing landscape of community colleges and how succession planning is responding to these changes was addressed, the argument for internal versus external candidates and methods of leadership development was summarized.

Chapter Three describes the methodology chosen for this study, including details about the individual cases.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

The purpose of this case study was to understand the influencers of succession planning of rural community college leaders specifically how these leaders identify and develop the pipeline of future leaders. A qualitative design was selected for this research because data collection methods enabled the researcher to gain a deep understanding about this phenomenon. A qualitative design supports the query of personal perceptions of current community college leaders as they relate to leadership development. Interviews were the primary method of data collection used in this case study and interview questions requested participants to discuss their beliefs and experiences related to leadership development. A multiple case study method was used to clarify the identification of future leaders, the development of future leaders, and the usage of succession planning (Yin, 2018). The chosen research method, qualitative case study, and its appropriateness for this study, the details of case selection, analysis methods, credibility, dependability, and transferability are described below.

Research Method and Design

Qualitative research provides the researcher the ability to capture people's stories, glean a more descriptive understanding of why something is happening or how things work (Patton, 2014). Qualitative research also allows the researcher the ability to select participants based on criteria set by the researcher, allowing a more-depth understanding than what might be gained through a random sampling approach (Creswell, 2012). A qualitative case study approach was selected for this study to acquire an in-depth understanding of how current community college leaders perceive and execute the selection and development of future leaders. Further, qualitative research is well-suited for studies where the knowledge sought seeks an understanding of the participants in the study; of the events including situations and actions with

which they are involved; understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions; or understanding the process by which the events and actions take place (Maxwell, 1996). Marshall and Rossman (2006) found researchers utilize qualitative research “because thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptive worlds are involved, the researcher needs to understand the deeper perspectives that can be captured through face-to-face interaction” (p. 53). In quantitative studies, researchers test preconceived hypotheses through collection of numeric data focusing on an identified research problem generalized to a larger population (Creswell, 2012). However, qualitative methods are not designed to measure or generalize, but rather to provide a deeper understanding about the social structures that influence human behavior. Therefore, interviewing is an appropriate method to hear the voices of participants and to provide meaning to those voices (Creswell, 2012).

Case Study Methodology

One strength of case study methodology is the ability to use multiple sources of evidence that can be developed and corroborated by analyzing, triangulating, and corroborating to reach a conclusion (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018) the design of a qualitative study guides the researcher in connecting initial research questions to the evidence and three conditions should be considered when designing a case study approach a) the form of the research questions, b) the researcher’s control of behavioral events, and c) whether the event is contemporary or historical. By reviewing these three conditions, the researcher can determine if the case study is exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory. Using the information presented by Yin (2018) and Creswell (2012), an exploratory multi-case study design was developed to gain a rich understanding of leadership development and succession planning strategies used within community colleges across a rural Southern state. First, the research question led to discovery of

if and how current community college leaders are selecting and developing future leaders. Second, there was no manipulation of behavior, or control, in this study such as in an experiment. Third, the event is contemporary, happening currently, allowing access to individuals for interviewing. For this particular case study, I will gain insight into perspectives of multiple participants, also referred to as a multiple-case study (Yin, 2018).

Identifying the case(s) to be studied requires the researcher to define the case and bound the case. The case can be a single person, a community, or an event. In this research, the case study is rural community college within a single Southern state. The context of the case study are the presidents and chancellors of these community colleges. The cases were chosen by developing criteria while conducting the second step, bounding the case. Bounding the case assists the researcher in determining the scope of the data collection by determining criteria such as time limitations and specific locations and allows the researcher to distinguish between the phenomenon being studied and the context of the case (Yin, 2018).

Criteria for Interviewee Selection

- (a) Must currently be a sitting president of chancellor at a community college within the selected state.
- (b) The location of the community college must be in a rural area.
- (c) Participants selected must be from both system and non-system institutions.

Site and Sample Selection

Qualitative sampling targets a limited numbers of respondents, searching for depth and richness in a narrow focus rather than attempting to gather a broad overview from many respondents (Kline, 2008). As such, sampling units are smaller but are able to produce intense and detailed information (Patton, 2014). This study used purposive sampling to select

information rich cases by limiting the selection of respondents to those with experience leading rural community colleges. Six community college presidents or chancellors were interviewed all having experience serving in the chief executive role of a rural community college. Participants met the following criteria: representation from system member colleges and non-system member colleges, female, participants who have only worked at a single institution, participants that come from unique backgrounds such as law and military, participants that have earned a doctorate and those who have not, and participants who have led outside the state being examined.

Participants were recruited based upon professional and personal contacts and participation was requested through email, where the purpose of the study was explained. Case Invitations (Appendix A) and Informed Consent forms (Appendix B) were emailed to the selected cases prior to interviews. Background information about the study, the use of audio equipment, and the methods used to ensure confidentiality were sent by email to each case in an effort to reduce the time explaining these details at the time of the interview. Each interview was scheduled for one hour.

Instrumentation

This multiple-case study utilized personal interviews as the principal data-gathering strategy. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) state “the interview is the favorite methodological tool of the qualitative researcher” (p. 353).

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, one broad research question guided the study, “what role do community college leaders play in identifying and developing future leaders from within?” An Interview Protocol (Appendix C) was developed to guide the face-to-face interviews in a semi-structured format, reducing fieldwork time (Yin, 2018). Open-ended questions were intended to prompt discussion while following a suggested question sequence. All cases were

informed they held the right to stop the interview at any point. Participants were informed of the use of an audio recording device, and permission to record the interview before beginning the interview was verified. Recording the interviews allows the researcher the ability to focus on listening and only make observational field notes about the behavior and body language of participants. Before each interview, a discussion with each case occurred stating that no right or wrong answers exist, hoping to elicit honest responses. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. After each interview, overall thoughts were recorded as soon as possible. Responses from the protocol were reviewed to search for areas that relate to adaptive leadership and the research questions. As each interview was transcribed, questions were noted. Upon completion of each transcript, the summary was emailed to each case requesting confirmation that perceptions were interpreted correctly and to clarify any noted questions.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews with six community college leaders located in a southern state were conducted in an attempt to further understand how these leaders select individuals for the pipeline of future leadership and the methods they use to develop these individuals. While interviews provided most of the data, critical documents and other artifacts related to the leadership development process were examined as needed. These artifacts include but are not limited to items such as curricula of professional development, job descriptions, and leadership programs used by the colleges who participated in this study.

Transcription - Member Checks

The Otter mobile application was used to record and transcribe each interview. The researcher created field notes to serve as a reminder of questions or impressions during the recording and to ensure that the recorded transcription was accurate. After transcribing each

interview, the researcher summarized the responses and provided to the participants to review, edit, or comment on. This process, known as member checking, provides participants with the opportunity to review the transcript and ensure that my synthesis of the conversation was accurate and reflected the participant's voice and meaning. None of the participants requested significant changes or corrections to the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The main objective of data analysis in case study research is to demonstrate a thorough and in-depth understanding of the case. Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding, condensing the codes, and finally representing the data. Data management, or organization of the data, is a linchpin of the process. Following organization, analysis continues, reading the whole several times and making notes of key concepts. Next, data collected from the interviews is chunked and categorized according to a list of codes. Codes may evolve during phases of data collection and the list of codes may be edited as necessary to meet the evolving patterns. Some codes may be condensed, and some may be expanded into categories as more ideas emerge. The new phase includes taking the codes and forming them into common ideas, or themes. The next step includes interpreting the themes, or making sense of the data, to show the larger meaning of the data. Finally, data is organized into a visual manner to allow an understanding of findings (Creswell, 2013).

Analysis followed Guba and Lincoln's (1994) coding and theme methodology of devising categories using convergent and divergent thinking. Convergence thinking includes identifying what data fit together in a single category or theme and divergence thinking involves sorting out the categories as they develop. As a first step in analyzing responses, interview

questions were examined by establishing categories related to each question and then identifying commonalities among responses including the identification and interpretation of patterns. Data analysis included identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling emergent patterns. Information was organized into tables illustrating commonalities among participant responses.

As the researcher I applied triangulation to ensure valid inferences were made from data collection. Triangulation of multiple sources of data ensures validity by testing for consistency as patterns and themes emerge (Yin, 2018). The discovery of inconsistencies are not to be considered a weakness but instead expands the depth of insight into the issue (Patton, 2002). Results from the interview transcripts were triangulated with field notes, member checks, and personal reflections to assist with interpretations of the findings.

