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Preparing Future Leaders: Lessons From Small College Succession Planning and Leadership Development

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Abstract

Succession planning and leadership development in higher education has come under greater scrutiny in the last decade as a result of a large contingent of college administrators. Small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities are often more susceptible to the challenges of succession planning and leadership development as a result of scarce resources available for investment in these critical areas. This study focused on the experiences of small, private, not-for-profit college administrators and their use of leader and leadership development as well as succession planning and management strategies. A qualitative, multiple-case study approach was used. The researcher conducted 12 semistructured interviews comprised of a sample of three administrators from four different institutions. Results were organized into three themes, representing the best practices of leader and leadership development, the scarcity of succession planning practices, and the use of informal and formal strategies discovered across the multiple cases. The researcher presented a small college succession planning and management framework, based on this study's findings, aimed at assisting practitioners in implementing a tangible strategy for developing internal leader and leadership capacity that could be used in a long-term leadership development and succession planning and management.

Keywords: Succession planning, leader development, leadership development, small colleges, multiple-case study, succession planning framework

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> Succession management allows college and university administrators and campus leaders to be anticipatory, rather than reactive. But, a succession management process requires clear understanding of who is in the leadership pipeline, their leadership aspirations, and areas for skill development and training based on anticipated institutional needs of the future … higher education may be losing future talent at the executive levels because of a lack of support and development earlier in the pipeline. (Baker et al., 2019, pp. 840–841)

The failure to establish a clear, transparent, and holistic human resource development plan for internal talent has been a recurring theme in higher education leadership literature (Betts et al., 2009; Cavanaugh, 2017; Hempsall, 2014; Klein & Salk, 2013; Miller & Bisbee, 2006; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). The lack of leadership development and succession plans in higher education has resulted in the shortage of adequately prepared leaders to fill upper-level leadership roles vacated by the outgoing generation of leaders (Betts et al., 2009; Grotrian-Ryan, 2015). To further complicate the matter, few chief academic officers often seen as the heir apparent, desire to move into the presidency (Klein & Salk, 2013). As a result, many higher education institutions have chosen to fill leadership needs with outside hires rather than training leaders from the inside. On the one hand, some practitioners argue that hiring leaders externally can disrupt the culture and continuity in the organization, positing that more robust training for internal leaders is needed (Cavanaugh, 2017), while on the other hand, the notion that promoting career academicians into institutional leadership may not be an adequate strategy to meet the ever evolving needs of today's higher education landscape (Hull, 2020). Hiring externally does have positives to consider, however. For example, an external search can provide an institution the chance to coalesce around a shared vision, chart a new course, and allow the fresh perspective of an outsider (Leske, 2009). Hiring externally could be particularly desirable for institutions that need drastic change. But with every outsider that is pillaged from another institution, a new leadership vacancy is created.

The scarcity of prepared leaders is further exacerbated by the increasing demands placed on leaders at all levels in higher education by accreditors, students, and elected officials, requiring more general leadership and administrative competencies to be learned and mastered (Gigliotti, 2017; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Floyd, 2016; Thompson & Miller, 2018; Waters & Hightower, 2016). These general leadership competencies, however, continue to be overlooked by current colleges and university leadership as many emerging leaders fail to receive formal training before taking advanced roles (Pepper & Giles, 2015). The lack of succession planning and management strategies appear to play a role in the underdeveloped state of higher education leaders.

Klein and Salk (2013) described succession planning as "both a strategic planning tool to address issues created by individuals' departure as well as to bridge the knowledge gap created by a departure" (p. 336). Most of the succession planning and leadership development research in higher education is unanimous in highlighting the failure to train future administrators. High turnover rates, negative impact on morale, and loss of time and capital have been connected to underprepared hires in academia due to inadequate or nonexistent succession planning strategies (Miller & Bisbee, 2006). Betts et al. (2009) argued the need to develop visible career paths to broaden the pool of candidates who can be developed as future leaders. Likewise, Hempsall (2014) demonstrated that "career pathways into management and executive roles in higher education were often not planned, and many did not undertake any formal education in how to manage and lead others" (p. 390). The benefits of succession planning in for-profit industries have been observed and praised, encouraging researchers to call for leaders in higher education to employ similar tactics (Cavanaugh, 2017).

This study sought to explore how small, not-for-profit colleges and universities in the Midwest United States approach leadership development and succession planning and management strategies. Interviews with higher education administrators provided insight into the procedures and actions they believe have been successful in developing the next generation of leaders within the industry.

Background

At the end of the second decade of the 21st century, colleges and universities are facing new and significant challenges not seen by previous generations (Ruben et al., 2018). Rising student debt, decreased funding, pervasive sexual assaults, declining enrollments, poor student performance, and a rapidly diversifying demographic of students have stretched industry leaders beyond their past experiences and current capabilities. Some college and university boards suggest replacing industry insiders with those from the private sector in hopes their business acumen and perceived ability to innovate and create new markets and sources of funding may be able to solve the financial dilemmas that threaten the existence of their institutions (Klein & Salk, 2013). Many colleges are responding to the #MeToo movement by creating new procedures, courses, and policies to handle sexual assault cases that previously went unreported (Howard, 2018). In 2019, it was reported that national student debt stands at approximately 1.5 trillion dollars (Cilluffo, 2019), and less than six out of 10 college students graduate in six years (Nadworny, 2019), causing many families to question the value of a college degree. All of these challenges may be the culprits behind sagging enrollment numbers that threaten the financial stability of many institutions.

Further exacerbating budgetary issues is the lack of support from federal and state governments. States have cut the equivalent of nine billion dollars of funding over the last decade (Marcus, 2019), forcing closures and mergers of institutions on the cusp of solvency (Beyer, 2019). The federal government has proposed significant overhauls to funding, eliminating loan-forgiveness programs, and limiting loans offered to parents and graduate students (Johnson, 2019; Kreighbaum, 2019). Today's leaders are facing decreased governmental support in conjunction with unsustainable student debt levels. These factors challenge leaders to balance shrinking budgets with tuition increases that threaten to exceed the average student's ability to pay (Mitchell et al., 2016).

This list of challenges facing current higher education leaders in the United States seems to have no end. Additional disruptions, such as for-profit competition, online learning modalities, and the move from reliance on tenure track to contingent faculty add to the issues mentioned above. These dilemmas have forced institutions to reexamine the leaders they choose and how to better prepare and develop the ones they already have. Thompson and Miller (2018) argued that "today's successful leaders must develop new aspects of their personal leadership skills that take into account 'disruptions' of the academic environment and reflect thoughtful contemporary leadership and management scholars" (p. 93). The question remains as to how these disruptions will shift the leadership values and preparation for the current and future presidents, provosts, deans, and directors of colleges and universities.

Lastly, it is important to note how these specific challenges weigh heavier upon small, private, not-for-profit colleges across the higher education landscape. While Ivy League colleges can lean on their endowments when necessary and public colleges continue to have the support of government tax income, small, private colleges face a less certain future (Eide, 2018). Even as more of their peers close or merge with larger institutions, most small, private colleges are not seeing gains in enrollment to offset their struggling financial picture (Seltzer, 2019). Horn (2018) laid out the bleak future for many of these colleges, noting their rising discount rates, the complex operation model of higher education, and declines in high school graduates. It is not a stretch to understand how challenging developing new leaders will be in this environment.

The Carnegie Classification of a small college consists of institutions that have less than 3,000 students (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, n.d.). Selingo (2016) noted that roughly 40% of American colleges have an enrollment under 1,000 students. The reality facing small, private colleges will drive innovation or closure. How much of the innovation will be a result of holistic, multilevel, succession planning and management strategies? Current leaders need more development, and future leaders need better support as they progress through the leadership pipeline.

Problem Statement

Recent higher education publications and reports have begun to shed light on the issue of leadership preparation, transition, and succession planning (American Council on Education, 2017; Butin, 2016; Pfaff, 2019). A litany of difficulties awaits current administrators, boards, and search firms looking to fill open leadership positions. Baby-boomer retirements, high turnover, poorly planned or nonexistent internal leadership pipelines, ever-increasing responsibilities, and external hiring biases are a few of the challenges that leaders must navigate when finding the next dean, director, provost, or president. These challenges have highlighted the shortage of qualified higher education leaders to fill vacancies and the lack of investment in leader and leadership development through multilevel, holistic succession plans (Cavanaugh, 2017; Gigliotti, 2017; Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Hempsall, 2014; Klein & Salk, 2013; Ruben et al., 2018).

Small, not-for-profit colleges and universities may be more susceptible to these challenges and oversights given the lack of resources available to invest in leadership development and succession planning and management strategies, creating the need for further research on leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit colleges and universities.

Succession Planning

Not only is the aging population of current leadership causing large number of vacancies throughout the industry, but the growing pressure on college leadership to perform an increasing number of tasks has resulted in shorter tenures of key leadership positions (American Council on Education, 2014; Butin, 2016; Clayton, 2019; Morris, 2012; Schmidt, 2016). This fast turnover costs institutions time and money in addition to derailing strategic plans and continuity (Cavanaugh, 2017; Leske, 2009; McGlynn, 2018). As higher education comes under greater scrutiny due to rising student debt and lower than desired retention and completion rates, the need for adept leadership is essential to the future of the industry as a whole, let alone each college that faces a leadership vacancy (Thompson & Miller, 2018). Moreover, the traditional route to administration, through academic positions in the institution, has not proven to best prepare the current generation of leaders (Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Walseth, 2009).

The shortage of qualified and prepared leaders in the changing landscape of higher education will force institutions to decide to grow talent, buy talent, or recruit talent (Kutchner & Kleschik, 2016). This shortage has led some institutions to look outside the ranks of higher education to find their next chief executive, including hiring from corporate and other industries (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). However, many of these “outsiders” leaders sometimes fail to assimilate into the unique culture of higher education (Walseth, 2009). This new trend of hiring outside the higher education industry parallels the historical bias to hiring outside of one's institution. To combat these issues, researchers are calling for more institutions to implement succession planning practices similar to those commonly found in the corporate sector (Betts et al., 2009; Cavanaugh, 2017).

What is the current state of succession planning in higher education? One former dean observed:

> While succession planning is a cornerstone of business leadership, it is anathema in academia. It is rare indeed for department heads, deans, provosts or university presidents to groom potential successors. When someone does step down, either expectedly or unexpectedly…an outside search is usually conducted and it is often at least a year before a permanent successor is in place. (Portney, 2011, para. 6)

Succession planning alone, however, is not enough to keep up with the demands of leadership vacancies, it must also include succession management. Rothwell (2015) described succession planning and management as the "deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement" (p. 6). Conger and Fulmer (2003) further described succession management as "a flexible system oriented toward developmental activities, not a rigid list of high-potential employees and the slots they might fill" (p. 78). The internal focus on identifying and developing a pool of leaders has been referred to as a *leadership pipeline* (Charan et al., 2011). Building and managing an institution's leadership pipeline is a key strategy of succession planning and management.

Leadership Pipeline

A leadership pipeline is best understood as "a systematic and visible system for identifying candidates for succession management, coupled with processes and programming for development" (Baker et al., 2019, p. 825). Charan et al. (2011) argued that leadership pipelines span multiple levels of the organization and seek to identify emergent leaders early and provide development and coaching opportunities to prepare them for future leadership vacancies. This is not often the case in the higher education industry due to the bias towards hiring external candidates (Cavanaugh, 2017; Klein & Salk, 2013), which may contribute to a nonexistent or underdeveloped internal leadership pipeline.

Pfaff (2019) concluded, "Academe appears to have an inherent bias in favor of external candidates and against internal ones, whose strengths may be in potential more than credential" (para. 4). This external bias has been identified in numerous articles and studies (Cavanaugh, 2017; Gearin & Gee, 2017; McGlynn, 2018; Walseth, 2009). If a leader cannot move up within an organization, he or she must decide to move out or return to an academic position, further exacerbating the leadership deficit at many institutions. Morris (2012) argued that few higher education institutions take the time to prepare their leaders and observes that leadership development tends to focus on administrative positions only, neglecting other layers of hierarchy, a problem that needs to be addressed if institutions want to plan for future vacancies.

A multilevel approach to leadership development has been identified as a need by other higher education researchers and practitioners (Baker et al., 2019; Cavanaugh, 2017; Dai et al., 2011). Specifically, middle management in colleges and universities, usually associate deans and directors, are overlooked and undersupported in terms of leadership development (Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Floyd, 2016; Rivas & Jones, 2015). However, some colleges and universities are overcoming this oversight through succession planning practices, both supporting newly hired leaders and preparing them for more significant roles (Berman, 2015; Glasgow et al., 2009; Rivas & Jones, 2015). Additionally, the American Council on Education offers leadership training for emerging leaders across multiple levels of colleges and universities, filling the gap that may exist in institutions that do not have intentional leadership development programs (American Council on Education, n.d.). These institutions, along with the American Council on Education, provide the impetus by which new leadership development programs can be developed.

One significant fact about multilevel development plans is that leaders at different levels must learn and master different competencies as they progress up the leadership pipeline (Charan et al., 2011). It is not enough to simply offer the same leadership development program to emerging and seasoned leaders within an organization. Research by Dai et al. (2011) asserted that organizations that identify leadership competencies for each level of leadership and match development to those competencies can reduce the preparation time needed for individuals to move up through the pipeline.

Rothwell (2015) explained the critical difference between succession planning and other forms of human resource development, stating, "succession planning is proactive and attempts to ensure the continuity of leadership by cultivating talent from *within* [emphasis added] the organization through planned development activities" (p. 10). The pathway up the career ladder in higher education is often not linear, visible, or planned (Betts et al., 2009; Hempsall, 2014; Woollen, 2016). Building an internal leadership pipeline begins to lay the foundation for individuals to plan their career paths and for institutions to implement better succession planning practices. Cavanaugh (2017) stated that in the corporate sector, "evidence indicates that inside preference results in better organizational performance long-term" (p. 26). Leaders, boards, and search firms may soon begin to realize the potential of succession planning practices borrowed from the corporate sector.