Limitations and Delimitations

Creswell (2008) states, “limitations identify potential weaknesses in the study” (p. 148). Limitations that might affect either the reliability and/or the validity of the findings and conclusions of this research are discussed. This qualitative case study used semi-structured interviews and reviewed related documents as data collection methods. Because of time and convenience, this study examined six individual community college chief leaders’ efforts of leadership selection development at rural community colleges within a single state. The study does not address succession planning efforts at other colleges within the state or outside the state. The geographically constraint to a single southern state may yield different results if a similar study was conducted at an institution otherwise geographically located. In addition, this study focused on leadership development in community colleges and may not have the same level of relevancy for other institutions of higher education, such as four-year, private, or research institutions. The researcher was aware of the potential bias in the data that was collected as chief

executive leaders may not be forthcoming with all the information regarding their culture and views of leadership selection, development, and succession planning, in an effort to protect the integrity of their institution. The researcher addressed this limitation by assuring participants of their anonymity, and the anonymity of the institution throughout the process. As the researcher, I also discussed the potential benefits of the study with participants. Every opportunity was made to develop questions that were clear, unbiased, and easily understood, however, interpretations of questions may have caused inconsistencies in the responses. The semi-structured interview protocol results may reflect individual bias and opinions of the participants interviewed and are not generalizable to a different population or location. Only chief executive positions were addressed in the study, consequently, the relevancy of the study may be restricted to succession planning for individuals who hold such positions. Additionally, this study relied on the willing participation of community college presidents to explore their perceptions regarding selection of future talent, skills and attributes future leaders need, and leadership development methods. While the study does not examine other colleges or systems efforts on a national level, data was drawn from national studies on succession planning in higher education to inform research, findings, and conclusions.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher is a key instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Because of the integral role the researcher plays in qualitative research, the research is more influenced by the researcher than in quantitative research (Yin, 2018). My decade of experience in higher education from both faculty and chief academic officer lens yields personal opinions on the topic of leadership selection, development, and succession planning. My opinion of such topics may be very different to those of chief executive officers, therefore, it is important as the researcher to

bracket my personal biases by making a conscientious effort to separate and suspend any past knowledge or presumptions associated with the research topics or participants.

As a current community college leader, I have daily experience with leadership development and is an area of great interest to me on both personal and professional levels. From my professional experiences and contacts, I had access to all case sites and case participants. My personal background knowledge relating to each case participation led to the selection of the particular cases.

Research Strategy

An inductive process allows the researcher to pour through the data, seeking for concepts that may not be seen if using the theoretical proposition strategy. Employing this rigorous inductive approach to data analysis included creating themes, codes, and pattern codes allowing for a thorough data analysis process to take place.

Chapter 3 Summary

Chapter Three addresses the methodology used in this study. A qualitative multi-case design was used to explore the influencers of succession planning among current rural community college chief executives in a Southern state. Participants were selected based off unique individual characteristics to make the study a richer experience.

Chapter Four presents a demographic description of the cases and the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

The purpose of this case study was to understand the influencers of succession planning among rural community college leaders specifically how these leaders select and develop future leaders. As described in Chapter Three, this study was designed as a multi-case study using purposeful sampling to select information-rich cases. Six rural community college presidents were interviewed during July and August, 2019. The intended goal for using a case study approach was to explore cases who could offer a broad range of perspectives from their experience and diverse characteristics. Participant characteristics included: system member and non-system member college affiliation, mixed gender, diverse backgrounds such as law and military, individuals with and without terminal degrees, and individuals who have never worked outside the state and those who have. Participants were recruited using professional and personal contacts and were sent emails inviting them to participate (Appendix A). All six individuals accepted the invitation to participate in the study. A semi-structured interview process guided the interviews, which allowed the researcher flexibility to ask subsequent questions when needed. Patton (2002) indicates that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to “explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject” (p. 343). The interview questions were emailed to all participants prior to the scheduled face-to-face interview to allow participants the opportunity to reflect on the questions and organize their thoughts. Interviews were conducted at each case site. All participants were friendly and seemed open to share their experiences and philosophies about the phenomenon. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes to one hour and was recorded its entirety. A numerical code based on the order of the interviews was assigned to each case to assist in keeping participant

information anonymous. Informed Consent (Appendix B) was sent to each case by email before the interview and was signed and collected at the interview.

The layout of chapter four begins with a discussion of the participants and the context of the cases. In qualitative research it is important to understand the participants and the context of the cases. A summary of findings discussing each interview question follows. As the researcher, during coding I first organized information by interview questions making this layout logical for this study. A discussion of each research question follows, which correlates the findings from the interviews to the research questions. Determining emerging themes was the last component of the organization process, therefore, a discussion of the three emergent themes concludes chapter four.

Participant Profiles

All six participants interviewed for this study are standing community college chancellors or presidents at rural institutions. Each president selected had extensive experience as a community college president. To protect the identity of participants, names of the community colleges' participating or their rural locations are not disclosed in this study. From this point forward, participants are referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 5, and Participant 6.

Context of the Cases

While data collection for this study consisted primarily of interviews and informal communications, it is important to describe the context or descriptive elements of the community college in which the participant is situated. Below is a description of general characteristics of each participant and contextual data regarding the institution and community in which they are a

part. This is especially important because a focus of this study is to examine the influence of stakeholders on the leadership development of community college leaders.

Case 1

Participant 1 holds a bachelors in accounting and master's in education. She has a thirty-two year career at a single community college. She started as a faculty member, became faculty chair, division chair, chief academic officer, and chancellor. Currently, the individual has served as chancellor for twelve years and plans to retire within the next five years. She is in her mid-sixties and is the only female in the study.

The community college began operating in 1991 and experienced an enrollment of 1,019 in fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 84.5% white, 2.3% African American, and 6.6% Latino. During academic year 2017, 44.5% of students required remediation and 419 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 50%. The 2016 population of the community was 10,727 with a median age of 38. Demographics were reported as 77.6% white, 14.1% Latino, and 3.8% African American. Fifteen percent of the population lives below the poverty rate with a median income of \$44,132. For residents over the age of 25, 84.7% have completed a high school degree, 25.7% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 9.3% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Case 2

Participant 2 is a retired Navy Captain and has a master's degree in finance and a PhD in public policy. He has sixteen combined years in higher education both at the community college and university levels at both public and private schools. He has worked in multiple states serving as a dean, graduate faculty member, and president. He is in his early sixties and plans to retire within the next three to five years.

The community college began operating in 1975 and now operates a main campus and three satellite campuses. The college experienced an enrollment of 840 in fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 94.9% white, 1.6% African American, and 1.9% Latino. During academic year 2017, 38.2% of students required remediation and 464 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 31%. The 2016 population of the community was 1,813 with 100% of the population being rural with a median age of 49.6. Demographics were reported as 96% white, 1.7% Latino, and 0.3% African American. Twenty-six percent of the population lives below the poverty rate with a median income of \$33,411. One hundred percent of the Latino population lives below the poverty line. For residents over the age of 25, 85.7% have completed a high school degree, 17.9% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 2.9% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Case 3

Participant 3 holds a bachelor's degree in both marketing and accounting, a master's degree in operations management, and a Doctorate of Education. He has worked in community colleges for thirty-one years in various positions including advancement, continuing and community education, business and industry, and chief academic officer. He has been in his current chancellor role for fifteen years. He is in his early sixties and plans to retire in the next four years.

The community college began operating in 1995 and experienced an enrollment of 980 in the fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 78.7% white and 2.9% Latino. There is a small African American student population. During academic year 2017, 46.6% of students required remediation and 663 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 49%. In 2016 the population of the community was 12,332 with a median

age of 50.7. The community is often described as a community for retirees. Demographics were reported as 94% white, 3.2% Latino, and 0.3% African American. Thirteen percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median income of \$37,985. One hundred percent of the African American population live below the poverty line. For residents over the age of 25, 87.6% have completed a high school degree, 19.8% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 4.8% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Case 4

Participant 4 holds a bachelor's in biology education, a master's degree in educational leadership and supervision, and a Doctor of Education with an emphasis in educational leadership/higher education. Participant 4 has a broad background working within academics that including at the K-12, university, and community college levels. He served as a K-12 principal, university dean, and workforce/grant coordinator at the community college level. He has fifteen years at the community college level and six at the university level, and has been in his current president role for three years. He is in his early fifties and hopes to retire in the next five to seven years.

The community college began operating in 1974 and experienced an enrollment of 1,326 in the fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 86.6% white, 6.8% Latino, and 0.8% African American. During academic year 2017, roughly thirty-two percent of students required remediation and 701 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 49%. The 2016 population of the community was 13,079 with a median age of 37.5. Demographics were reported as 91% white, 4.1% Latino, and 0.8% African American. Twenty-four percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median income of \$37,095. For

residents over the age of 25, 85.1% have completed a high school degree, 17.5% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 7.1% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Case 5

Participant 5 holds a Juris Doctorate and served as a Prosecuting Attorney prior to entering higher education. He entered higher education as a community college chancellor and has served in this position for twelve years. He is in his mid-forties and has not yet considered retirement.

The community college began operating in 1965 and now operates two sites. The institution experienced an enrollment of 953 in the fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 55.2% white, 7.2% Latino, and 33.7% African American. During academic year 2017, 55.7% of students required remediation and 717 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 32%. The 2016 population of the community was 9,790 with a median age of 35.9. Demographics were reported as 34% white, 20.8% Latino, and 43.2% African American. Thirty-four percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median income of \$28,274. For residents over the age of 25, 65.8% have completed a high school degree, 9.6% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 3.3% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Case 6

Participant 6 has worked at the same community college for twenty-three years. He held several roles at the institution prior to being selected as chancellor. These roles include: faculty, distance education director, division chair, and chief academic officer. He also has experience in politics as a former state representative. He has a bachelors and master's degree in business and a Doctorate in Education. He is in his mid-fifties and plans to retire in twelve years.

The community college began operating in 1975 and now has a main campus with three satellite campuses. The institution experienced an enrollment of 998 in the fall of 2019. Institutional demographics include 58.3% white, 27.2% Latino, and 9.7% African American. The college is the only federally designated Hispanic Serving Institute in the study. During academic year 2017, 35.4% of students required remediation and 579 credentials were awarded. The college's most recent IPEDs graduation rate was 41%. The 2016 population of the community was 6,591 with a median age of 28.5. Demographics were reported as 33.3% white, 58.8% Latino, and 6.7% African American. Thirty percent of the population lives below the poverty line with a median income of \$35,945. For residents over the age of 25, 55.5% have completed a high school degree, 8.9% have completed a bachelor's degree, and 2.8% have completed a graduate degree (City-Data, 2019).

Summary of Findings

In this section, a summary and analysis of the interview questions are provided. Direct quotations are used judiciously to emphasize the issues that were raised during the interviews and the patterns that were apparent across the six cases.

Interview Question 1

All interviews began by gathering the participant's philosophy for leadership development. All participants felt that leadership development must be hands-on, focusing on the individuals being developed and providing them the opportunities to hone skills and talents.

Table I provides a synopsis of the findings.

TABLE I: Participant Leadership Philosophy	
Participant	Leadership Philosophy
Participant 1	Focused on preparing the future pipeline at the point of hiring. Seeks an individual who doesn't mind going beyond the normal scope of their position and seeks opportunities to serve internally across the campus community as well as the external community. Looks for individuals who are curious about how the institution operates and are not afraid to step up or ask questions.
Participant 2	Assumes everyone has the capability to be developed into a leader and works to develop talent within by watching and recognizing individual's capacity to do more and then expose those individuals to more experiences to grow and develop. Believes leadership development is dependent on the region as some regions struggle in attracting external talent; therefore, it is in the institution's best interest to develop internal talent to create the pipeline.
Participant 3	Centers on providing opportunities for individuals to learn and make decisions for growth. Works with individuals by providing new responsibilities to hone skills and talents.
Participant 4	Believes you can fine tune a leader, but natural ability must be present and a top leader cannot be created. Believes in getting out of an individual's way and allowing them lead to gain that experience. Strives to create an environment where failure is not feared, but is a learning tool and successes are praised. Places importance on not creating future leaders in your same image.
Participant 5	Believes leaders should recognize that everyone has the potential to be a leader and creates an environment where that talent can be nurtured. Leaders must recognize they have to model best practices as leaders, being a reflection of the leadership values and principles believed to be important to the organization. Believes people learn more quickly from watching leadership demonstrated, than from just hearing what the definition of a leader is.
Participant 6	Focuses on early identification of potential leadership and then places that individual in increasing areas of responsibility to allow them to make important decisions to grow and develop. Encourage and challenge individuals with harder tasks, ensuring continuous follow-up, progress checks, and mentoring.

Participant 1 stated “I sometimes say we hire the diamonds in the rough and help polish off those edges.” All participants felt it is important to develop internal talent for future leadership, but in the situation of filling a leadership position, it is most about finding the right fit

for the position, rather than promoting internal talent because they are in the pipeline. Participant 5 stated as a leader “you have to recognize that you have to model best practices and leadership yourself. Leadership is not talking or directing another person or individual on how they should or shouldn't do things in an organization. You need to be a reflection of the leadership values and principles that you believe are important to the mission of your organization”. While the majority of participants suggested that leadership development is very intentional and requires self-awareness to model the desired behaviors, Participant 4 was the only participant to refer to the limitation of developmental activities and stated “you can fine tune a leader, but natural ability has to be present, too.”

To expand information regarding leadership development, participants were asked what they felt helped prepare them for the chancellor/president role and all participants felt there was a combination of experiences. Some of those experiences included K12 experience, work outside education, assuming leadership roles during difficult times, and taking on additional responsibilities across various points of operation for institutions. Sixty-seven percent of participants felt policy and legislation experience was extremely helpful. Fifty percent felt their financial background, mentors, and serving as a chief academic officer was helpful. Thirty-three percent felt becoming involved in the community, their personal education, and participation in an executive fellowship were impactful. One participant felt watching leaders and learning good and bad aspects of leadership was meaningful. Participant 5 stated “increasing areas of responsibility with a supervisor who allowed me to make mistakes, but then use my energy to create new things.” Participant 3 stated “a mentor that allowed me to become involved in multiple aspects of the college operation, including legislative sessions.”

To further examine participants perceptions about leadership development, participants were asked to describe the methods that they use at their institutions to groom and develop future leaders. The majority of participants felt they are preparing the pipeline of leaders in much the same way they were prepared. Each participant mentioned the importance of encouragement, continuous communication, and feedback to those seeking to be leaders. Additionally, participants felt exposure to the various operations of the college was essential to learn the full cycle, as well as the scope of responsibilities and challenges that leaders will face. For example, Participant 3 stated “Leaders have to understand the full cycle. If a leader only has experience from the academic side, they are not prepared to be a president or chancellor because a president/chancellor must understand the student service side, including all the financial aid intricacies. A president or chancellor has to understand the budgeting side, hiring, how the HR process work, the full cycle.” Participant 1 stated “A president or chancellor must have the ability to see the big picture and integrate. Sometimes I see my vice chancellors get very myopic and have a single focus on their division and fail to see how we integrate. So that's my job as a leader to get them to integrate, and to be aware of how the big picture works and all fits together.”

Participants were asked to expand on the formal and informal leadership development strategies that are used in their institutions. Table II illustrates the strategies used among the 6 cases.

TABLE II: Strategies Used to Develop Future Leadership	
Informal Mentoring	All institutions
Participation in State Leadership Program	All institutions
Local Chamber Leadership Program	Four institutions
Other External Leadership Programs	Two institutions
Component in Annual Evaluation	Two institutions
Internal institutional leadership program	One institution

The two most reoccurring approaches included informal mentoring and the state leadership program. Informal mentoring is a strategy utilized by all institutions. One participant mentioned, “A core responsibility of a president is to mentor your people closely. Don’t blindly expect them to know everything because we don’t know everything.”

Interview Question 2

The second question asked participants to discuss what they perceive to be the greatest leadership challenges faced by community colleges. From this question, the most common theme that emerged was challenges presented by rapid change. Five out of the six participants mentioned the challenges of the changing environment of higher education.

Fifty percent of participants commented that a shrinking talent pool will continue to be a challenge for community college leaders in the future. For example, Participant 4 felt finding talented individuals with critical soft skills who can learn how to adapt to the future generation of workers is critical. Participant 3 echoed the same concern, stating “understanding how to both motivate and inspire the younger employees to make decisions to improve themselves and want to climb that career ladder—figuring out how to make those wants and needs meet up with the wants and needs of the institutions so that they can be compatible and those people can be nourished and flourish in that environment.” Participant 1 felt “a challenge leadership faces is finding individuals who want to assume leadership. I think in the future, finding those individuals who are willing to accept the role.”

Two participants also mentioned budget and financial challenges. Both participants felt their backgrounds in the areas of accounting and finance helped them in meeting this challenge. Other descriptors included the ability to build authentic relationships, strong technological literacy, having a positive public perception, and the ability to focus on faculty needs. Participant

3 expressed concerns regarding challenges of technology when he stated “I think there is a clash among the adopters of technology and the non-adopters. Students that are coming in as digital natives expect to be supported.”