Using the research and recommendations of scholars and practitioners in the succession planning and management field, institutions can begin to make strategic decisions to develop internal talent as a way to combat both the shortage of leaders and the preparation of current and future leaders. In fact Grove (2007) argued, "Highly successful organizations focus on creating a comprehensive set of assessment and development practices that support the entire pipeline of talent across the organization" (p. 240). The next logical step in crafting a succession planning and management strategy is to invest in specific leader and leadership development programs.

Leader and Leadership Development

Promoting employees from within must be coupled with leadership development. Leadership development in higher education, however, has often been the exception and not the rule (Baker et al., 2019; Betts et al., 2009; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Hempsall, 2014; Miller & Bisbee, 2006; Morris, 2012; Preston & Floyd, 2016; Ruben et al., 2018). Charan et al. (2011) posited that "organizations promote people with the expectation that they have the knowledge and skills to handle the job rather than the knowledge and skills to handle a particular level of leadership" (p. 5). Conger and Fulmer (2003) discovered the institutions that experience long-term success during and after leader transitions are those who combine succession planning and leadership development. Combining these two strategies leads to "a succession management system that will build a steady, reliable pipeline of leadership talent" (Conger & Fulmer, 2003, p. 78). Therefore, attention to leader and leadership development should become a priority in building a leadership pipeline. However, there is an important distinction between leader development and leadership development.

Day et al. (2014) argued that "developing individual leaders and developing effective leadership processes involve more than simply deciding which leadership theory to be used to motivate effective development" (p. 64). Day (2000) delineated the difference between *leader* and *leadership* development by describing the former as the development of an organization's human capital and the latter as the development of an organization's social capital. Leader development focuses on the individual skills of the leader, such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation. Leadership development, by contrast, focuses on the relational aspects of leadership, including social awareness and social skills.

Often the focus of leader and leadership development research examines the role of personality or behavior. Personality is seen as a relatively unchanging aspect of a leader, and behavior modification is often achieved through short-term training (Day et al., 2014). Neither of these foci falls under the realm of development. As a result, the need to focus on human development and its role in leader and leadership development should come into view when institutions seek to grow their leadership pipeline and build their succession plans. Further complicating leader and leadership development is that most development programs fail to achieve their goals (Ardichvili et al., 2016). If most development programs fail and much of the research focuses on unchangeable personality traits or short-term behavior modification, then the need to understand successful development strategies becomes essential. The current study sought to address the gap in research by discovering the successful succession planning and leader and leadership development practices of small, private, not-for-profit colleges.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. This may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build better leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet the shortage of qualified leaders within the industry.

Research Question

What practices have small, not-for-profit, private colleges engaged in to (a) develop leaders and leadership and (b) develop succession planning and management strategies to ensure continuity of leadership?

Significance of the Study

The intersection of several challenges facing higher education and, in particular, small, private, not-for-profit institutions predicated the current study. First, the dearth of qualified leaders to take on upper-level management roles throughout the industry underscored the need to focus on succession planning and management strategies. Second, the internal and external pressures on higher education leaders to adapt to financial challenges, declining high school graduates, public accountability for retention and graduation rates, and unsustainable student loan debt highlighted the need for changing the industry's approach to developing its current and emerging leaders. Lastly, small colleges represent nearly 40% of all institutions of higher education (Horn, 2018), and these challenges disproportionately affect these colleges due to the lack of financial support, either in the form of government tax income or substantial endowment income, to sustain them through this period of uncertainty. Taken together, the case for examining successful succession planning and management and leader and leadership development strategies in small, private, not-for-profit colleges was warranted.

Definition of Key Terms

Leader development. "Leader development is inherently longitudinal involving a process by which leaders acquire relevant experiences, skills, behaviors, and knowledge over time" (Miscenko et al., 2017, p. 605).

Leadership. "Leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2016, p. 6). It is important to note that the definition of leadership presented here is not a trait or behavior, but rather an interactive process between leader and follower.

Leadership development. "Leadership development is defined as expanding the collective capacity of organizational members to engage effectively in leadership roles and processes" (Day, 2000, p. 582).

Leadership pipeline. "A systematic and visible system for identifying candidates for succession management, coupled with processes and programming for development" (Baker et al., 2019, p. 825).

Small colleges. The Carnegie Classification of a "small" college consists of institutions that have less than 3,000 students (Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research, n.d.).

Succession planning and management (SPM). The "deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement" (Rothwell, 2015, p. 6).

Delimitations of the Study

The following delimitations apply to this study. Only small, private, not-for-profit colleges located in the Midwest United States will be part of the research. Additionally, participants were limited to middle- and upper- management roles within each college. Entry-level managers were excluded due to the likelihood of being less experienced as formal leaders and playing smaller roles in crafting and implementing institutional human capital strategies.

Organization of the Study

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provided the background of the study, defined the problem, reviewed current literature, posed a research question, outlined the significance of the study, defined a subset of terms, and identified the delimitations of the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of current literature related to succession planning and management, leadership pipeline, and leader and leadership development. Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the study, and Chapter 5 discusses the implications of the study and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this study was to explore the succession planning and management, and leader and leadership development practices of small colleges located in the Midwest United States. This chapter will review key literature related to succession planning and management, the leadership pipeline, leader and leadership development, and the specific challenges facing small colleges in the United States.

The focus of this literature review is to provide an overview of the existing literature and research as it relates to leader and leadership development and succession planning and management that creates a foundation for this study. In many sections the review includes the private sector as there is a larger body of literature in that sector, but primary attention is always given to research and practices prevalent in the higher education literature. The literature was compiled through search queries in major databases such as EBSCO, ERIC, Google Scholar, and ProQuest using the following standalone search terms and in conjunction with in higher education: (a) *leadership development*, (b) *leadership pipeline*, (c) *leader development*, (d) *succession planning*, (e) *mentorship*, (f) *action learning*, (g) *executive coaching*, and (h) *small colleges*. References of the major literature reviewed were also used to follow specific subsets to reach greater saturation of the literature.

Succession Planning and Management

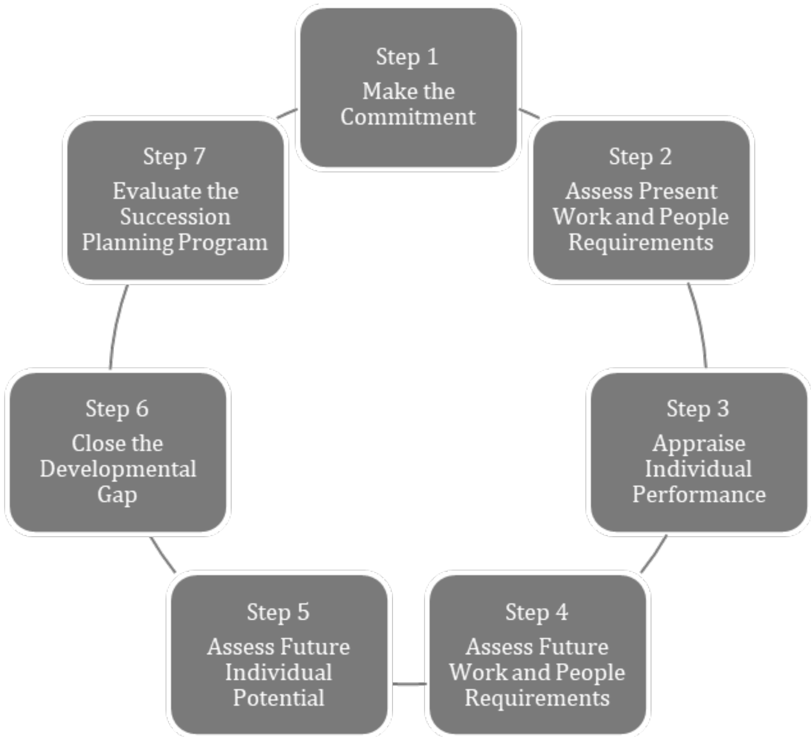
As noted in Chapter 1, Rothwell (2015) described succession planning and management (SPM) as the "deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement" (p. 6). Conger and Fulmer (2003) highlighted the specific focus of succession planning on developmental activities and not only creating a list of employees as potential successors. The key idea in both of these descriptions is the emphasis on development as a mechanism for organizations to plan for succession in key positions. It is important to review not only the way in which succession planning has evolved over the years, but the differences between the corporate sector and the higher education industry in terms of utilizing succession planning to mitigate the potential adverse outcomes for organizations during the loss of leadership.

Best Practices and Approaches to Succession Planning and Management

Figure 1 presents an example of a best practice SPM model: Rothwell's (2015) seven-step model of succession planning. While this example does not encompass all approaches to SPM, it does provide a model from one author's perspective as to how organizations could approach building their SPM program. This model is used as an example of what an SPM program includes and to serve as a reference point for the analysis of the interview data for current study. The illustration and explanations in Table 1 are not exhaustive, but rather as a starting point in understanding SPM approaches.

Figure 1

Seven Steps of Succession Planning and Management



Note. Adapted from *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within* (5th ed., p. 74), by W. J. Rothwell, 2015. AMACOM. Copyright 2016 by William J. Rothwell. Adapted with permission.

Table 1

Seven Steps of Succession Planning and Management

Step	Description
Make the commitment	This first step of SPM requires organizations to commit to a systematic and organized strategy. Rothwell notes that the most important aspects of this step are (a) the measurable goals of the program; (b) the roles of key groups in the organization to the program; and (c) the accountabilities of those involved.
Assess present work and people requirements	Organizations should evaluate the key leadership positions within the organization and the competencies needed for those roles. Additionally, individuals who have specialized talent or knowledge should be identified and plans made as to how these roles may be replaced if the individuals leave the organization.
Appraise individual performance	Step three is an internal look at current talent throughout the organization. Undertaking this task will allow leaders to understand their internal capacity at the moment and will enable them to identify gaps that need to be addressed.
Assess future work and people requirements	Step four takes a long lens view of what future competencies may be needed for the organization to function well given the current strategic priorities. These competencies will inform leaders as to the developmental needs of current and future leaders.
Assess future individual potential	The key modifier of this step is the emphasis on future potential. Rothwell (2015) stresses that the future potential of an individual should not be confused with past or present work performance. Step five is focused on developing an objective process for assessing future potential.
Close the developmental gap	There are two ways for organizations to close the developmental gap between their current internal succession capacity and their future needs. Leaders can close the gap through internal leadership development aimed at those with high future potential or through recruiting individuals externally.
Evaluate the succession planning program	Organizations and their leaders should continually evaluate how their SPM program is functioning and make necessary changes. Evaluating the program also helps maintain a commitment to the program.

In addition to these seven steps, Rothwell (2015) outlined six categories of SPM programs and delineates between how organizations might approach each one. Rothwell does not indicate which of the approaches are best practice. Rather, he presented the thought process behind each variation. The six categories are: (a) direction, (b) timing, (c) planning, (d) scope, (e) dissemination, and (f) amount of individual discretion. Each category is briefly described below.

Direction refers to who makes the final decisions in the SPM plans. There are three strategies under this category, top-down approach, bottom-up approach, and a combination approach. A top-down approach would include decision-makers from the board of directors, CEO, and other top-level leaders. In this model, individuals from these groups would make decisions related to how employees are assessed, how potential will be identified, and what types of developmental activities will be offered to prepare individuals in the SPM program. By contrast, a bottom-up approach is directed from the lowest levels of the organization. This grouping would include employees and their supervisors. Rothwell (2015) notes that in this model, decisions about SPM are related to an employee's career-planning exercises such as assessing their strengths, weaknesses, and future potential. Higher-level leaders would take this information and use it for succession planning purposes. Lastly, a combination approach integrates the two previous approaches. Top leadership establishes the protocol, and lower-level managers and employees engage throughout the process. Career planning and succession planning work in tandem so that high potential employees who also desire promotional opportunities can be found and developed appropriately.

Timing is another important element of a succession planning and management strategy. Organizations must also decide how often SPM plans are reviewed, implemented, and monitored. Rothwell (2015) noted this can happen "fitfully, periodically, or continuously" (p.

28). Fitful SPM plans are not truly planning in the sense they are only reviewed or implemented when a vacancy arises. Periodic plans follow a fixed schedule. Organizations that follow this approach review their SPM plans and activities on a quarterly or annual basis. Continuous plans involve the implementation of development activities on an ongoing basis and rely less on forms and checklists.

The third category relates to the level of planning that goes into the SPM strategy. Some organizations develop extensive processes and forms that are followed across the organization. Other organizations may leave their SPM strategy up to the discretion of individual managers. These managers would subsequently carry out the development of their subordinates as they see appropriate.

The scope of an SPM plan refers to the number of roles covered in the plan. Rothwell (2015) observes these range from specific to generalized. Specific plans focus only on a few key job roles within the organization. Generalized plans may include all roles within the organization. These delineations guide the scope of assessment and developmental activities contained within the SPM plan.

There are two types of dissemination approaches, closed SPM programs and open SPM programs. Closed SPM programs do not disclose the details of the plan or the scope of the organization the plan covers. The information and decisions made in these plans are not shared outside of the top-level leaders who are responsible for the strategy for two reasons. First, succession strategies are regarded as proprietary, and organizations do not want this information to be known by competitors. Second, keeping the SPM plan confidential keeps employees from knowing their status in regard to the plan and avoids individuals from developing expectations that may not come to fruition.