Interview Question 3

The third question focused on how leaders recognize potential leaders. The descriptors that most participants used included: demonstrating drive and energy, showing the capacity to lead, and a willingness to step outside one’s current position and take on more responsibility.

Participant comments below elaborate on these descriptors:

Participant one: I look for someone who definitely doesn't mind going beyond the normal scope of their position. As an institution we talk about ‘who is coming next,’ and there are individuals that naturally are curious about how the operations of the institution work, and they're not afraid to come and ask questions so we look at those individuals.

Participant two: As a team we watch for those who have capacity and give them more opportunities to build capacity and learn. We start in looking at everyone and narrow down to those who truly demonstrate the capacity.

Participant three: It's typically those people who are demonstrating capacity and willingness to lead and innovate in various projects. The people on your campus who raise their hand and are involved in everything.

Participant four: I think many leaders are identified through natural selection. Somebody just becomes the natural leader. If you sit if you put 10 people at a table randomly and give them a task without fail somebody is going to become the leader, somebody is going to take over that conversation.

Participant five: We all are focused on watching everyone at every level. Those that seem to really engage and be self-motivated on assisting the mission, whether that's in the classroom, in the student center, or at our community events. We recognize that people are taking the initiative to go that extra step focusing on the mission. The individuals looking at the bigger picture are ones that we continue to feed that hunger in them to be mission driven by the campus.

Participant six: Employees are noticed by their drive to achieve, their energy to make the college better, their ability to get the job done, and help outside their current position.

Interview Question 4

The fourth question examined participant's perceptions of traits, skills, and abilities needed for future leaders. While participants used various descriptors when discussing this, the most common was adaptability. All participants mentioned in some form the need for future leaders to be flexible or adaptive. Participant 5 stated "you have to be thoughtful, and flexible. You have to understand and appreciate the environments that we operate in and be able to move very quickly, efficiently and effectively from one environment to the next."

The importance of interpersonal skills, such as the ability to communicate and relate to various groups, was noted by four of the six participants. Participant 5 stated "strong communication is very important to work with all groups of stakeholders—internal and external." Participant 3 stated "good interpersonal skills such as listening and not losing their cool easily is necessary for effective leadership."

Four out of six participants also discussed the need for leaders to be visionary and forward thinking in their ability to understand and integrate community college operations within the larger community context. Participant 1 stated "The ability to see the big picture and integrate is huge. Sometimes I see my vice chancellors get very myopic and have a single focus on their division and fail to see how we integrate. So that's my job as a leader to get them to integrate, and to be aware of the big picture." Half of the participants mentioned the importance of strategic thinking and the ability to analyze and understand finances.

Interview Question 5

The fifth question examined how institutional culture impacts grooming and leadership development. All participants stated their institutions focus on a culture that seeks to develop internal talent through encouragement, development opportunities, and nurturing talent. All

participants agreed that a strong culture invests in their own people. Five out of six participants stated they prefer to hire from their internal pipeline, but ultimately the final hiring decision is most about finding the right fit for the position, whether that be an internal or external candidate.

Participant one: It's about the fit. It doesn't matter where they come from, it is more important to find the right fit. You have to look at the good of the institution and not what you think you owe someone or who might be a friend. No hire is better than the wrong hire.

Participant two: When someone is leaving we use this opportunity to first look across internal talent to see who would fit. We prefer to hire from within vs outside if they are the right fit and ready for the position. It is important to be mindful of cultural fit and the ability for that person to work with the backgrounds of the staff and understand the communities we serve. I do believe the wrong hire can hurt you for years.

Participant three: Finding the right fit, personality, and skill set to move things forward is the most important element---it doesn't matter if they are internal or external.

Participant four: I prefer to grow my own. It's motivation if someone is successful within the family, and they know they have options of moving up. So, my preference is always to look within but at the end of the day, it's about the institution moving forward and not about people. You don't owe it to people to promote them if they're going to drag the institution down. Right now, we're fortunate, I think, because we do have natural leaders here, that we've been able to generally move up. But, you know, we do what's best for the institution. It's really about where if they fit. It's all about the fit.

Participant five: We are mixed here. We have internal talent and sometimes outside prospects because that's sometimes needed. It's all about the fit and connection to the mission of the institution. The best leaders are mission driven.

Four out of six participants stated leadership development at their institution is a team effort and it is important to create an environment where failure is not feared and mistakes are considered part of the growth process.

Participant 2: I think one of the strengths I have is getting out of their way and letting them lead and allowing them to get that experience. Praise them when they are successful. Advise them and help them do whatever you can to make them successful. When they do fail, don't come in and persecute. I think failure is part of the experience that makes you stronger. Make an environment where they do not fear failing because it is part of growth. Our leadership team knows what we need for the future and know the capacity we are looking for. We look at things in a collegial and a critical way. I am a

believer in critical inquiry and looking at things from the different perspectives we all bring and this works really well for us. I place people in positions and the team feels supportive that those individuals have the opportunity for bigger things. We mentor them closely and give them challenges and opportunities to really demonstrate their capacity. We look at are they strategic thinkers? How well do they communicate? Do they have the capacity to operate at higher levels? Communication skills are very important.

Participant 5: We try first and foremost to create an environment that nurtures and fosters the desire and the growth of leaders. We try to make it very clear that this institution is committed first and foremost to the mission of serving our region and serving our students and the communities within that region.

Participant 6: I believe we impact talent by the way our college treats employees. We give them freedoms to learn and make mistakes and we all possess an energy level that tells new employees that to be here they need to step up their game.

Half of participants stated as a leader they are always looking at their staff to determine what individuals have leadership qualities and where that individual might someday fit. Half of participants also felt their institutional culture focuses on providing growth opportunities for aspiring talent. It was also mentioned by two participants that leadership development is a very deliberate process at their institutions.

Participant 1: You are always preparing. You are always looking through institutional personnel.

Participant 2: We are very deliberate in our operations. We are always looking to be progressive and advance the College.

Participant 5: We all are kind of focused on watching everyone at every level. Those that seem to really engage and be self-motivated on assisting the mission, whether that's in the classroom, in the student center, or at our community events. We recognize that people are taking the initiative to go that extra step focusing on the mission. The individuals looking at the bigger picture are ones that obviously we continue to feed that hunger in them to be mission driven by the campus. We look across our campus, but also across the state. We watch those at meetings or Leadership to see what talent is out there. Scanning that potential talent for potential future opportunities.

Two participants mentioned that they look for future leadership talent at the point of hiring, and the importance of empowering ambitious leaders. Participant 1 stated “When we hire

people we look for individuals who can be leaders. I say, sometimes we hire the diamonds in the rough and service to the institution and to the community can help them polish off those edges.”

Two participants also specifically mentioned a leadership pipeline. Participant 1 stated “In the end, when somebody pulls the peg out, or they decide to take another position, or they go to another institution for a different job, we know that there's this little group, the pipeline, over here that can assume some responsibilities.”

Interview Question 6

The last question focused on community stakeholders and what role they play in the selection of future leaders. All colleges that are a member of a larger academic system stated that community stakeholders play a vital role in the selection of top leadership and that trust in the leader is extremely important for the community. Comments from system schools related to the role of stakeholders in leadership selection follow.

They play a very important role. Our Board of Visitors would serve on the chancellor hiring committee and probably the hospital administrator would as well. We have a local advisory that would serve on the search committee. For a period we had several out of state chancellors and this was very, very difficult. I learned good and bad from all of them, but it's sometimes hard for externals to establish that rapport and trust with the community and campus community.

Both times that I've been hired the interview process involved a number of community leaders either in receptions or formalized meetings where the very last few questions and answers are get to know you. They provide input back to the campus leadership concerning that potential candidate and their fitness for the position and their compatibility with the community. This is especially important for community colleges--if the community doesn't trust you it is difficult. You have to be a part of the community and be accepted and approachable.

They're very involved. All the communities that we serve support this campus, and I think in the most exceptional ways. They support us to a sales tax. They support us in so many ways they have a definite role to play in the leadership of this institution. They have to feel the leadership here is connected to them, and identifies it with their priorities, and, and respects and appreciates those priorities.

I have seen stakeholders make recommendations for the employment of certain individuals and they turned out to be great. Their role is sending potential talent to us! For the system, the search committees usually interview select community members to gauge their interest in the potential chancellor candidate.

One non-system institution felt community stakeholders have soft influence in the selection of top leadership, but the other non-system institution felt the opinions of the community is vital, stating “it's all about that fit and fit is about culture and culture is about community stakeholders. So the stakeholders, even though they may not be in on the interview teams I keep that in mind when I hire leaders how are they going to fit in with this community.”

Document Review

As an alternate data source, I reviewed current and recent chancellor/president job descriptions from searches within the state where I conducted the study. All searches were nationwide searches and utilized search panels ranging from eight to sixteen members. A fourteen member panel was the most common. One search panel was eight members and included only faculty and staff. The rest of the panels were much larger and contained representation from the board, community, faculty, and staff. Two search panels included student representation. Institutions that were members of a system included local board and system board representatives.

All job descriptions required senior level or executive leadership experience. Some required a terminal degree, but most required a master's degree with the preference of a terminal degree. Required attributes of candidates included: a deep understanding and commitment to the community college mission, ability to be visionary and to think strategically and support strategic planning processes, strong communication and active listening skills, creative and forward thinking, integrity and fairness, appreciation for diversity, ability to advocate and work with multiple stakeholders, active involvement in the community and an appreciation for the

rural community, encourages development of faculty and staff, fiscal responsibility, data driven decision-maker, and have an understanding of the legislative process.

Research Question 1

The primary research question that guided this study examined the role community college leaders play in identifying and developing future leaders. From all six interviews it is clear that the community college leaders in this study are very active and engaged in the identification and development of the pipeline of future leaders. Leadership development is often a team effort, with four out of the six participants stating they utilize their team in the identification and development process. Another commonality emerging from the interviews is a major role of community college leaders is to provide opportunities for individuals to learn and make decisions. All participants felt a combination of experiences and exposure to the full cycle of operations is key to the success of a president/chancellor. One avenue current presidents/chancellors use to assist developing is providing learning opportunities. This connects to mentoring and providing individuals new responsibilities that allow the ability to hone skills and talents. One participant stated, “a core responsibility of a president is to mentor people closely.” Several cases mentioned placing a focus on improving your people, investing in people, and nurturing potential talent. One case stated “I think we invest in people. I'll tell you that as a leader, I want to invest in the people. I say all the time I hire the very best people for the position, I give them the tools that they need to the very best of my ability and I get the hell out of their way and they excel.”

Research Question 2

The second research question examined how institutional culture influences leadership selection and development. One of the three themes that emerged from data analysis directly

correlates with this question and will be discussed in greater detail in the emerging themes section. All cases believed the fit of an individual at an institution and within the community is vital, which is very much cultural. One participant stated “it is important to be mindful of cultural fit and the ability for that person to work with the backgrounds of the staff and understand the communities we serve.” All participants agreed that building a strong culture is an investment in people and as leaders they focus on a culture that seeks to develop and nurture internal talent.

Research Question 3

The third research question examined the influence, if any, community stakeholders have on leadership selection and development. Analysis found that both internal and external stakeholders are involved in the selection of top leadership and it is vital stakeholders trust leadership.

Emerging Themes

All six interviews provided rich details regarding the selection and development of leaders for the future pipeline. Coding and data analysis revealed three major themes:

1. Adaptation and flexibility are primary characteristics needed by future leaders.
2. Organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs.
3. Leadership development must include broad organizational exposure.

The following discussion contains details to support these findings and is organized in thematic sections corresponding to the three findings. Direct quotes from interviews may be used to support the findings and give the reader a better sense of the richness of the data gathered.

Finding 1

All cases expressed the importance of adaptive leadership for aspiring leaders. I was surprised that the framework of the study, adaptive leadership, was such a common theme. I did not notice a commonality until I transferred codes into the Data Summary Tables for data analysis. At some point throughout every interview, each president or chancellor mentioned the importance of being adaptive, flexible, and the changing environments of community colleges.

Adaptive leadership is very much environmental in context. Adaptive leaders hone the ability to create the appropriate organizational climate. Four out of six cases discussed the importance of creating an environment free of fearing failure. During interviews, leadership attributes of visionary, strategic, and forward-thinking also emerged. An adaptive leader will demonstrate vision, strategic, and forward-thinking to navigate the changing environment organizations face. Adaptive leaders utilize strategies to help their organizations blossom in challenging, competitive and complex environments. Adaptive leaders are very connected to stakeholders. All cases discussed the important connection that stakeholders have with community colleges. The vital role of stakeholders to community colleges emerged in the second theme, connecting theme 1 and 2.

Finding 2

The second theme that emerged was organizational leadership being influenced by organizational culture and community needs. All cases mentioned in some form the fit of an individual, which is very much cultural. Community colleges, especially rural community colleges, are extremely connected to their communities. Both internal and external stakeholders are involved in the selection of top leadership. It is vital that internal and external stakeholders trust leadership. Participant 2 stated,

It is sometimes hard to recruit new talent to rural areas so it's often in your best interest to work on developing internal talent so they can move into leadership positions when called upon. In my opinion, it's largely about the culture of the institution. In rural areas you also face that most employees know everyone and know deep information about candidates in these rural areas.

While all cases encourage the development of internal talent and even prefer hiring from within, ultimately the selection of an individual is based upon how that individual fits with the culture of the institution and community. One case stated,

I am a proponent of hiring from within. Rarely have I seen a situation in rural education where someone from outside the organization was a good fit for the institution. I feel at the very least, if they are not from within, they at least need to be from the same type of atmosphere so they understand the students and fellow workers.

Another case referenced "fit" from a different angle stating,

Every person you hire you watch and you see where they fit. So as you look at succession, you are looking at every person you hire and you're thinking about where they fit in. There are individuals who you hire that never want or aspire to lead.

All cases also mentioned leadership development as a team effort, which relates to the culture as well. Participant 1 stated "recognizing leaders is a team effort and our current team of leaders talk about potential leaders as a team. Once a leader has been recognized by the team we work to integrate these individuals throughout different areas." All cases mentioned they recognize potential talent by their drive, demonstrating the capacity to lead, and a willingness to step outside their current position. Participant 2 stated,

My experience and philosophy for leadership development is trying to focus on developing staff and future leaders from within. I assume everyone has the capability to be developed into a leader. Just watching and encouraging your people and recognizing that capacity to do more and then you work to expose them to other experiences that help them grow and develop.

Several cases made mention that they look for individuals who can be future leaders during the hiring process. Several cases also referenced "we" and "team."

Participant one stated,

I look for someone who definitely doesn't mind going beyond the normal scope of their position. If we have opportunities to serve--in the institution, on campus committees, in community activities--I'm looking at those individuals that are the first ones with their hands raised. So as we look at succession planning, and we've talked a lot about it at the institution "who is coming next," and there are individuals that naturally are curious about how the operations of the institution work, and they're not afraid to come and ask questions--we look at those individuals.

Participant two stated,

It's informal, but as a team we watch for those who have capacity and give them more opportunities to build capacity and learn. We start with everyone and narrow down to those who can truly demonstrate the capacity. As a team we talk daily about ideas and who can potentially has the ability to do what.

Participant three stated,

It's typically those people who are demonstrating capacity and willingness to lead and innovate in various projects. They're typically assigned additional duties and responsibilities, which helps them acquire additional leadership skills. That natural progression provides that blueprint for developing that that person as a leader. So that's how you would recognize the potential leaders by looking at those things, the capacity, and the willingness to do the extra. The people on your campus who raise their hand and are involved in everything. You've got 20% doing 80% of the work, but that's the obvious group that's on the path for leadership. You just end up giving those more because they're able and willing to do more, and over a period of time they acquire those additional skills and leadership traits that put them on that path.

Finding 3

The third theme that emerged relates to the development of future leaders. Leadership development must include broad organizational exposure. Upon coding all the themes commonalities among leadership development strategies emerged. Additionally, the theme that leaders develop future leaders in a similar manner to how they were developed emerged.

All cases send employees demonstrating the capacity to be future leaders to the state sponsored community college leadership program annually. I examined the program curriculum to determine the topics covered. Areas covered through the year-long program include: examining the big picture of community college as it relates to the history on both a state and

national level, individual personalities and leadership styles, state budget and legislation processes, communication, an understanding of campus administration, student needs and challenges, and networking.

All cases also utilize informal mentoring to assist developing leaders. Half of the participants mentioned having strong mentors that aided in their development.