Open SPM plans, by contrast, provide employees an expectation of what it takes to be promoted. The expectations, key performance metrics, and processes are all shared openly. This open approach does not indicate a guarantee that an individual will be promoted. Rather, it only shows them what data contributes to the decision-making process.

Lastly, the amount of individual discretion an organization allows refers to what level of input an employee has in their assessment. Rothwell (2015) identified two approaches to this category. Mandated SPM does not take into account an individual's desire for promotion. Plans that leverage this approach promote the individuals the plan identifies. While the internal employee may have the right to refusal, Rothwell noted they may be pressured to accept the job for the sake of the company. The second approach under this category is a verified SPM strategy. Under this strategy, organizations identify potential successors and verify their interest in promotional opportunities. No pressure is placed on individuals when vacancies arise.

Succession Planning and Management Practices in Corporations

SPM practices have a long history of research. Eastman (1995) explored the extensive history of succession planning practices. Her collection of annotated bibliographies of research on succession planning condensed over 400 studies down to 56 using a narrow set of criteria. Her literature search returned a large number of studies on the topic, even though the years under review in Eastman's search only spanned seven years, 1987 to 1994. The conclusion of the literature review highlighted the following 11 themes that were consistent with effective succession planning systems. Eastman stated these succession planning systems: (a) receive support from the CEO and top management, (b) are owned by line management and supported by staff, (c) are simple and contextual, (d) are flexible and linked to strategic plan, (e) evolve from an HR review process, (f) are based on competencies and an objective assessment of potential candidates, (g) incorporate employee input, (h) are part of a broader management development effort, (i) include plans for developmental job assignments, (j) integrate with other HR systems, and (k) emphasize accountability and follow-up. With that said, it is evident that reviewing succession planning practices in the corporate sector can be daunting and extensive. The review of the literature presented here seeks to include 21st-century studies in addition to sources that present major contributions to the current study.

One significant work on succession planning and management practices in the corporate sector is Tichy's (2014) Succession. Tichy was hired by Jack Welch of General Electric to run the company's leadership development center in Crotonville, New York, and has written comprehensively on succession planning and leadership development. In the opening chapter, Tichy argued for the importance of succession planning in organizations:

> It is more the rule than the exception that if and when an incumbent leader departs the scene, for any number of predictable or unpredictable reasons, the organization all too frequently finds itself in the awkward predicament of lacking an insider candidate or candidates waiting on deck who are ready, willing, eager, and most important, well prepared and able to step up into the top job at a moment's notice and succeed. (p. 22)

The remainder of his book provides case studies of organizations who invested the time and resources in making the CEO succession successful and those who did not. What is clear from his field-based research is the organizations who not only had a plan, but also invested appropriately around the strategy of SPM, were the companies who succeeded posttransition. However, not many organizations have taken the necessary steps to address this issue.

Tichy (2014) provided evidence of the current state of succession planning in corporations. He cited three different studies that all found that more than 60% of companies surveyed had no formal succession plans or leadership development processes in place. It can be concluded that many organizations in the United States are unprepared for the planned or unplanned departure of key talent. Too often, organizations rely on outsiders to fill the gap left by departed leaders (Cavanaugh, 2017; Tichy, 2014).

Groves' (2007) research offered an insightful review of how leadership development informs and crafts succession planning strategies of successful organizations. The researcher outlined a conceptual framework for incorporating these practices that give researchers and practitioners a model to hone and apply in a real-world setting. The purpose of Groves' qualitative research was to explore how leadership development and succession planning are integrated in organizations. The author interviewed 30 CEOs and human resource executives across 15 separate U.S. healthcare organizations. Content analysis was applied to the transcripts resulting in six overarching research themes: (a) developing pervasive mentoring relationships, (b) identifying and codifying leadership talent, (c) enhancing high potentials' visibility, (d) assigning action-oriented activities, (e) leadership development through teaching, and (f) reinforcing an organizational culture of leadership development. Groves highlighted key excerpts from the participants for each theme and connected the practices of the organizations to research literature. The author cited several limitations of the research, including (a) the small number of organizations and lack of diversity in the types of organizations included in the research, (b) the lack of empirical evaluation conducted by the organizations on their practices, and (c) the absence of external evaluators for these practices.

This brief review of several SPM sources from the private sector serve to frame the scarcity of similar research in higher education. Rothwell's (2015) work provided one framework by which practitioners can begin to build an organizational strategy to address succession planning needs. Tichy (2014) provided evidence for the effectiveness of succession planning through examining unique cases while Eastman (1995) covered the extensive breadth of research over a very short window of time. Finally, Groves (2007) provided a link between purposeful leadership development and succession planning. Taken together, these sources provide unique perspectives that provide a foundation for the present study: the importance of SPM and the connection of leadership development to the success of that strategy. Additional literature related to the connection between leadership development and SPM as included in the *leadership pipeline* below.

Succession Planning and Management Practices in Higher Education

SPM practices in higher education have been a topic of recent research studies by both practitioners and researchers. Although most of the studies reviewed here highlight the need for more and better succession plans, it is clear the need is not being overlooked entirely. Miller and Bisbee (2006) examined the executive-level succession planning strategies at land grant institutions. Specifically, they were attempting to better understand how land grant institutions identify academic leaders, train them, and support them throughout their careers. The study relied on 16 randomly selected institutions from the original 1862 United States Land Grant Universities. From this population, the researchers sent surveys, including two open-ended questions, to a sample size of 264 academic leaders. In total, 169 participants responded to the web survey. Miller and Bisbee found an even split of leaders who felt well prepared for their current role. The authors noted this finding deviated from previous research, which indicated a lack of preparedness in academic leadership.

As it related to training, the participants in Miller and Bisbee's (2006) research noted several different methods, including workshops, seminars, conferences, small groups, and professional association programs. The training that was cited as most valuable, with 89% of participants agreeing, was on-the-job experiences. The only other training methods that more than 50% of the participants rated as valuable were personal initiatives (69%) and mentoring (51.8%). Slightly more than two-thirds of the respondents indicated their institution had no established leadership development program, and only 3.6% worked for an institution that had a developed succession plan.

Although Betts et al.'s (2009) research is over a decade old, it is cited by many of the current authors on academic leadership as a significant piece of research. The authors presented a meta-analysis of current research and literature related to the shortage of qualified administrators in higher education. By presenting data that demonstrates not only the need to train more qualified leaders in education but also the shifting demographics in the United States, this article made a compelling case that inclusive succession planning is imperative if higher education is to meet the needs of the next generation. The authors recommend four actions to be taken by the higher education community, most likely boards and senior leaders: (a) define visible career paths, (b) provide professional development across all levels of administration, (c) make an institutional commitment to succession planning, and (d) commit to increasing the diversity of their workforce. The recommendations also extend beyond the need for presidential succession to include a call to provide a pipeline into all levels of leadership in the academy.

Another study that contributed to understanding the impending problem of the dearth of qualified leaders for the chief executive position in higher education was research conducted by Klein and Salk (2013). The authors argued the lack of succession planning in higher education is compounded by the impending retirement of baby-boomer presidents. To better understand what current institutions were doing to remedy the issue, the researchers conducted a qualitative study focused on presidents, board chairs, and search firms. Results of semistructured interviews demonstrated that succession planning was ill-defined or nonexistent in most institutions. The culture of higher education was seen as the main barrier to succession planning as internal candidates are seen as having baggage – that is, known flaws and shortcomings, disagreements with peers, and personal viewpoints that may affect their leadership in a new role - compared to external hires. The authors suggested several recommendations. First, a clear definition of succession planning within higher education needs to be established. Second, the conversation around succession planning must begin with the board of directors. Third, the traditional view of succession planning needs to be challenged. Fourth, institutions should change their succession planning approach by "assessing the competency of current faculty and administration, conducting a risk analysis of the institution, and organizing a formal and complete mentoring and development program within the institution" (Klein & Salk, 2013, p. 343).

A strength of Klein and Salk's (2013) research is the inclusion of viewpoints from various stakeholders on the current state of presidential succession planning. Data from current presidents, board chairs, and search firms presented a robust case for the findings of the study. Although this study focused solely on the succession plan of the president's position, it demonstrated that succession planning in higher education is disjointed, misunderstood, or inadequately implemented.

One of the more modern articles on succession planning in the higher education industry highlighted the practices of the private sector (Cavanaugh, 2017). This literature review once again argued for the need to develop and employ succession plans in higher education. Cavanaugh demonstrated the benefits of succession planning in business and called for leaders in higher education to employ similar tactics. Combating an external hiring bias is a significant focal point of Cavanaugh's recommendations for current leaders. The author outlined four ways in which external hiring is counterintuitive. First, hiring external candidates over internal ones shows that institutions value perceived leadership over demonstrated leadership. Second, when internal talent is overlooked, a message is sent the only way to grow professionally is for employees to move out of the organization, which cancels out any development investment made by the institution. Third, external hiring often ignores the importance of organizational culture. Fourth, the notion that an internal candidate must go through a rigorous search process to be perceived as legitimate is wrong. Cavanaugh contended that legitimate leadership is bestowed upon a new leader by the governing board and a track record of success. The author's argument for internal hiring made a strong case for succession planning and leadership development to be seen as a central component of a higher education administrator's responsibility. As stated in this research, higher education as an industry has historically been opposed to internal promotions due to the value placed on *diversity of thought*. Cavanaugh made a compelling argument for rethinking that approach.

Leadership Pipeline

One of the main goals of succession planning and management is to assess an organization's internal capacity for promoting individuals into vacant leadership roles. Rothwell's (2015) seven-step model outlined this crucial step in the process. In the private sector, there have been several popular mainstream books and articles written to address this practice. Charan et al. (2011) argued for a new approach to filling leadership gaps and vacancies in organizations. Popularizing the phrase "leadership pipeline," these researchers posited the trend in hiring outside talent and the revolving door at the CEO level of many companies demonstrates that leadership development from within organizations is lacking. A significant contribution from their conceptualization and research is the focus on developmental differences based on leadership levels. Rather than focus only on the top position, organizations should seek to develop individuals at every level of leadership. This multitiered approach provides a clear pathway up a pipeline and into leadership for employees across the organization.

The main idea of the leadership pipeline model of leadership development rests in the development of individuals through six career passages: managing self to managing others, managing managers, functional manager, business manager, group manager, and finally, enterprise manager. At each passage, new skills, time frames, and work values are required. Charan et al. (2011) argued that "unfortunately, many managers often work at the wrong level" (p. 9). To combat this, organizations need to develop individuals as they progress through the pipeline, teaching the necessary skills and attitudes along the way. When combined with succession management principles, a clear picture of a holistic succession plan emerges.

In the opening chapter of *Succession*, Tichy (2014) argued for the importance of building internal leadership pipelines as a strategy in succession planning, stating,

> But what I am arguing, unequivocally, is that every time an organization's board needs to reach outside its own ranks for a successor to an incumbent CEO, such a desperate move, even if at the time it may be hailed as a breakthrough, is in fact an unmistakable sign of a broken leadership pipeline, and in my experience, broken leadership pipelines are the primary root cause of broken companies. (p. 20)

Additional researchers have used the leadership pipeline model to marry succession planning and leadership development. Conger and Fulmer (2003) offered practical applications for businesses interested in the leadership pipeline model of leadership development. Their research reviewed 16 companies, of which six were noted for their effectiveness in succession management. The authors described how poor performing companies promoted internal talent without developing them in needed leadership competencies. As a result, the promising leaders failed as they moved into the top echelon of Charan et al.'s (2011) framework. The problem, as the authors saw it, was these individuals were promoted based on past performance without having mastered the needed competencies for the next level of leadership. It could be argued that the companies had a succession plan, but that plan was poorly managed due to a lack of leadership development embedded in the process. Conger and Fulmer (2003) argued that successful organizations combine the practices of "succession planning and leadership development to create a long-term process for managing the talent roster across their organizations" (p. 77). They called this combination *succession management*.

There are five rules to developing an organization's leadership pipeline (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). First, organizations must focus on development. Rather than a list of potential successors to a given rule, succession management must focus on developmental activities such as job rotations, special assignments, and action learning. Second, organizations should identify what the researchers call *linchpin positions*. These positions are not limited to the C-suite. Instead, they begin in middle management and stretch all the way to the CEO office. A pool of potential successors should then be developed for one of these positions rather than a few select individuals. Third, the researchers recommend that organizations make their SPM efforts transparent. A visible plan, they argued, will allow employees to see what they need to do in order to prepare themselves for movement through the pipeline. Fourth, Conger and Fulmer explained that once a pool of candidates emerges, organizations must engage in long-term progress monitoring to ensure developmental gains. Monitoring allows the organization to head off any potential issues in the pipeline. Issues can range from recognizing that an individual is in the wrong job for development to the risk of losing a high potential employee to another organization. The best companies the researchers reviewed consider an outside hire for a critical position to demonstrate a failure of the succession management strategy. Last, successful organizations take a flexible approach to their succession management strategy. Continuous improvement and revision are necessary to both the process and the content of the plan.

Leadership Pipeline Research in Corporations

Dai et al. (2011) sought to test the leadership pipeline model proposed by Charan et al. (2011) by investigating how the competency profile changed from one leadership level to the next. Their study sought to demonstrate empirically the effectiveness of the leadership pipeline model using a 360-degree feedback instrument that covered 67 leadership competencies that spanned the entire leadership pipeline model. The research found the leadership pipeline model was supported and managers need to develop new competencies in order to be effective in new positions in the pipeline. The researchers suggested that organizations should not only inquire as to how to improve their leadership development programs, but they also need to recognize that identifying talent and developing a full range of leadership competencies are two different priorities and must work in tandem. In essence, organizations would be wise to infuse the various skills, time frames, and work values outlined in the leadership pipeline model into their leadership development program and link an individual's development to their current leadership level. Dai et al. (2011) summarized,

> By identifying the crucial leadership competencies for different position levels and matching these competencies with the right developmental experiences, organizations can reduce the time needed to prepare an individual for various management positions, because there is little or no wasted effort on jobs that merely duplicates skills. (p. 376)

Leadership Pipeline Research in Higher Education

The leadership pipeline model has not escaped higher education researchers. Baker et al. (2019) applied this model to academic leadership positions. They point out the growing need for faculty to develop leadership skills to handle the growing pressures facing higher education. The researchers noted that in recent studies investigating leadership development offered through faculty development programs, a growing interest has emerged in extending leadership training beyond the formal academic leadership roles. Deans, associate deans, and department chairs are natural targets for such development. Increased faculty inclusion in these efforts demonstrates a commitment to a multileveled approach to leadership development, a fundamental tenet of Charan et al.'s (2011) approach.

Another critical focus of Baker et al.'s (2019) research is the investigation of how higher education institutions can build better leadership pipelines and where potential leaders are being lost in their careers. To begin, the authors defined the leadership pipeline "as a systematic and visible system for identifying candidates for succession management, coupled with processes and programming for development" (Baker et al., 2019, p. 825). This definition links the ideas of the leadership pipeline (Charan et al., 2011) with SPM (Rothwell, 2015). Baker et al. found that faculty members are unprepared for leadership positions and are lacking in encouragement to develop leadership aspirations. Other key findings in the research are that mentoring and coaching are proactive behaviors that encourage faculty to seek leadership roles, there is a notable drop in the number of faculty who progress from faculty chair to more senior roles, women are less likely to pursue the entry-level leadership roles, and few mid-career faculty consider senior leadership positions.

These findings led Baker et al. (2019) to several implications for practitioners and researchers. The authors suggested that more research is needed to uncover why the vast majority of mid-career faculty who seek leadership roles do not have aspirations beyond the faculty chair level of the academic leadership pipeline. The authors also observed that more research is needed on leadership development. They found a perceived lack of preparedness among participants in taking on advanced leadership roles. The implications for practice are multifaceted. First, Baker et al. suggested leadership development as a process for faculty. To begin, the authors posited that institutions should assess their overall faculty development portfolio and identify gaps in leadership development opportunities offered to faculty. Second, Baker et al. outlined the need to clarify performance and assessment measures of current leadership roles, linking them to the institutional strategy. This approach will help current leaders mentor future leaders. Last, the researchers argued for the creation of a culture of mentorship. Mentoring early and mid-career faculty members was found to be influential in preparing them for future academic leadership roles.

Leader and Leadership Development

Leadership development, like the conception of leadership, is always in a state of evolution. It is essential to understand the basic definition of leader and leadership development before beginning to examine modern attempts at improving these activities. In addition to the definition of terms outlined in Chapter 1, Day and Dragoni (2015) added the "definitions of leader and leadership development focus on efforts aimed at expanding individual and collective capacity to be effective in leadership roles and to bring about effective leadership" (p. 134).

Moreover, the difference between leader and leadership development likely stems from two different conceptualizations of leadership. Day (2000) noted this dichotomy, describing the first view of leadership as an "individual-level skill" and the second view as "a social process that engages everyone in a community" (p. 583). Day warned that organizations should not choose one approach of development over the other observing, "the preferred approach is to link leader development with leadership development such that the development of leadership transcends but does not replace the development of individual leaders" (p. 605). As outlined below, researchers and organizations inside and outside of higher education are simultaneously proposing new frameworks and relying on proven tactics that align with the individual level skills of leaders and the social and relational aspects of leadership. Through understanding the changing nature and needs of leader and leadership development, organizations can better shape their succession plans to include developmental activities called for by experts (Charan et al., 2011; Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Rothwell, 2015).

One example of modernizing leadership development approaches is a *network enhancing framework* proposed by Cullen-Lester et al. (2017). Cullen-Lester et al. advocated for leadership development programs that focus on enhancing (a) an individual's intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies, and (b) the relational and social aspects of the individual and the teams on which they participate. These relational and social aspects include the ability to understand, leverage, and modify the social network connections held by the individual and teams. The researchers state their proposed framework furthers the view of "leadership as an outcome of multilevel social dynamics" by "including social and leadership networks as critical components of these dynamics" (p. 133).

McCall et al. (1988) demonstrated the high return on investment of on the job experience over 30 years ago. In their research, McCall et al. explained that on the job experience contributes more substantially to a leader's development than seminars, conferences, and classes.

Their book on the lessons learned from experience covered four separate studies representing data gleaned from 191 executives. The experiences of these executives are inclusive of challenging assignments, the positive and negative influence of their superiors, and hardships faced by the executives. While action learning is a structured method for leadership development and many of the experiences listed in McCall et al.'s research were not structured, it is easy to see how the employment of action learning (Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Rivas & Jones, 2015) in a leadership development program may hasten the necessary experiences that are foundational to a leader's growth.

Day (2000) also covered the most common methods of leader and leadership development, mentorship, executive coaching, 360-degree feedback, networking, job assignments, and action learning. Day noted that while all of these practices of development have been highlighted for their successes, they are likely only effective where they are consistently and intentionally implemented. Therefore, the focus of this study is not specifically on what leader and leadership development are or are not, but rather on how small colleges utilize development strategies effectively and whether or not they are included in an overarching SPM plan.

Leader and Leadership Development Programs in Higher Education

Leader and leadership development programs should be an essential pillar of SPM strategies employed by colleges and universities (Baker et al., 2019). Several recent articles have focused on connecting leader and leadership development to succession planning and called for a more robust strategy across the higher education industry in these areas.

Hempsall (2014) conducted a qualitative study that focused on what higher education institutions are doing to develop leaders and meet current issues facing higher education (e.g., declining enrolment). Two key questions are posed in the research: "What characteristics define good leadership in higher education[*sic*]?" and "What can we do differently and/or better in preparing people for leadership roles and the work of leadership in our institutions?" (p. 385). The author used semistructured interviews to collect data. Participants of the study include higher education institutions from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. A total of 12 males and 17 females were interviewed. Several themes were identified as a result of the interviews. First, traditional leadership skills and the view of leaders as "heroes" were no longer seen as effective in today's higher education landscape. Rather, transformational, distributed, and post-heroic leadership skills and competencies were desired in modern leaders. Second, the focus on fundraising, compliance, and executive compensation were factors that encourage short-term thinking rather than long-term transformation. Third, the lack of formal leadership development programs contributes to the underpreparedness of today's higher education leaders. Hempsall (2014) suggested these results indicate the need for more formal development of leaders in the industry.

The global perspectives included in Hempsall's (2014) research demonstrated the universal need for an increased focus on leadership development in higher education. The categories that emerged from the interviews provide readers with a clear understanding of the issues facing leadership development in higher education. One limitation is this research is descriptive rather than prescriptive and does not give examples of how to solve the problem. However, the research does include an emphasis on developing an internal pipeline of leadership. The author asserted that future studies should focus on the impact that institutional policies play on the culture of leadership development. Such policies will be examined through the interview protocol of this research.

Another broad study of leader and leadership development strategies reviewed practices of academic leadership education within the Association of American Universities (AAU; Gigliotti, 2017). Gigliotti argued that leadership education and development is needed for several reasons. First, the higher education industry is undergoing complex change, including the rising cost of education, increased competition, growth in online learning, public accountability, and student accessibility, to name a few. Moreover, the author highlighted that a growing number of college presidents in the USA come from fields outside of higher education. Gigliotti concluded, “The growing pressures facing academic leaders, coupled with the trend of recruiting senior leaders from outside of the academy, point to the importance of exploring the perceived lack of preparation for those in formal academic leadership roles” (p. 198). The purpose of his study is to explore academic leadership education, understanding what is being offered to academic leaders and the experiences of those who have completed these education programs.

The AAU is comprised of 62 institutions, representing both the private and public sectors of higher education. Membership into the AAU is by invitation only. Gigliotti (2017) focused on the AAU due to their perceived reputations as leading academic institutions in the United States and Canada. The researcher relied on content analysis of data collected through the universities’ websites in addition to interviews with academic leaders at six of the institutions. Gigliotti found that all AAU institutions did offer formal and informal opportunities for faculty and staff leadership development. Several important factors characterized these development opportunities. Not only did the development offerings vary in size and duration, but they highlighted particular outcomes that were unique to the university that offered the development. In this way, the leadership development connected the leader to the mission, vision, and values of the organization in which they worked. This nuance supports Walseth’s (2009) suggestion that succession planning solves the issue of hiring leaders that do not know the culture of an institution. Programs that link leadership development to the mission, vision, and values of the institution would not only better prepare the individual for higher levels of leadership, but also embed them deeper in the culture of the organization.

Gigliotti (2017) also observed that communities of practice were a theme among a number of these development programs, often taking the form of pairing leaders with mentors. However, the interviews with deans and associate deans at six of the institutions yielded a more negative understanding of these leadership development efforts. Gigliotti noted that almost all of the respondents spoke negatively about their experiences with these programs. The respondents also discussed the lack of development they participated in before landing academic leadership roles, aligning with current research in the industry (Hempsall, 2014; Morris, 2012; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Floyd, 2016). Further, the interviewees noted the lack of *real* management training, citing the realization they had never seen a budget or had to navigate a personnel action before taking a leadership role. Instead, the respondents indicated they had to learn on the job. However, the few respondents who had participated in the AAU leadership development programs did note an appreciation for the knowledge and perspective gained as a result of the training. In sum, Gigliotti (2017) concluded that institutions could find value in designing educational initiatives relative to cultivating relationships, approaches to addressing the complex issues facing higher education, and the administrative competencies that facilitate effective academic leadership. Lastly, Gigliotti encouraged future research to extend this topic by examining the experiences of academic leaders in various types of institutions. This present study aims to respond to this call for future research.

A recent study by Selingo et al. (2017) that collected qualitative data from 165 presidents and 840 president's CVs revealed not only the diverse career pathways to the chief executive role, but also called for more formal leadership development for presidents. Presidents who participated in the study were asked to rate the importance of particular knowledge skills and behaviors as it relates to the presidency. The top six knowledge skills and behaviors were (a) strategist, (b) communicator and storyteller, (c) fundraiser, (d) collaborator, (e) financial and operational acumen, and ranking last, (f) academic and intellectual leader. The researchers noted the traditional pathway to the presidency, via the provost office, is waning, aligning with findings in previous research (Klein & Salk, 2013). Selingo et al. (2017) concluded that "the shift in responsibilities means that the provost's role might not always be the best preparation for the presidency" (p. 9). Another key finding from this research is the lack of formal leadership development offered to higher education presidents. Nearly two-thirds of the participants stated they had coaches that helped prepare them to take the role, but only one-third indicated they had executive coaches to succeed in the role. Further, the participants indicated that leadership development was the second most pressing training need (fundraising was rated as the most important). However, several presidents in the study claimed a career in leadership, rather than teaching and research, was looked down upon in the academy. Leadership development, according to one president, was "stigmatized" (p. 13). Lastly, the researchers noted succession planning is largely absent in higher education. As a result, they encouraged organizations to develop intentional training and leadership development opportunities for emerging leaders. When comparing leadership development approaches of higher education to corporations, the authors noted,

> Companies that demonstrate the highest maturity level in leadership development are 10 times more likely to be highly effective at identifying effective leaders than other organizations. High-maturity organizations approach succession management at multiple layers of the organization, not just the top, and approach succession as a continuous process rather than an activity or event. (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 14)

While the college presidents interviewed in Selingo et al.'s (2017) study highlighted the need for more leadership development, researchers out of Rutgers University have developed an innovative approach to filling this gap (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Ruben et al., 2018; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). The Rutgers Leadership Academy (RLA) provides leadership training for academic and administrative roles, highlighting both the formal and informal nature of leadership. The program targets mid-career faculty and staff who aspire to higher levels of leadership within higher education. The RLA is one of several leadership development strategies that exist in The Rutgers Center for Organizational Development and Leadership, which aims to train leaders on a two-dimensional model of leadership development (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017). The two-dimensional model focuses on developing industry-specific competencies (vertical development) and cross-cutting leadership skills and competencies (horizontal development). According to the researchers, the strength of this approach to leadership development is that it avoids exclusively focusing on the experiences of higher education leaders that could "have the unintended consequence of validating frameworks for leadership recruitment, development, and evaluation that reproduce the current state of affairs, rather than helping to define the competencies needed to significantly advance the work of colleges and universities" (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017, p. 42).

Formal Leadership Development Programs

Several higher education studies have reviewed the implementation and outcomes of formal leadership development programs in the higher education industry. Many of these programs incorporate several of the strategies mentioned above but are different because they focus on a cohort of emerging leaders or follow a formal pathway through a series of development strategies rather than a single strategy.

Berman (2015) conducted a case study of an academic leadership development program. The author contended that formal graduate education does not prepare faculty for leadership roles and the gap in preparation is best solved through succession planning practices. Berman used a qualitative, semistructured interview approach to collect feedback from seven faculty members who completed a leadership development program geared toward preparing them for academic leadership roles. The leadership program had eight female participants who were all current nursing faculty, of which half were women of color. Seven of the eight participants provided feedback through interviews. Six themes emerged from the study. First, participants noted they found the peer cohort supportive. Second, the interviewees suggested the program be enhanced through real-life application. Third, participants had little to no experience with the content previous to the program, indicating the content was implicitly learned in their previous roles as faculty members. Fourth, the participants' self-perception changed over the course of the program. Fifth, the program was perceived as being helpful to faculty member's preparation for future leadership roles, and sixth, the participants believed the content was broadly applicable.