When asked about methods of grooming future leaders Participant 1 stated,

Kind of the same way I learned. I want our instructors, our faculty, and our staff, to get outside the institution. I encourage them to travel. We have a very healthy travel budget. We ask them to travel outside, go to conferences and I encourage them to present at conferences. I encourage them to go and see what other folks are doing. I encourage them to look at other methods to doing things. We as a team encourage our folks to be involved in a multitude of state committees, that I think probably is one of the best things. We also give them additional responsibilities, and that sometimes is a two edged sword, because those individuals that will do—do. And then you know, there are those individuals that never volunteer to do anything. Be honest with people and give them the opportunities. I assumed leadership roles during difficult time. I started accepting different responsibilities outside the classroom, I served on committees, and I traveled. I think it is very important that you get your people off campus. I think the more exposure they have to other institutions the more they understand. I looked at leaders that I aspired to be like. I say you, you learn the good and the bad. Within 10 years, we had five chancellor's and so I knew what was good. I looked at qualities that were really good, but I also looked at how they could improve in my very biased opinion. I thought, you know, here are some attributes that I want to aspire to be like or I don't want to do this. So I watched and I learned. I had some really great mentors along the way. I got involved in our community. I was chair of the local Chamber of Commerce and I served on local boards. In those roles, I also saw leaders that I aspired to be like.

Participant 2 stated,

I believe leadership development also depends, to some degree, on the region where you are located—sometimes external qualified personnel are difficult to find unless connections are present. In such areas, developing internal talent is most of the best choice because it can be difficult to recruit new leaders to the area. Administrative council with the president work collectively as a team using different perspectives for leadership needs. We place people in positions for bigger challenges and mentor and give them challenges to build that strategic thinking and communication. A core responsibility of a president is to mentor your people closely. Don't blindly expect them to know everything because we don't know everything. This is why we operate very much in a team culture, for strength and diversity by bringing different perspectives. We give those new tasks (strategic tasks) and certain jobs to help them develop the capacity to do more.

Participant 3 stated,

I had a good mentor that allowed me to become very involved in multiple aspects of the college operation, including attending legislative sessions starting in 1990. Also becoming CAO was a good experience that helped me prepare to be president. The best example is my CAO that just accepted a president position. I helped him in his role to becoming president. So, providing them with the opportunity to learn and be involved, to make decisions and to make mistakes even, but helping them understand the full cycle-- Student Services, budget, HR, all the student issues, all the other gamut of issues that confront you. Give them those opportunities and discuss that with them, and help them problem solve and come to conclusions.

Participant 6 described his development and how he is currently developing the pipeline,

Ever increasing areas of responsibility and a supervisor who allowed me to make mistakes but use my energy to create new things helped prepare me for my current role. I am constantly looking for leaders who possess massive amounts of energy and then quizzing them on what they want to be and then encouraging and challenging them with harder and harder tasks.

Chapter 4 Summary

The findings of this study, gathered by interviews, were presented in Chapter 4. Six community college presidents or chancellors, selected based off unique characteristics, shared their philosophies of leadership development; challenges future leaders may face; how they recognize future talent; traits, skills, and abilities needed by aspiring leaders; how institutional culture impacts leadership development; and the role of community stakeholders in the selection of future leadership. Three major themes emerged: adaptation and flexibility are primary characteristics needed by future leaders; organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs; and leadership development must include broad organizational exposure. Conclusions of the findings from this study, implications for research, and recommendations for future investigations are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Recommendations

McKnight (2016) indicated that the expectations of community colleges are growing more complex, and the roles of community college leaders are changing, creating an opportunity to examine leadership attributes and skills needed for the next generation of leaders. Community colleges leaders are realizing they must develop adaptive individuals to move into the leadership pipeline. The purpose of this case study was to identify the influencers of succession planning among rural community college leaders specifically how these leaders select and develop future leaders. Additionally, the study investigated the role of community and institutional culture in leadership development for rural community colleges. By understanding these factors, evidence-based decisions relating to the topic of leadership selection and development can be made. Since adaptive leadership was the conceptual framework that guided this study, this chapter will discuss the themes that emerged from the data through the lens of adaptive leadership. My rationale for this discussion is to clarify how participants understand, describe, and model adaptive leadership. Six community college presidents or chancellors were purposefully sampled and interviewed. Descriptions of each individual interviewed and their institution are described in Chapter Three and Four.

Conclusions about the Findings

During analysis that included thematic coding and honoring the rules for ensuring trustworthiness of the data, three primary themes emerged. These themes or categories from the data included: adaptation and flexibility as primary characteristics needed by future leaders; organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs; and leadership development must include broad organizational exposure.

Discussion for Theme 1

Adaptation and flexibility are primary characteristics needed by future leaders.

Participants felt that the rapidly changing environment in higher education was a challenge that required current and future leaders to be intellectually and behaviorally adaptive. Participants' references to the need for leadership adaptation and flexibility supported where Shultz (2001) found that "presidents believe that the skills needed to lead colleges in the future will remain constant but there will be more emphasis on the ability to be flexible, to understand technology, and to seek business-and industry partnerships" (p. 1). Each participant from my study suggested that partnerships were key to surviving the competitive landscape of higher education. For example, participant 4 mentioned "a leader must have the ability to build authentic relationships and have the experience to solve issues that arise. Leaders must know how to handle issues as they arise and must recognize if they aren't equipped with the knowledge of how to handle an issue they know who to call to help with the challenge." Participant 5 mentioned "stakeholders have to feel leadership is connected to them, identifies with their priorities, and respects and appreciates those priorities." The ability to demonstrate the social – emotional leadership paired with financial acumen seems to be critical for leadership success in the turbulent environment of community colleges.

Much of community college day-to-date operations depend on others, whether that be legislators, stakeholders, or accrediting bodies. As mentioned in the literature review, adaptive leadership processes allow individuals and organizations the ability to cope with and manage changing conditions (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linksy, 2009). One participant stated "You have to be thoughtful, and flexible. You have to understand and appreciate the environments that we operate in and be able to move very quickly, efficiently and effectively from one environment to

the next.” The majority of participants frequently used the term “flexible.” In my opinion, the terms “flexible” and “adaptive” can be used interchangeably when discussing community college leadership connecting to the conceptual framework of this study. I can say from my experience as a community college administrator, changes and challenges are constant and effective leaders must be nimble and adaptive to efficiently lead organizations. Adaptive leaders display a willingness to take risks and experiment through innovation and encourage innovation of their team as well. Adaptive leaders employ a broad-based leadership style, making it possible to thrive in any environment in which they are placed. They are dedicated lifelong learners and make every effort to be up-to-date on current trends and ensure an openness to new ideas. One participant stated being “a life-long learner and the willingness to find new ideas and embrace them. You learn from the most unexpected people. Not everything will be in the books or formalized but rather in conversations.” Community college leaders rely on stakeholders for much of their success. It is imperative that community colleges learn from these people and have deep, continuous conversations with internal and external stakeholders, alike.

Philip Rogers, senior vice president for learning and engagement at the American Council on Education stated, “Adaptive and nimble leadership is a non-negotiable skill set for today’s college presidents” (McCafferty, 2019, para. 9). One participant mentioned finding leaders in a shrinking talent pool and then learning how to adapt to the next generation of workers that think and produce differently is a challenge faced by leadership. As found in the literature, adaptive leaders hone the ability to tackle these adaptive challenges and build a healthy pipeline of talent through openness, commitment to learning, and shared responsibility for the organization’s future (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linksy, 2009). One participant discussed leaders recognizing those with leadership potential and then creating an environment where that

talent can be nurtured. Leaders must recognize they have to model best practices as a leader; being a reflection of the leadership values and principles is important to the organization. Observation is a powerful learning tool and adaptive leadership focuses not on the leader but on actions of leading. The participants from this study were consistent in their appreciation for the benefits of this way of leading and the need to cultivate a leadership pipeline of individuals with this capacity.

Items found in the review of recent job searches included: commitment to the mission, visionary, strategic thinker, forward thinking, ability to work with multiple stakeholders, legislative understanding, communication skills, and active in the community. The majority of required attributes match the descriptors that were used by the current academic leaders interviewed for this study and correlate directly to adaptive leadership.

Discussion for Theme 2

Organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs.

The idea that organizational leadership is influenced by organizational culture and community needs was another theme that emerged from the participant interviews. All participants agreed institutions must invest in their own people to create a strong culture. The framework of adaptive leadership links to cultural and community influence of organizational leadership. My literature review revealed that organizational culture is very much tied to an organization's ability to adapt. An organization's rituals, norms, and protocols are all cultural ingredients, and adaptive leadership requires an understanding of the culture. The literature also mentioned adaptive leaders understand their most important responsibility is getting the right people in the right roles doing the right jobs (Randall & Coakley, 2007). Five out of six participants stated they prefer to hire from their internal pipeline, but ultimately the final hiring

decision is most about finding the right fit for the position, whether that be an internal or external candidate. It is important when hiring that the best interest of the institution is considered, rather than personal agendas or personal connections. Much of the literature surrounding higher education as a whole found institutions tend to place focus on external candidates, believing this approach leads to finding the best talent available (Cavanaugh, 2017). However, Eddy (2013) noted rural leaders examined in her study were more often promoted from within. This may be one reason rural institutions place focus on developing the internal pipeline of talent.