The strengths of Berman's (2015) case study lie in the feedback gathered from the participants. While all six themes were not unanimous, enough consensus emerged for practitioners to have a benchmark for future cohorts. This research provides a look into a cohort leadership development program as a way to build future leaders prior to them taking a leadership role. It also demonstrated how programs can be incorporated outside of a degree-oriented education program and led by leadership at an institution.

Ruben et al. (2018) reviewed the content and early outcomes of the aforementioned Rutgers Leadership Academy. The study agreed with many higher education researchers that few institutions offer or require systematic preparation for leadership, and as a result, higher education faces a deficit of leaders prepared to overcome modern challenges in the industry. In response to this reality, the Rutgers Leadership Academy was created and contains a broad leadership education and development approach to train leaders from within the college. The first cohort of participants represented 28 faculty and staff from various schools and departments within Rutgers. Pre- and posttests were conducted to evaluate participant growth. Results demonstrated a marked change in how participants conceptualized leadership and the role played by organizational culture, visioning, and planning. All but two participants rated the program as *outstanding*. Additionally, the majority of participants indicated the program had a positive influence on their current roles and led to higher degrees of preparedness for future leadership roles.

This case study found overwhelmingly positive data that demonstrated the growth of the participants. The authors include a review of relevant literature, conceptual foundations, and detailed components of the leadership program, all of which help inform other institutions on how and why to craft similar development programs.

Mentorship

Mentoring was mentioned in a variety of the research articles reviewed in this present study (Gigliotti, 2017; Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Groves, 2007; Kutchner & Kleschik, 2016; Morris, 2012). Two of the most relevant studies will be reviewed in light of mentorship here (Grotrian-Ryan, 2015; Kutchner & Kleschik, 2016).

Grotrian-Ryan (2015) began her research by citing two problems: the high turnover rate among senior higher education administrators and the lack of administrative experience for most faculty members. As a result, faculty who are promoted into administrator roles are unprepared to tackle the challenges they face and are forced to adapt quickly. One way of developing the skills and competencies for leadership is through mentorship. Grotrian-Ryan examined the mentorship program offered through the American Council on Education (ACE). The purpose of this mixed-methods research was twofold. First, the study sought to discover which functions of mentoring the ACE Fellows Program participants perceived to be the most and least utilized aspects of the program. Second, the study aimed to discover which functions were the most and least beneficial to their leadership development.

The final sample used in the study was 36 former ACE Fellows. Grotrian-Ryan (2015) first surveyed the participants through an online instrument. Of those participants, nine were purposively asked to participate in the qualitative stage of the data collection. Several key themes emerged from the data. First, 94% of the respondents indicated they perceived mentoring to be valuable, and 82% felt mentorship provided by their assigned mentor in the ACE program was valuable. Second, the most used career development function from the program was "challenging assignments," of which 63.9% said were used "often" or "very frequently." Not only did the online survey discover that "challenging assignments" were the most used aspect of career development, but the survey also discovered that 75% of the participants found this function to be moderately or extremely beneficial. The second most utilized (58.4%) and beneficial (75%) function of the mentorship program was coaching. Third, in addition to the career development functions of mentoring, the online survey discovered the most utilized and beneficial psychosocial functions of mentoring was role modeling, followed by acceptance-and-confirmation. The qualitative follow-up interviews also produced three themes. First, the participants noted they received mentorship not only from their assigned mentors but also from each other. Second, the interviewees desired to become mentors for future ACE Fellows as well as ongoing mentorship for themselves. Third, the psychosocial functions of mentorship were more utilized and beneficial than the career development aspect of mentorship. Grotrian-Ryan suggested this is primarily due to the career development that had already taken place for the participants prior to becoming an ACE Fellow.

The challenges facing higher education leaders have been a theme through the majority of the literature reviewed for this study. Kutchner and Kleschick's (2016) article on the importance of mentorship not only shares this view, but uniquely does so from a nonacademic leadership perspective. Kutchner and Kleschick pointed out the declining high school graduate population in the coming decade will prove especially challenging for enrollment leaders in higher education. One way to gain a competitive advantage and better prepare future enrollment managers and college registrars is through mentorship programs. The authors outlined two avenues for small colleges facing a resource shortage for internal formal mentorship programs: informal mentorship and external programs offered through professional organizations (in this article, the authors highlighted the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers Mentor Committee program). The Mentor Committee was formed in 2010 and saw early success with all 24 participants remaining connected to this program.

Additionally, the program uncovered the most robust mentorship relationships were fostered between the participants who lived in proximity to their mentors. Kutchner and

Kleschick (2016) concluded this finding demonstrated the importance of social networking to mentorship effectiveness. The authors recommend following Groves' (2007) recommendation of creating a network of mentoring relationships within an organization to integrate leadership development and succession planning. More specifically, they advocated for administrative staff to identify and maintain mentorship relationships that would become a formal structure to support employees. Kutchner and Kleschick offered seven steps to frame out an effective formal mentorship program:

- Understand the institution's mission and goals. Leaders and emerging talent must be on the same page;
- Senior leadership must endorse and support a mentorship culture;
- Identify critical gaps and structure the mentorship program to solve those issues;
- Develop specific goals that can be accomplished but do not become burdensome;
- Provide funding;
- Solicit feedback from mentors and mentees, making adjustments as necessary;
- Understand the institution will lose some mentees to other organizations and be supportive of this reality.

Executive Coaching

Colleges and universities have demonstrated the success of executive coaching in developing future leaders. One such study was a review of the use of executive coaches at Drexel University (Glasgow et al., 2009). The authors presented an impetus for the need to employ a systematic succession plan in nursing colleges to combat the shortage of qualified academic leaders in nursing education. The researchers maintained the required skill set for nursing academic administrators is gained "through a deliberate, executed development plan over time"

(Glasgow et al., 2009, p. 205). The article reviewed how Drexel University implemented leadership training and executive coaching to prepare new nursing education administrators for leadership roles. Using a qualitative approach, the researchers interviewed four individuals who completed the leadership symposium and underwent executive coaching. During the leadership symposiums, veteran directors, associate deans, and deans engaged the new leaders on a variety of topics related to general leadership. The second phase of the succession plan incorporated the use of an executive coach. A total of eight to ten meetings took place between the coach, new leader, and their current associate dean. These meetings addressed strengths, weaknesses, and growth opportunities. Participants noted several positive outcomes from this approach to leadership development. Learning conflict management, how to be more accessible to subordinates, and improved communication were skills learned through this process. Every participant found executive coaching to be beneficial. Glasgow et al. concluded the study by emphasizing their perspective that executive coaching is vital to preparing the next generation of leaders.

Action Learning

As previously noted in Grotrian-Ryan’s (2015) study on mentorship in the ACE Fellows program, action learning, or *challenging assignments* are some of the most utilized and beneficial career development tools that an organization can employ. Rivas and Jones (2015) outlined three examples from a south Texas university that illustrates how action learning can be embedded in a succession plan.

The first action learning program is entitled Provost Fellows. Two to three faculty members were funded each year to work with administration to solve particular administrative needs. Rivas and Jones (2015) indicated that previous projects have been as varied as creating a freshman year experience program to designing a faculty resource center for instructional support. The faculty member is selected by the provost, who grants release time and a small stipend. Participants have a year to craft and propose their solution. Throughout the process of action learning, the faculty members interact with senior administrators, attend executive meetings, and learn to function within the administrative environment. The researchers observed the *Provost Fellows* program not only serves to assist the institution in solving a problem, but also gives faculty administrative experience and encourages them to consider a career move.

The second program reviewed by Rivas and Jones (2015) is called *ULead*. This action learning program is designed to give faculty an opportunity to develop leadership skills. The program runs over the course of one year and consists of leadership readings in organizational behavior, strategic planning, business functions, leadership theory, and personal leadership development. Additionally, faculty participants attend short lectures and two all-day classes related to leadership topics. At the conclusion of the program, faculty are celebrated during a ceremony attended by peers and senior leadership of the institution.

Rivas and Jones examined the outcomes of these two faculty action learning opportunities and found participants have gone on to become the Dean of the College of Education, Director of the Faculty Center for Instructional Support, Director of Student Relations and Community Support, and Director of Student Advising among other career changes. The researchers noted participants acknowledged a greater understanding of administration and commitment to the institution as a result of the programs.

The third action learning program examined, *The Next Generation Academy*, was specific to the noninstructional staff of the university. This program ran over a 2-year time frame and accepted 10 to 12 staff members. Throughout of the program, staff were exposed to faculty members comprised of senior leaders, faculty who had expertise in organizational leadership, and community business leaders. Additionally, participants engaged in problem-solving assignments. Over the summer months, the Vice President of Student Affairs assigned a major task to the group. This program, like *ULead*, concluded with a graduation ceremony attended by peers, senior leaders, and family members. Participants of this program went on to fill many leadership roles at the university and elsewhere, including Registrar and Director of Admissions, Directors of Financial Aid, Vice President of Student Affairs, Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management, and a community college President.

Small Colleges in the United States

Chapter 1 covered many of the challenges facing higher education in the early 21st century. Small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities are especially susceptible to these challenges as they rely more heavily on revenue from enrollment, have seen little return on endowments, are operating in an environment with increased competition, and have experienced a decrease in philanthropic giving (Carey, 2014). With the move to greater reliance on online and blended modalities for survival, small colleges are behind their larger state counterparts in the required infrastructure needed to successfully navigate this transition (Liu & Tourtellott, 2011). The weight of these challenges falls most heavily on the shoulders of small, private, not-for-profit colleges, leading to an increase in closures and mergers (Beyer, 2019; Eide, 2018). While the majority of the literature that outlines these modern challenges is found in trade publications, there have been several researchers who have added to the knowledge base of how small colleges have dealt with hardship (Carey, 2014; Liu & Tourtellott, 2011; Moran, 2016).

Carey (2014) evaluated two small college institutions that were successful in turning around their dire situations. The researcher wanted to gain an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of the leaders involved in the turnaround of these small private colleges. Carey interviewed a total of 18 participants (nine from each institution). Both institutions were not only small, private, not-for-profit institutions, but they were also faith-based and had enrollments under 1,000 students. Both institutions also brought in new presidents to lead the turnaround efforts. Carey uncovered similarities between the two success stories, stating,

> Eight findings common to both schools became evident: (a) the board recruits a president ready for a significant challenge; (b) the president designs a compelling turnaround plan; (c) the president takes immediate action to correct the most pressing problems; (d) key constituencies provide support to the president; (e) the president develops the team and releases those who could not embrace the vision; (f) the president successfully raises donor funds; (g) the president communicates a clear direction for the future; and (h) the institution identifies and offers a distinctive aspect that brings growth in student enrollment and, thus, in revenue. (Carey, 2014, p. 311)

The findings of Carey's (2014) research highlights the importance that leadership, specifically the president, plays in the success of small, private, not-for-profit institutions. Carey concluded,

> What was significant about these two successful cases was that much of the progress depended on the leader and his ability to create change at his institution. The importance of recruiting an entrepreneurial leader with a blend of tenacity and vision was constantly reinforced throughout the interviews. (p. 315)

Liu and Tourtellott (2011) reviewed two different approaches for how small colleges successfully diversify their learning modalities (online and blended formats). Liu and Tourtellott noted that "financial challenges have greatly limited small colleges' capacity and innovation, especially small private colleges whose budget mainly relies on student tuition and public donations" (p. 62). They proposed two different models for small private colleges. First, is the *fast and narrow approach* which entails dedicating scarce resources into a few programs in order to adapt them for new learning modalities. The second approach, *broad and slow*, spends more time scaffolding the faculty's expertise in technology and preparing them to deliver coursework online. This second approach takes more time to see tangible results.

The need for this move towards expanding learning modalities lies in the proliferation of online programs offered by large public and for-profit universities (Liu & Tourtellott, 2011). As local and regional students have more options for their pursuit of higher education, small, private, not-for-profit colleges must adapt to survive. The authors presented a case study of a small college in upstate New York that adapted successfully. The institution's success was dependent on several factors: (1) alignment of blended learning with institutional mission, (2) faculty and administration support on what resources will be dedicated to the transition, (3) technological literacy, (4) collaborative culture between departments, and (5) updating policies that allow the flexibility that blended learning provides. In each one of these findings lies the need for strong, mission-driven, and collaborative leaders. As competition for fewer students increase and financial resources are threatened, small colleges must lean on their leaders to be innovative to survive.

Moran (2016) examined the role that organizational resilience plays in assisting small, private, not-for-profit institutions in surviving and remaining effective during organizational decline. The author found small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities were at the most significant risk of closure during periods of decline. These colleges have employed several strategies to solve these challenges. Moran explained that "many smaller institutions are responding to the drop in student enrollment by discounting tuition, reducing the number of academic programs, even replacing leadership in hopes of achieving turnaround" (p. 269). The success of such strategies has been mixed. Moran observed that while many of these colleges have closed, some have survived. This reality led to the research question, "Why are some US higher educational institutions more resilient at coping with organizational decline than other institutions operating within the same segment of the higher education sector?" (p. 269).

To answer this question, Moran (2016) sent a 60-item survey to small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities in the United States. The researcher received responses from key administrators of 141 of these colleges and universities. Moran found small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities facing organizational decline should rely on two organizational resilience response factors, *goal-directed solution seeking* and *avoidance*. The author explains,

> Goal-Directed Solution Seeking suggests that administrative team members enjoy improvising solutions to problems and consider multiple solution possibilities. Team goals guide individual goals, and team members understand each other's team roles... Avoidance constrains the free-wheeling problem-solving process creating during Goal-Directed Solution Seeking…Avoidance enables administrators to keep the institution's mission in mind when evaluating coping solutions, preventing hasty, knee-jerk reaction to multiple competing stakeholder interests that arise during organizational decline. (Moran, 2016, p. 279)

As can be seen from these studies, small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities have experienced challenges at adapting to the shifting higher education landscape. These researchers also demonstrated that some of these colleges have been successful at surviving, thriving, and adapting in the face of these challenges. While the scope of the present study seeks to discover the best practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning and management at small, private, not-for-profit institutions, practitioners and researchers may also discover these practices lead to more effective organizational performance for institutions caught in the crosshairs of these challenges.

Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed literature pertaining to succession planning and management, approaches to building leadership pipelines, current practices in leader and leadership development, and the challenges facing small, private, not-for-profit institutions. This literature highlights the connection between using leader and leadership development strategies in developing an organization’s human and social capital. The growth of a larger and more holistic leadership pipeline may contribute to an organization’s overall succession planning and management strategy (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Additionally, the literature reviewed in the present study demonstrates the difference in how the private sector has utilized succession planning strategies compared to the education sector (Cavanaugh, 2017). The difference in this approach may be one reason that has contributed to the scarcity of qualified leaders in the academy (Betts et al., 2009; Grotrian-Ryan, 2015).

Chapter 3: Methodology

To support the study's exploration of succession planning and leadership development strategies used by institutions of higher education, Chapter 3 provides a review of the purpose statement and research questions and then outlines the research design of the study including the population and sample, instrumentation, data collection, and the process of data analysis. Quality assurance, ethics, and study limitations are also addressed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. This may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build better leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet the shortage of qualified leaders within the industry.

Research Question

What practices have small, not-for-profit, private colleges engaged in to (a) develop leaders and leadership and (b) develop succession planning and management strategies to ensure continuity of leadership?

Research Design

The research design of this study was a qualitative, multiple case study using a constructivist paradigm. The aim of the study predicated this research design as the research aimed to explore: (a) the leader and leadership development strategies and succession planning and management strategies that have been employed by multiple small, private, not-for-profit higher education institutions through experiences shared by leaders in these organizations; and

(b) why the participants believe these strategies to be effective. Qualitative research most appropriately fits research that aims to explore and investigate social phenomena (Leavy, 2017; Yin, 2017). Saldaña and Omasta (2016) posited that qualitative research's "primary purpose is to provide a rich medium for examining the human condition" (p. 146). A qualitative research approach allowed me to examine the lived experience of higher education leaders and their institution's approach to the SPM, and leader and leadership development.

Constructivism refers "to the cumulative process of knowledge building within one's mind" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016, p. 142). Constructivism was chosen as the philosophical worldview as it allowed me to understand leader and leadership development and SPM strategies through the participants' subjective experiences of and subsequent construction of meaning. Saldaña and Omasta (2016) noted that qualitative research is an inductive and evolving form of inquiry and a constructivist approach to qualitative research is one based on human interaction as necessary to interpret and understand reality.

A multiple case study research design aligns with Yin's (2017) argument of a case study's applicability when a researcher wants to understand the contextual factors of a phenomenon. He further argued that case studies are appropriate when "there will be many more variables of interest than data points" (Yin, 2017, p. 46). Saldaña and Omasta (2016) described case studies as a genre of qualitative research that focuses on a unique individual (or, in the case of this study, an organization) that can be combined and compared to other cases. This study focused not only on the methods and strategies used in leader and leadership development and SPM, but also on the perceived effectiveness of the strategies used by higher education leaders, thereby capturing "more variables of interest than data points" (Yin, 2017, p. 46). Moreover, Saldaña and Omasta (2016) maintained that "if researchers wish to understand the human condition deeply, words and images rather than numbers could be more-revealing forms of collection and analysis" (p. 145).

I conducted semistructured, face-to-face, web-based, and phone interviews. Interviews were chosen as the primary instrument of data collection due to its ability to narrow the gap between the interviewer and interviewee, observe participants' construction of meaning from conversations with participants, and use narrative accounts of participants to collect and examine data (Klenke, 2008). Semistructured interviews provided an opportunity to probe further by asking follow-up questions and to gather additional information relative to the participants' beliefs and perceptions of the efficacy of the strategies and approaches. The major strength of semistructured interviews is that it simultaneously allowed me to use structured and preplanned questions to guide the conversation while also allowing me to analyze the response, modify the questions, and gather additional data for clarity (Klenke, 2008; Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Several weaknesses, however, pose a challenge for this research. Klenke (2008) noted that semistructured interviews are often dependent on the skill of the researcher to formulate questions mid-interview, can be difficult to analyze, and have limited generalizability. However, through interviewing multiple individuals at each site, I was able to better triangulate the data to best understand each unique case and then compare and contrast the multiple cases with one another. All interviews were conducted one-on-one, recorded, and transcribed. One-on-one interviews facilitated in-depth conversation and are commonplace in qualitative research (Leavy, 2017). Additionally, in-depth, semistructured interviews allowed the interviewees to use their own language rather than a predetermined set of responses (Leavy, 2017), giving me more nuances from which to draw conclusions and compare with other cases.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was formal leaders across the upper hierarchical levels at small, private, not-for-profit colleges in the Midwest United States. Institutions were identified through the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Ohio. Once the institutions were narrowed, an invitation to participate was sent to the institution's president asking for permission to approach the administrators at their institution (Appendix A). In each case, the president provided the names of administrators at their institution that met the requirements of the study. These leaders are the most likely to have firsthand knowledge of leadership development and SPM strategies that are currently in place at their institutions. Participants met the following criteria to be included in the study:

1. Hold a title of formal leadership within the college or university (e.g., president, vice-president, provost, dean);
2. A minimum of two years of experience in a formal leadership role (at any college);
3. Work for a college or university that is classified as a small, private, not-for-profit institution in the Midwest United States (see definition of small college in Chapter 1).

The first step of choosing the sample was based upon which organizations agreed to be a part of the multicase study. Once the sites were selected, I used convenience and purposive sampling to ensure the above criteria were met in the population sample. Leavy (2017) observed that purposive sampling is "based on the premise that seeking out the best cases for the study produces the best data" (p. 79). Due to the research question and the specificity of experience required to provide the needed data, purposive sampling was the most appropriate approach to identify a homogenous group of participants. According to Daniel (2012), a typical sample size for case studies ranges between three to five participants per organization. As a multiple case study, I identified four institutions and interviewed three participants from each site, resulting in a sample size of 12 participants.

Instrumentation

I formulated a consistent line of inquiry, beginning with close-ended demographic questions and an additional nine open-ended questions, which I posed to each participant with a low degree of structure. Demographic questions included position, years of experience in upper administration, years in academia, years with the institution, and gender. Additional follow-up and clarifying questions were asked as needed. Questions moved from general to specific as rapport was established (Leavy, 2017). Interviews ranged from about 30 to 60 minutes in length. The full interview protocol, including an interview script and questions, is included in Appendix D.

Data Collection Procedures

I gained approval from Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board (IRB; Appendix E). Participants for the study were selected using the criteria mentioned above. I gained approval to conduct the research from the president at each institution. An email (Appendix B) was sent to all individuals who participated in the research that provided further details on the logistics of the interview and included a copy of the consent form for them to review and sign. Interview times were scheduled at the convenience of the participant and conducted via Zoom. As mentioned previously, an interview protocol was used to maintain consistency across each interview. After introducing myself and reviewing the privacy and confidentiality assurances for the study, I began the audio recorder and began the interview protocol, starting with the demographic questions. At the end of the interview, I allowed time for brief informal discussion. I thanked the participants for their time and stopped the recorder.

Data Analysis

Rossman and Rallis (2011) stated, "Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data is the process of systematically organizing the interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials you have collected; bringing meaning to them so they tell a coherent story" (p. 171). Creswell (2014) outlines six steps in qualitative data analysis:

1. Organize and prepare data
2. Read through all data
3. Begin coding
4. Generate a description of the setting and people as well as themes
5. Advance how the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative
6. Interpret the data

To prepare the data for analysis, I transcribed all the interviews through a confidential transcription service. After transcription, I checked the transcripts for accuracy and engaged in interview condensation. Interview condensation was used to reduce the length of the interview through the elimination of redundancies and extraneous comments that are unrelated to the research questions (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016). Once all data were transcribed and condensed, I reread all transcripts in their entirety before moving to step three.

The process of analysis continued with coding. Utilizing In Vivo coding to identify themes and understand meaning. In Vivo coding "utilizes the participant's own language as a symbol system for qualitative data analysis" (Saldaña & Omasta, 2016, p. 121). Coding was completed through the use of Dedoose (online qualitative data analysis application), which also enabled me to examine all transcripts for the frequency and density of the codes that were produced during the coding process. Upon completion of coding each interview, major themes and patterns were compared across all interviews allowing for richer data analysis of (a) how small, private, not-for-profit colleges approach leader and leadership development and succession planning and management strategies; and (b) which of these strategies have been effective from the perspective of the participants. The goal was to identify major themes that would frame the findings of the study and lay the foundation for the overarching themes that emerged at the conclusion of the analysis.

The narrative representation of the themes comprises step five in Creswell's (2014) data analysis model. In this step, I developed a qualitative narrative comprising themes from the data. The implications, recommendations, and proposed framework found in Chapter 5 completed the sixth step, interpretation.

Ethics

This research was conducted following the guidelines of the Abilene Christian University IRB. I committed to accuracy, transparency, avoidance of plagiarism, and integrity in handling sensitive and personal information. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix C) prior to data collection and audio recording. The consent form outlined the study's purpose, research method, anticipated time commitment (approximately 60 minutes), risks to the participant, and the commitment to confidentiality. All identifying information for the participant and institution were withheld from publications of the study's results. Recorded interviews were secured on my laptop and password protected for security. Password protection was also be used for anonymized data analyzed on Dedoose's website.

Participants stood to benefit from the research inasmuch as they were able to reflect on effective practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning and management strategies. This reflection may have allowed the participants to reexamine their institution's policies and practices and improve or recommit to those policies and practices. Furthermore, there may be a broad benefit to higher education researchers as the data analysis aims to condense several cases into recommendations for small college and university administrators that could be further examined in additional contexts. Sharing the research report with interested participants will ensure a balance of burdens and benefits of the study.

Quality of Research

Validity and reliability are important concepts used by quantitative researchers to demonstrate the quality of their research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). However, as Creswell (2014) noted, these terms do not carry the same connotation in qualitative research as they do in quantitative research. Bryman and Bell (2015) pointed out the various ways that qualitative researchers have attempted to adapt these concepts to research that relies less on measurements in a quantitative sense. Creswell (2014) presented one way of adapting the concepts by arguing that qualitative validity ensures the accuracy of the findings through the use of procedures, and qualitative reliability demonstrates the consistency of the research approach. This research employed several different strategies and procedures to ensure adherence to these principles.

Three approaches were used to ensure the validity of this qualitative research. The first approach to validate the results of qualitative research is interviewing multiple participants from each site (Creswell, 2014). By interviewing three participants from each site, I was able to generate converging themes from each site to compare and contrast to the other sites included in the research. Having multiple participants bolsters the study.

A second method for validating the results of the research is clarifying my bias (Creswell, 2014). Yin (2017) warned against using a case study to substantiate a preconceived position and notes that all researchers run the risk of falling into this behavior. I used an external reviewer to function as an auditor throughout the data collection and analysis process. Here, "the procedure of having an independent investigator look over many aspects of the project…enhances the overall validity of a qualitative study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 203). Ultimately, I recognize my own bias that arises from experience as a university administrator and assumptions made about the research question. Through following the method listed above, I enhanced the validity of the data collection, analysis, and findings.

The last method used to validate the results is the inclusion of any themes or participant perspectives that run contrary to the major harmonious themes. Creswell (2014) argued that "because real life is composed of different perspectives that do not always coalesce, discussing contrary information adds to the credibility of an account" (p. 202).

In addition to these validity measures, I also took steps to account for the reliability of the research. Yin (2017) explained that one way of approaching reliability in case studies is to make the research procedures as explicit as possible. There are four main sections of the case study protocol used in this research (Yin, 2017):

- An overview of the case study, including aims and relevant literature
- Data collection procedures
- Interview protocol
- Case study report outline

Chapter 1 of this study speaks to the first requirement of a case study protocol. The data collection procedures are described in Chapter 3, and the interview protocol is included in Appendix D. The last section, the case study report outline, is embedded in Chapters 4 and 5. These four components are all present and accessible so the study could be replicated by future researchers. One reason to use a case study methodology, according to Yin (2017), is the salience of the real-world context to the research. Through providing a detailed description of the context in which each case resides, future researchers can extrapolate the similarity and differences of this study to new cases. Context becomes a mechanism to both display and understand how different cases can be analyzed using a standard case study protocol.

The second approach to establishing reliability in the research is through the use of a codebook. Creswell (2014) recommended comparing data with codes previously established, and through writing memos and definitions about the codes as they are developed. I utilized a codebook to increase the fidelity of the research. The same external reviewer used to bolster the validity of the research served as an auditor of the codebook and coding process. Using Dedoose as a structured tool also added the reliability of the data analysis.

Summary

Chapter 3 outlined the purpose of the study, the research question, research design, population and sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, data analysis, ethics, quality of research, and limitations.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4 reviews the study's purpose, research question, and methodology followed by a description of the research participants. The findings of the study are then outlined and discussed in detail as it relates to the research question. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple-case study was to discover best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. This may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build better leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet shortages of qualified leaders within the industry.

Research Question

What practices have small, not-for-profit, private colleges engaged in to (a) develop leaders and leadership and (b) develop succession planning and management strategies to ensure continuity of leadership?