Stakeholders are familiar with and have developed relationships with individuals already established in an institution and community. One participant mentioned using hiring as an opportunity to first look across internal talent to see who would fit, with a preference to hire from within if the individual is the right fit and ready for the position. “It is important to be mindful of cultural fit and the ability for that person to work with the backgrounds of the staff and understand the communities we serve. I do believe the wrong hire can hurt you for years.”

I feel from the definition of “fit” is a relative term. For example, “fit” can describe being familiar with the community and stakeholders, showing a commitment to the mission of the community college, and a familiarity with institutional offerings and norms. For many rural institutions, stakeholders help drive the community college and stakeholder trust of leadership is extremely important. As found in the literature, two thirds of all public community colleges serve rural communities by driving economic opportunity and providing access to higher education (VanIngen-Dunn, 2016). Often, it can be challenging for an external hire to understand cultural norms, many of which are unspoken. The results of this study show current leaders recognize this and prefer to hire internally. However, over reliance on “fit” may limit new talent with diverse ideas and approaches. If “fitness” is synonymous with like-mindedness, it poses a danger

of group think and could perpetuate a less diverse organizational culture. While participants discussed the desire to hire internally, leadership should consider the possible unintended consequences of this preference. One participant stated “at the end of the day, it's about the institution moving forward and not about people. You don't owe it to them, or owe it to people to promote them if they're going to drag the institution down.”

While conducting interviews, I had several informal discussions surrounding the shrinking pool of available leadership talent. Many institutions within the state where I conducted the study had recently conducted national searches for senior level openings. As mentioned in the literature, the traditional path to the chancellor/president role has been that of chief academic officer. Also mentioned in the literature review by Riggs (2009) was the challenge of a narrowing applicant pool and growing number of positions faced by community colleges. Participants mentioned that fewer chief academic officers were in the applicant pool for chancellor/president searches. Findings from the literature review found many current chief academic officers are not interested in moving into president positions confirming what participants in this study mentioned. Mentioned in literature, many chief academic officers feel presidential activities and external duties, such as fundraising and politics, are not congruent with academia, leading these groups to lose interest in seeking the role of president (Richards, 2016). My experiences lead me to agree with this theory. Most chief academic officers, once faculty themselves, are rooted in the academia of education. Tasks that a president/chancellor must be involved such as politics and community activities often are unattractive to chief academic officers. Many academic officers are content with their salary and responsibilities and feel the additional tasks of a president/chancellor are not worth the stress or investment of time.

When discussing leadership identification and development, all participants described it as a team effort. They described it as a process that involves many individuals. The participants described institutional culture where president/chancellors place trust in their leadership team to identify strong performers and potential leaders. From my experience, it is common for the senior leadership team to closely monitor all employees and notice those that demonstrate capability and interest. The team then decides how to provide these individuals growth opportunities. During this process, it becomes apparent those individuals who have no desire to take on a leadership position. Therefore, the process better familiarizes the leadership team with the internal talent pool and can assist with strategic planning.

While the majority of participants suggested that leadership development is very intentional and requires self-awareness to model the desired behaviors, Participant 4 was the only participant to refer to the limitation of developmental activities and stated “you can fine tune a leader, but natural ability has to be present, too.” I believe Participant 4’s belief stems from personality traits and communication. It is very difficult for some personality traits to be strong communicators, especially with many different stakeholders.

Discussion for Theme 3

Leadership development must include broad organizational exposure.

The need for broad organizational exposure as a component of leadership development was the third theme to emerge. This theme connects to the framework of adaptive leadership as exposure throughout operations leads to an increased level of adaptive leadership. Richards (2016) found previous approaches of leadership and accompanying skills can no longer match such an environment; therefore, future leaders must be able to adapt as well as be highly competent and effective to compete and survive in the future. Change and challenges in today’s

society require leaders to be adaptive with specialized skills and abilities exceeding what was required of leaders in the past. All participants felt that leadership development must be hands-on in nature, focusing on the individuals being developed by providing opportunities to hone skills and talents.

Mentoring was a leadership development topic that participants mentioned often. The majority of participants had a mentor during their development stages, and mentor future leaders now. One participant felt watching leaders and learning good and bad aspects of leadership was meaningful. Participant 5 stated “increasing areas of responsibility with a supervisor who allowed me to make mistakes, but then use my energy to create new things.” Participant 3 stated “a mentor that allowed me to become involved in multiple aspects of the college operation, including legislative sessions.”

The two most reoccurring approaches included informal mentoring and the state leadership program. Likely, the low cost of both these strategies place them at the top. Informal mentoring is a strategy utilized by all institutions. As mentioned in the literature, mentoring is a popular strategy for leadership development because it is cost effective and personal. Mentoring may also improve the mentee’s understanding of the role of organizational vision, mission, goals, and objectives for effective leadership. The mentoring experience has been shown to enhance one’s ability to identify as a leader, practice reflexivity, build relationships, initiate change, and learn from modeled behavior (Parks, 2018; Hanson, 2015).

One of the main components of mentoring is communication. Participants feel it is important to stay in constant communication with individuals being developed. They also feel it is important to provide challenging opportunities and allow potential leaders the ability to try new tasks. Providing feedback during the process is key. One participant stated “it’s important to

always inspect what you expect.” From a leadership perspective this is extremely important. You cannot give developing leaders challenges and blindly expect them to conquer the challenge. All mentioned the importance of encouragement, continuous communication, and feedback to those seeking to be leaders. All participants also felt exposure throughout the various operations of the college to help learn the full cycle is imperative, which is most commonly achieved by giving those potential leaders additional responsibilities and challenges. My experience in community college leadership and working closely with my chancellor has provided me the opportunity to see firsthand the importance of understanding the full cycle and operations throughout a college. It is not just about academics or finances, it is about every single piece of operations. I believe the theme that a combination of experiences prepared current leaders emerged because experiencing a combination of experiences helps to develop that full cycle knowledge and skillset. Making mistakes and in turn growing from faults is an important part of development. Leaders must create such an environment where future leaders can challenge themselves without fearing how leadership will react to potential failure.

Participation in the state leadership program for aspiring talent emerged as a tool used by all case institutions. Likely this tool is often utilized as it is a cost effective approach. While the program has an associated cost, it is much more cost efficient when compared to national leadership programs. The state leadership program also promotes networking with peers across the state and improving the deep knowledge and understanding of how the educational system operates within the state. Local chamber leadership programs are also very cost efficient and allow participants to deepen their understanding of local communities and economies. This knowledge is especially vital for those leading rural community colleges. Two institutions mentioned leadership development as a component of annual evaluations. However, I believe all

institutions likely incorporate personal and leadership development into annual evaluations without even realizing it. A single institution holds an internal leadership development program, which is relatively new to that institution. It can be difficult for small community colleges to incorporate internal development due to budget restraints and because many employees at community colleges are responsible for extended responsibilities.

The following areas also emerged from one to two participants: self-awareness, listening skills, commitment to the mission of the community college, an energetic personality, motivator, ability to delegate, servant leadership, technological skills, ability to think critically, fair, calm, ability to build authentic relationships, and being a life-longer learner. Specific comments related to many of these skills follow:

“Commitment to the mission of community colleges and higher education in general. You have to be in this for the right reasons.”

“One of the greatest qualities that a leader has to be is self-aware. You have to understand what your strengths and what your weaknesses are so you can build your team around those.”

“Servant leadership attributes are very important. You have to walk a mile in someone else's shoes. As a leader you always look at how you can help make your people better.”

“Technology is important—have good technology skills because everything is going to a technologic element. Flexible, adaptive, and calm.”

“A life-long learner and the willingness to find new ideas and embrace them. You learn from the most unexpected people. Not everything will be in the books or formalized but in conversations.”

“They must possess energy and a drive that makes them complete projects that were assigned and those they came up with on their own.”

A contradictory area emerged for me when relating adaptive leadership and leadership development. Boyd (2010) stated “future community college presidents cannot be mirror images of their predecessors” (p. 36). Historically, community college presidents were tasked with creating the right campus climate, allowing students and staff the opportunity to fulfill their full

potential within the college community as well as communicate the mission to various constituencies including students, employees, board members, legislators, and the community. While these needs still exist, incoming presidents will face different and complex issues from those of the past and must focus on trends in population demographics, declining enrollments, employment needs, state and federal legislation, budgets and performance analytics

All participants stated they are developing future leaders in much the same way they were developed, yet also stated flexibility and adaptability are important for future leaders. Adaptive leadership centers on a changing environment. Perhaps, current leadership uses the same methods of leadership development they experienced because it is the only method of development they know. The ability to demonstrate the social – emotional leadership paired with financial acumen seems to be critical for leadership success in the turbulent environment of community colleges.

Limitations

As mentioned in Chapter 3, limitations exist that might affect the reliability and/or validity of the findings. Perceptions of six community college leaders were examined, but a larger pool of participants might yield different findings. The study also only examined rural institutions at the community college level. It is probable larger community colleges, more urban community colleges, private entities, and four-year institutions might yield different results using the protocol. The study does not address succession planning efforts outside the state. The geographically restraint to a single southern state is also a limitation, as results may differ if a similar study was conducted at an institution otherwise geographically located. The semi-structured interview protocol results may reflect individual bias and opinions of the participants interviewed and are not generalizable to a different population or location. Only chief executive

positions were addressed in the study. Higher education administrators outside the role of the chief executive position may have varying methods and opinions of leadership development.

Recommendations for Future Research

A recommendation for further study is to increase the size of the population examined. Perspectives from this study were gathered from leaders at rural community colleges leaders within a single state. Presidents and chancellors from other states, geographical locations, or urban areas may have different perspectives regarding leadership selection and development. Replication of this study in other states, urban institutions, and institutions with different budget levels would allow comparisons of the findings to further the research on this topic.

Additional research also might examine individuals that have been identified as a potential leader and may reveal how these future leaders are preparing for leadership opportunities. Do identified leaders feel prepared for future leadership positions and if so, how were they prepared? Best practices for assessing emerging leaders' strengths and weaknesses in support of leadership development may be useful to expand upon. Examining how institutions deal with leadership failure might also be a worthy study. A study may be conducted at a higher education institution where a formal succession plan has been successfully implemented to determine what factors influence the effectiveness of succession planning and leadership development.

Researcher's Reflection

I, as the researcher, worked through the research process by removing preconceived ideas and personal bias about development of leaders. Interview questions were used to solicit the perceptions of participants. Responses were found to be consistent. Participants were very interested in the research topic and extremely willing to contribute to the study. Retirements of

top community college leaders continues to rise making this study extremely timely. The findings from this study were consistent with the study's framework of adaptive leadership. Findings were also consistent with literature regarding the importance of mentoring and leadership development programs.

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Appendix A Case Invitation Email

Dear President or Chancellor:

As a current academic officer at a community college and a doctoral student at the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, I am interested in leadership development practices of community colleges located in [REDACTED].

I am excited and appreciative that you will help me in my doctoral study, which explores Influencers of Succession Planning among Rural Community College Chief Executives. According to the research, community college administrators will be retiring in alarming rates over the next 5-7 years. Although literature exists nationally, minimal known information exists for [REDACTED]. The information gathered in this study is extremely valuable to guide both current community college leaders and aspiring community college leaders. Contributors have been selected based upon various factors, which have been designated as being critical to provide in-depth information about the experience of contributing to leadership development.

Your participation will include a recorded interview lasting forty-five minutes to an hour. All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. No known questions will be asked that could be damaging either socially or economically. After transcription of the interview, you will have an opportunity to read the transcribed notes, ensuring that your perceptions have been correctly interpreted. Your identity will be kept confidential.

To confirm our appointment, below is the date, time and location of our scheduled interview:

- Date of Interview:
- Time of Interview:
- Location:

For your convenience, the interview questions are attached for your perusal prior to the interview. Additionally, a consent form is attached. I will bring a hardcopy to the interview for your signature and collection

If you have any questions, please contact me at XXX-XXX-XXXX or respond to this email.

Sincerely,

Ashley Aylett, Researcher
University of Arkansas, Doctoral Candidate

Appendix B Informed Consent

Dear Participant:

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the study, Influencers of Succession Planning among Rural Community College Chief Executives.

This study is being conducted to provide data to the current and aspiring community college leaders. Participants have been selected based on personal experiences leading a community college(s).

Your participation will include a recorded interview lasting approximately forty-five minutes to one hour at your convenience. After transcription of the interview, you will have an opportunity to read the transcribed notes, ensuring that your perceptions have been correctly interpreted. All responses and data collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy. An alias will be used in reference to your responses and the state being examined will not be mentioned by name to assure anonymity when reporting results.

There are no known risks associated with this research, nor are there any benefits to the participant expected from this research. There is no compensation or costs associated with this study for the participant. All information will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law and University policy; no names will be associated with the data collected from your interview. Information will be destroyed at the end of three years after the conclusion of this study.

Your consent is requested by signing below. Participation in this project is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time. I will collect the signed form at the time of our interview.

If you have any questions, please contact me at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or my dissertation chair and University of Arkansas professor, Dr. Kit Kacirek, kitk@uark.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Ro Windwalker, the University's IRB Compliance Coordinator, at 479-575-2208 or irb@uark.edu.

Sincerely,

Ashley Aylett, Researcher
University of Arkansas, Doctoral Candidate

Date _____

Participant Signature _____

Appendix C Interview Protocol

What is your age?

How many total years have you been employed full-time in community college work?

How long have you been in your present position at this college?

How many more years to you expect to work prior to retirement?

1. What is your experience/philosophy for leadership development?

PROBE

- a. What prepared you for the role you hold now
- b. How are you grooming future leaders now

2. What do you perceive as the greatest leadership challenges faced by community college leaders?

3. How are future leaders identified and selected at your institution to lead the college in leadership development and succession planning processes? (*Future leaders: Individuals currently preparing themselves to lead organizations or institutions.*)

PROBE

- a) How do you recognize a potential leader?
- b) How do you groom that potential leader?
- c) Do administrators and/or supervisors at your institution regularly identify high potential employees for future leadership positions?

4. Given the challenges and internal/external influences impacting community colleges, what traits/skills/abilities are most critical for candidates to have to fill future leadership openings in your organization?

PROBE

- a. Why do you believe they are essential?

5. Could you describe how the culture of your institution impacts grooming and retaining leadership talent?

6. What role if any do community stakeholders play in the selection of future leaders?

7. What strategies does you/your institution use to develop a competent, trained pool of candidates to move into leadership positions and continue upward to the highest-level of positions, such as presidents, chancellors and vice presidents?

- a. Leadership programs?
- b. Mentoring by college leaders?
- c. Stretch Assignment (GYO)

8. Could you discuss your thoughts on the of recruiting leaders from within or from the outside

PROBE

- a. When vacancies occur in administration over the past five years have you hired from within our sought external prospects?
 - b. Do you feel your institution has a reputation for making promotional opportunities available for its own employees?
9. What else, if anything, do you believe is pertinent to the purpose of this study about leadership development and succession planning, which you would like to share that is not covered in the interview questions?

Appendix D
University of Arkansas IRB Approval



To: Ashley Rachelle Aylett
From: Douglas James Adams, Chair
IRB Committee
Date: 07/16/2019
Action: Expedited Approval
Action Date: 07/16/2019
Protocol #: 1905199687
Study Title: Current practices of community college chief executives in leadership identification and development.
Expiration Date: 05/30/2020
Last Approval Date:

The above-referenced protocol has been approved following expedited review by the IRB Committee that oversees research with human subjects.

If the research involves collaboration with another institution then the research cannot commence until the Committee receives written notification of approval from the collaborating institution's IRB.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without Committee approval. Please submit continuation requests early enough to allow sufficient time for review. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in the automatic suspension of the approval of this protocol. Information collected following suspension is unapproved research and cannot be reported or published as research data. If you do not wish continued approval, please notify the Committee of the study closure.

Adverse Events: Any serious or unexpected adverse event must be reported to the IRB Committee within 48 hours. All other adverse events should be reported within 10 working days.

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, study personnel, or number of participants, please submit an amendment to the IRB. All changes must be approved by the IRB Committee before they can be initiated.

You must maintain a research file for at least 3 years after completion of the study. This file should include all correspondence with the IRB Committee, original signed consent forms, and study data.

cc: Kit Kacirek, Investigator

IRB#: 1905199687 APPROVED: 16-Jul-2019 EXP: 30-May-2020