Methodology Summary

As outlined in Chapter 3, the research design of this study is a qualitative, multiple case study in the constructivist paradigm. Using semistructured interviews, I interviewed 12 participants at four unique sites to gather data on what: (a) leader and leadership development; and (b) succession planning and management strategies have been employed by college administrators at small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities. These interviews were conducted in June 2020 and ranged from 29-59 minutes. Given the distance between the colleges and the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were conducted by Zoom web conference, recorded, and then transcribed.

Participants

Participants for this study were first identified through contacting the president of each institution via email, seeking permission to interview administrators at their college or university. A short list of administrators was identified through the correspondence with the president and contacted directly by me via email until three participants were identified per site. Participants had to meet the following criteria to be included in the study:

1. Hold a title of formal leadership within the college or university (e.g., president, vice-president, provost, dean);
2. A minimum of two years of experience in a formal leadership role (at any college);
3. Work for a college or university that is classified as a small, private, not-for-profit institution in the Midwest United States (see definition of small college in Chapter 1).

Participants were nearly evenly split along gender lines with seven males and five females participating. Three of the participants were presidents, seven were vice presidents, and two held the title of executive director. The majority of the participants (66%) had 10 or more years in an administrative role with an average of 17.5 years. Unfortunately, only one participant, Whitney (pseudonym), directly oversaw faculty. The presidents provided insight into the leadership development and succession planning strategies over the administrative level of the organizations, while the other participants provided more direct experience with how these strategies affected middle management. Table 2 provides a summary of all 12 participants who were interviewed for this study.

Table 2

Research Participants

Institution and Participant Number	Pseudonym	Gender	Administrative Category and Area of Supervision	Range of Years in Leadership Role
Institution 1, Participant 1	Connor	Male	Executive Director – Enrollment	5-10
Institution 1, Participant 2	Joanne	Female	Vice President - Development and Alumni Relations	5-10
Institution 1, Participant 3	Darren	Male	Vice President - Enrollment	>5
Institution 2, Participant 1	Ross	Male	President	25-30
Institution 2, Participant 2	Summer	Female	Vice President – Enrollment	15-20
Institution 2, Participant 3	Donald	Male	Vice President – Student Engagement and Success and the Dean of Students	25-30
Institution 3, Participant 1	Sally	Female	Vice President – Business Affairs	25-30
Institution 3, Participant 2	Jim	Male	President	15-20
Institution 3, Participant 3	Whitney	Female	Provost and Senior Vice President	5-10
Institution 4, Participant 1	James	Male	Vice President – Student Affairs and Dean of Students	15-20
Institution 4, Participant 2	Darryl	Male	President	30+
Institution 4, Participant 3	Tara	Female	Executive Director – Information Technology	25-30

Institutions

Institution 1 is a small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts institution located in rural Ohio. The college enrolls approximately 1200 students and offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Institution 2 educates slightly under 1500 students and is located approximately 30 minutes outside a major metropolitan city in the Midwest United States. It advertises nearly 100 undergraduate degree programs but does not offer graduate degrees. Institution 3 is the largest university represented in the sample with over 2800 students enrolled across all degree programs. Located nearest to a metropolitan area, Institution 3 has a long history of serving underrepresented students. Institution 4, also located in rural Ohio, serves nearly 2500 students and is the only institution in the sample that offers a doctoral degree program.

Findings

The data from the interviews were recorded, transcribed, condensed, and then uploaded into Dedoose for coding. I inductively identified 43 codes across the 12 interviews. These 43 codes were organized into three main categories: leadership development, small college challenges, and succession planning. The categories were also used as codes themselves. Table 3 provides the codes, categories, and frequency of each code across the interviews.

Table 3

Code Frequency Across Transcripts

Major Category	Code	*f*
Leadership Development		16
	No planned leadership development	10
	Effective leadership development	76
	Executive sponsor	11
	External development	24
	Formal education program	15
	External leadership development program	23
	Conferences	14
	Webinars	2
	General professional development	9
	Internal leadership development program	11
	Mentorship	34
	Coaching	6
	On the job learning	44
	Committee work	16
	Challenging assignments	5
	Iterative learning	4
	Responsibilities outside of job	22
	Presidential involvement	9
	Professional membership and involvement	12
	Taking Initiative	13
	Social networking	6
	Systems view	1
Small College Challenges		25
	Lack of people to invest in	10
	Finding time to develop leadership	1
	Culture	4
	No budget	8
Succession Planning		30
	Interim leadership	13
	Board involvement	15
	Career mapping	3
	External hire	18
	Formal documentation of plan	4
	Formal hiring process	3
	HR involvement	10

Major Category	Code	*f*
	Assessing internal talent	23
	Internal hire	24
	Leadership pipeline	31
	Poor/nonexistent succession planning	31
	SPM	10
	Search committee	20
	Transparency	14

Category Overview

The *leadership development* category contains codes related to the action of developing employees' leadership skills and competencies. A variety of unique codes exist within this category and specific attention was given to practices the participants identified as effective. As a result, *effective leadership development* was the code used with the highest frequency.

One recurring observation was the consistent comments from the participants about the challenges faced by administrators in small colleges and universities around leader and leadership development and succession planning and management. While not immediately relating to the research question, the context of these challenges are relevant secondary issues that influence both leader and leadership development and succession planning and management decisions. This second category separates that data under *small college challenges* and will be discussed below in greater detail.

The third and final overarching category of codes is *succession planning*. This category contains codes related to succession planning and hiring practices utilized by the participants and their institutions.

Code Overview

Codes with frequencies of 10 or greater will be discussed in more detail, including excerpts, unless otherwise noted below. Some codes, while not occurring frequently, may also be described if the code's relevancy to the research question is notable. In total, 33 of the 44 codes either occurred with a frequency greater than 10 or were relevant to the research question and are described below.

Leadership Development

Leadership development is used as more of a category than a standalone code. The first part of this study's research question seeks to describe the practices that small, private, not-for-profit college administrators have used to develop leaders within their organizations. As such, the codes below describe the different methods and experiences the participants used to develop leaders. Focus will be primarily given to those practices that participants identified as *effective leadership development*.

No Planned Leadership Development. Participants in each case study, except for Institution 2, noted the lack of planned intentional leadership development in their current or previous organizations. This absence of strategy around leadership development was not only experienced in their current organization but also throughout their own leadership journey into the upper echelon of higher education administration. Darryl revealed that,

> I've been a college President for XX years, I don't think I've been sent by my institution to any experience with the explicit idea of, "Here's the thing, here's an opportunity for you to train, learn new things, and get better."

When asked how previous institutions have invested in the participant intentionally, Sally noted that higher education has not invested in her development as a leader, remarking "Not in higher education. I mean, there has not been anyone who stepped up and said, we're going to invest in leadership development."

It was apparent in many of the interviews that leadership development happened in a vacuum, disconnected from strategy. This code highlights the general feeling that leadership development is something all of these leaders stumbled across by accident, or by serendipity of being paired with a supervisor who, on their own and apart from the institution, decided to invest in them.

Effective Leadership Development. *Effective Leadership Development* was a code that was applied to various different leadership development methods across all interviews with the exception of one. The highest occurrence of the code, noted 12 times, was found in Summer's interview. She had several different methods that she either explicitly or implicitly indicated were effective. When speaking about her own leadership development, Summer stated about committee work,

> I have been somebody who's benefited tremendously from the opportunity right from the get-go to become involved, again, across the institution and outside of the institution in committee work, with, you know, state, regional and eventually national level organizations. And so, I really think … that's important. It's useful. It's … valuable personally and institutionally.

Additionally, Summer's institution recently established an intentional, internal leadership development program. Administrators were asked to identify employees from their area of supervision who demonstrated leadership potential. Program participants prepared a final presentation for the administrators at the end of the one-year program, of which Summer observed,

> I know the individuals who participated, really enjoyed the experience, I was there for the final presentation...And they all seemed to have valued the experience, have valued the chance to interact with each other, the chance to sort of recognize leadership in others and see how others brought those skills to the table. I think that was interesting to them. You

> know, I think it made them think about the institution differently and about their role in the institution differently and come to a different higher-level understanding of operation as opposed to just their more siloed work experience. So, so, yeah, I think the feedback from that group was positive. It's actually, it's certainly, partly why we went to a second cohort. You know, there's some cost involved, it's relatively minimal, but there is some institutional financial investment in this program. So, you know, obviously to continue with that particularly in times that can provide budgetary concerns. Yes, we felt like it was worth pursuing.

Other participants noted their own experience with effective leadership development methods. When asked about how the participant has effectively developed their direct reports, Darryl recalled an experience he had at a previous college. He explained that he invested in one of his vice presidents, stating:

> So, we figured out a way for her to participate in the (university name) executive doctoral program. It's a sort of a low residency program, it costs a fortune. We loaned her half the money and then forgave it for each year that she stayed at the institution after she graduated. She's still there and, you know, very effective now leader in the institution.

Conner discussed his participation in external development programs and noted how effective they were in confirming the leadership skills that he had learned throughout his career. Conner recalled:

> When I went to the Mid-Management Training Institute, I don't feel like I learned a hell of a lot. I feel like it, it affirmed what I believe to be true about effective leadership and management. And … that's just as good as learning new things as far as I'm concerned, because I've been supervising the staff for a while, I went to that thing. And … it just sort

> of, you know, confirmed that my instincts in certain ways were … correct. So that was great. All those experiences, you know, if you go in with a proper, … growth mindset, then you can always pull something away from them.

Of all the different experiences that were noted to be *effective leadership development*, three distinct codes stood out: *on the job training* (20 occurrences), *external leadership development programs* (15 occurrences), and *mentorship* (14 occurrences). Each one of these will be described in more detail in the respective codes below. In total, 21 of the codes co-occurred alongside of *effective leadership development* illustrating how many different leadership development methods have led to positive outcomes in the experiences of the participants.

Executive Sponsor. Many of the participants (75%) observed the importance of supervisors' encouragement to pursue leadership development. Having an executive sponsor appeared to be a catalyst for the participants to pursue growth and development as leaders. Jim, one of the presidents, recalled a significant leadership development experience he had earlier in his career and the role the president played in that development. When asked to reflect on impactful leadership development experiences, he said:

> So, the first one that occurred to me is The Executive Leadership Academy... it is for vice presidents who aspire to a presidency. And I had that opportunity, thanks to a president at (institution name) who nominated me and supported me, and I don't think without that experience, I would have gotten the presidency as quickly as I did after that. They, they worked on rounding us out, and they prepared us for the candidacy process and learned all sorts of stuff there. The other one that occurs to me off the top of my head is when I became a VP for advancement, I didn't know anything about advancement. I was just

> moved into that job by a president who saw potential in me, and I was sent to the Big 10 fundraising institute, which is not exclusive for Big 10 institutions. I was not at a Big 10 institution. But it is a regional, intensive, small group conference, sort of best practice sharing conference that helped me go from knowing very little about advancement, to having a fair amount of expertise in a relatively short timeframe and also gave me a great network.

As noted above under *no planned leadership development*, the presence of an executive sponsor or supervisor who wanted to invest in the participant correlated to leadership development experiences that were effective, formative, and memorable. The presence of an executive sponsor can also be seen in the formal and informal *mentorships* described below.

External Development. All participants noted some sort of external development that either they had participated in or they used in developing their direct reports. These external development opportunities are described in greater detail in the following codes: *formal education program, external leadership development program,* and *conferences.* The important thing to note in this grouping of codes is they are external to the organization.

Formal Education Program. The *formal education program* code was used for every occurrence where a participant noted the institution either sponsored an employee to pursue formal education at another college or university or when the participant themselves received formal education as part of their own development. Exactly half of the participants (50%) identified *formal education program* as a method used to develop leaders. Although occurring with a frequency of 15, only five of those co-occurred with *effective leadership development*. One example of how this approach has played out was recalled by Tara. When asked to reflect on what have been some of the most effective techniques for developing leadership skills in their direct reports, Tara discussed the use of formal education in the process of building leadership skills in junior employees. She recalled, “It was my encouragement to go after his master’s degree. And he first was thinking maybe an MBA but decided he would go the route of data security. And today, he is our Director of IT for security.” Tara indicated this is not the only time she has gotten involved in the use of formal education programs to grow her staff. She stated:

> Well, I have purposefully, I guess, encouraged people to get advanced degrees. I have purposely encouraged all my staff to get degrees at first, if they don’t have a degree. I could have my administrative assistant who doesn’t have a degree, and I will highly encourage them to get their degree. You know, I always tell people, “In five years, the only thing you’re for sure, is that five years is gonna pass. But if it’s five years later, if you start to take some courses, in five years, you’re five years closer to that goal.”

Tara’s response demonstrated how, at one institution, an advanced degree qualified an employee to take on a leadership role and is one method she uses to prepare her staff for growth within the institution.

External Leadership Development Program. The majority of participants had experience with leadership development programs external to the institutions where they worked. Many of these programs were academic management training institutes run by organizations such as the American Council on Education (ACE) or the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC). Workshops and programs offered through CIC, for example, appeared in over one-third of the excerpts connected to the *external leadership development program* code (eight occurrences out of 23 total excerpts). Ross, one of the presidents who participated in the interviews, discussed his participation in one of the CIC programs. He shared,

> And then in the summer of 2007, (I) participated in the Council of Independent Colleges program on presidential vocation and institutional mission, which is a leadership development program for people who are contemplating the presidency and really is designed to help with deep thinking about "Is, is this the right move, and if so, what would be the right kind of institution?

Other examples were also discussed beyond the CIC programs. Donald, who served in leadership in one of the mentioned organizations, shared an example of how he used his subordinate's participation in an external program as a way to provide ongoing mentorship. He explained,

> One of my Associate Deans is interested in becoming a Dean of Students and maybe Vice President one day. He … wanted to participate in a program for hiring senior student affairs officers that's offered through a professional association, ACPA, where I had been in leadership for a while. And I was actually the … lead faculty on that institute. And so, he enrolled in that institute, came to it....he was not in my group, but we were able to, you know, I supported his participation in that and funded it. And then it was sort of a continuing conversation beyond that around his … developmental needs, related to what he learned at the institute.

The use of external organizations to develop leaders at institutions was prevalent throughout the interviews. Not only did its frequency rank in the top three codes related to leadership development, but every participant recalled these experiences as being impactful, either in their development or in the development of their direct reports.

Conferences. One of the professional development opportunities that most higher education professionals would be aware of are conferences that are put on by external organizations. This code appeared 14 times over the course of the interviews and was noted in six of the participants' responses. Whitney spoke to the prevalence of conference attendance in the development of her career. She highlighted several experiences in the following quote:

> So, it ended up being things like going to the CIC CAO workshops and conferences, going to HLC because I was in charge of accreditation and getting support to be trained as a peer mentor for the Higher Learning Commission accreditation, going to conferences. So, I would say that a lot of my professional development came through attending conferences. And in particular, you know, maybe a specialized conference for like, a specialized workshop for new provosts at the beginning of a conference or something like that.

Joanne explained an interesting arrangement as it related to conference attendance and how it was used in her development. She remarked she often traveled with the president of her institution and was able to attend conferences with her. The president would highlight sessions at the conference that Joanne should attend and discuss the sessions with her. She explained,

> So, when she would travel to professional conferences, you know, that … were aimed at obviously helping her develop as a leader. … I might attend a session, … she might say, this session might be good for you or, … then we'd get together the next day, she'd share papers that came out of it.

These two quotes demonstrate the potential of this tool in developing leaders. In the case of Whitney, she spoke of both the utility of conferences in learning breadth of knowledge (HLC conference) and specific skills (provost's workshop). Joanne coupled her conference experience with the involvement of an executive sponsor, further ingraining the learning she experienced in the conference itself.

Internal Leadership Development Program. *Internal leadership development program* refers to formal programs that were put on by the institution where the participant was currently employed or previously employed. The code had a low frequency (11) but did appear in seven of the 12 interviews. Contrasted with the code, *external leadership development program* (23), it is evident that internal programs were less likely to be used or experienced in the higher education industry as was relying on external sources for development at the senior level. Institution 2 had recently begun an internal leadership development program that had completed one cohort of participants thus far. Ross, the president of the institution, briefly described the program. He stated,

> So formally, we have a year or two ago developed a leadership development program that targets about 15 staff members from across the institution. It's a 10- or 12-month program, supported by an external facilitator, coordinated by our Director of Human Resources.

Summer also discussed this internal program, explaining more of its goals for its participants. She emphasized,

> It's designed for this purpose to give them that broader perspective of leadership, skill development, how to parlay those skills into additional position opportunities, how to think broadly beyond their particular area of expertise, ... as they think about moving up in the ranks and potentially having more of an influence in other areas.

Lastly, the third participant from Institution 2 adds to the picture of this internal leadership development program. Donald outlines the type of employee who is targeted by the program. He states,

> This is a group of, sort of up-and-comers, who have been identified by their vice president as having … significant leadership potential and who might be good participants in a structured, curricular, cohort, kind of leadership model.

Institution 2 was the only institution that appeared to have a strategic approach to developing leaders internally. That is not to say the other cases did not have some form of effort or strategy around leadership development, rather, they were not as structured in their approach.

Mentorship. *Mentorship* was a code that appeared in both formal and informal applications of the term. Most of the occurrences of *mentorship* referred to informal interactions between supervisor and subordinate. Darren, a vice president in the enrollment management area of his institution, discussed how his participation on short term task forces has allowed him to invest in mentorship with individuals outside of his supervision. He commented,

> As far as the committee taskforce piece, it's been giving me the opportunity to mentor, and not necessarily formally mentor, but work with...staff from other areas of campus on their growth and development and … I do see it as an opportunity for growth.

Informal, peer to peer mentoring was mentioned by Sally. Her institution has a formal mechanism by which supervisors from across the institution come together for an opportunity to learn from each other. This unique example also highlighted the importance of the human resource department in setting leadership development strategy. Sally explained,

> There'll be a topic, HR will develop the topic, and we'll reach out to the campus and look for someone who has been in a supervisor role for an extended period of time, someone mid-level, and someone new. And then the program actually begins with information being shared by HR. It could be a TED talk...you just never know what it's going to be.

> And then there are specific questions that each of the managers, supervisors prepare to respond to. And then it's a group discussion. And so, it really is peer to peer mentoring.

Mentorship was cited 34 times across all 11 of the 12 interviews, becoming the third highest frequencies in the *leadership development* category. The prevalence of the informal arrangements between mentor and mentee, rather than formal mentorship, highlights the unplanned nature of this leadership development tool. *Mentorship* coupled with *executive sponsor* would suggest a planned, systematic, and strategic leader development effort. As is shown through the majority of these interviews, the employees who went on to become administrators seem to have similar patterns of experiences. Namely, the "serendipitous" experience of finding a supervisor to mentor and invest in their development apart from institutional strategy.

On the Job Learning. The code with the second highest frequency was *on the job learning*, occurring over 44 times across all 12 of the interviews. This code was applied anytime a participant indicated he or she learned a skill from the process of executing their job duties. Terms like "trial by fire" came up when participants described their leadership development. Some participants talked of taking on additional responsibilities during the absence of other leaders, or the experience they gained from serving on committees outside of their normal work duties. These *on the job learning* experiences came in a myriad of different forms, but all of them contributed to the development of leadership skills. Whitney speaks of her faculty and the experience they can gain on the job if they desired. She asserts,

> I do think that some faculty really do aspire to move into an administrative role and if that's the case, then they will seek out the opportunity to be a chair or a director or, let's see, a chair of a major faculty committee like personnel, which does all the tenure and

> promotion reviews, or curriculum, which is huge, or our faculty assembly has a chair. Right? And so, they may seek out those kinds of leadership positions if they aspire to some kind of [administrative] academic job. And we hear from faculty that they like having an internal track to administration, and-or they want to be able to then … be marketable outside of (institution name) and look for other options.

As one can see from Whitney's excerpt, there is no formal development program in what the faculty learns. Rather, by simply seeking a particular role or experience the faculty gains the requisite skills to be considered for a job inside or outside of their institution.

Jim, one of the presidents that agreed to be interviewed, discussed the importance of individuals volunteering for job experiences. He observes,

> The volunteerism is you know, the folks who serve on committees, the folks who want to help plan the events … that sort of stuff, end up having a lot more involvement and exposure, broadening their contact with different parts of the university, broadening their contact with other administrators, or academic leaders, and therefore developing their leadership skills as they go.

These two excerpts emphasize the role that normal, everyday experiences play in developing leadership skills in individuals. Sometimes, as Jim noted, these skills are social networking with other members on campus. Whitney's experience with *on the job learning* further highlighted the function of one's self-leadership in proactively seeking out the experiences that contribute to leadership development. *On the job learning* became one of the more salient codes to emerge out of the interviews and will be discussed more in Chapter 5.

Committee Work. C*ommittee work* as a tool for leadership development occurred 16 times and appeared in 50% of the interviews. *Committee work* aligns with *on the job training* but was specific enough to garner its own code. Darren spoke most often about the use of committees as a way to develop leadership skills in employees, mentioning committee work seven times across his interview. He points out,

> There are a lot of opportunities to pursue committee membership and committee leadership and build some of those skills in that way. That … that is an area that (institution) has a lot of opportunities. We have a lot more committees than I think some other small schools would have.

Tara is purposeful in who she chooses to represent her IT team on institutional committees, seeing it as an opportunity to grow her own leaders. She said,

> There have been a couple times where I have assigned or asked people in my department to participate because IT has a representation on that committee. And sometimes I will choose somebody who I see as sort of an up … and coming leader.

She further went on to advocate, “There’s lots of opportunities for, I’d say younger administrators, or, you know, beginning level administrators, to participate in committee work or subcommittee work in order to help build their leadership capabilities.” In both cases Darren and Tara see committee work as being an opportunity for developing leadership skills. In Tara’s case, she actively uses it as a development tool.

Responsibilities Outside of Job Role. Eight of the 12 participants spoke about the way in which one’s responsibilities outside of their assigned job role contributed to the growth and development of leadership skills. This code had a frequency of 22, ranking it as the sixth most used code in the leadership development category, co-occurring with *effective leadership development* nine times. In an extreme example of how *responsibilities outside of job role* contributed to leadership development, Ross recalls his first foray into leadership, stating,

> I'll go right back to when I arrived on a college campus 25 years ago. I arrived as the chaplain and about six months later, there was a crisis in the admission office, the President asked me to go help out as an interim and then a month or so later, he said to me, "I'd like you to be the Vice President for Enrollment."

Ross, now a president, took the opportunity offered him to grow his leadership capacity and now serves as a college president.

Summer discussed how she purposely takes on responsibilities to continue to grow and develop as a leader. She remarked,

> I feel like the ways that I've stepped into other organizations, work with people outside of just the bubble or pool of individuals whom I work with on a daily basis, where I've had to ... coordinate communication, where I've had to be the scheduler, and the agenda starter, ... communication channel, and both be the ... task orienteer as well as the strategic thinker. I think that's … why I look to that, because I feel like ... in those types of roles, there's so many different things that you're doing at any given time.

Lastly, Jim provided a more formal way by which he encourages and places direct reports across departments on campus. During the annual appraisal process he speaks to his subordinates about their interests and goals. He explains,

> I try to have a formal conversation at least once a year around evaluation time that is about them and their interests in the future at this institution or at other institutions and where they want to learn, and grow, and develop. And then there is, of course, lots of informal discussion all the time about how to grow their skills and abilities, and get them involved in part of the, parts of the institution that they're interested in.

Whether taking on new responsibilities outside of one's job role is unplanned (Ross) or planned (Summer and Jim), it is clear these experiences allow a leader to see, observe, and act in new capacities and develop a broader understanding of the institution and the functions that make it work.

Professional Membership and Involvement. This code relates to the involvement of administrators in external work and involvement for and with organizations that serve the higher education sector. Accreditation bodies, professional organizations, and state and national committees are a few examples of these external organizations. One of the best examples of the way the involvement in organizations outside of the institution develops leadership skills in an employee is Summer. Her involvement in a state organization lead to several opportunities of growth. She stated,

> So, I mentioned that I have been somebody who's really benefited from this opportunity. When I first started working in admission [*sic]* I was asked to join a state, our professional development committee, for the (external professional organization), and quickly rolled onto the professional development committee. And then within a year was asked to co-chair that with another individual and eventually chair it after that person moved out of state. [I] stayed involved with that organization for another year [and] moved eventually into the presidential cycle, which for that organizations like a four-year experience... And then I had the chance to serve as the president of the (external professional organization).

Summer's extensive service, at both the state and national levels, allowed her to gain important leadership experience outside of her own institution.

James describes how his institution sets aside funds for employees to join and participate in professional organizations and memberships, removing one barrier for involvement. Sally provides another good example of the importance of *professional membership and involvement* as she highlights,

> The other piece is really through professional organizations. NACUBO has a very, very good leadership program that is embedded in their programming. So, if you have the opportunity to participate in something like a NACUBO, or ECUBO, or CACUBO, whatever state you're in, and you divide your time, because there's always going to be a hot topic you want to be involved in. But you take advantage of that leadership series of programming. You learn a lot.

External leadership programming and involvement in organizations other than the home institution appeared to be beneficial in shaping the administrators interviewed for this study.

Taking Initiative. The last code under the *leadership development* category is *taking initiative*. This code had a frequency of 13 and occurred in nine of the interviews. Conner used the code most frequently, discussing how individuals who grew in leadership skills often "identify their own developmental experiences" and "track[ed] their own plan." He goes on to assert, "I think that people who do have ambition at a school like (institution) … there is responsibility, and influence, and power for the taking … if you kind of decide to orient yourself that way."

Conner's observation of *taking initiative*, both in the ways he has seen others exhibit that skill and his assertion that leadership is there "for the taking" is backed up by other participants as well. Darren discusses his purposeful approach to grow the *taking initiative* skill in others. He maintains,

> I'm really responsive to my staff in the sense that they're going to make decisions I wouldn't make and I know that's a hard thing for a lot of folks in our seats to, to live with. "I would do it that way, you should do it that way." That, that's not my style. I might do it that way. But there's more than one way to do it, and I'm going to trust you're going to find the way that works. And we're going to get to the same outcome. And so, I'm very, I very much believe I have to empower them to be just, I can't be the decision maker at all times. And that's, I know for my team here [that] has been a transition. It's actually been a bigger transition then I expected. When I sit back and say, "I'm not going to decide, I will confirm I agree with you, but you're going to decide and we're going to go from there." Because they need to feel empowered to lead. And, you know, they're not just processing an assembly line here. We're not just going through the motions. It's deeper than that.

Taking initiative, as described by Conner and Darren appear to be a prerequisite to the leadership development process. Where Conner notes the need for *taking initiative*, Darren actively promotes it.

Small College Challenges

This second category is indirectly related to the research question. While never specifically probed during the interview protocol, many of the administrators (75%) discussed challenges for small, private, not-for-profit colleges in executing leader and leadership development as well as succession planning and management strategies. These specific challenges are discussed below.

Lack of People to Invest In. The first challenge that came up during the interviews was the *lack of people to invest in*. Small colleges typically have smaller employee pools than larger institutions. As a result, leaders have fewer people to invest in and fewer opportunities to find an internal successor to an open position. This code appeared 10 times in six of the 12 interviews. Conner cited this reason more often than the rest, stating that small staff sizes were challenging. He described his dilemma as "I have exactly one direct report" and observed that his institution does not have "a lot of deep departments where there are say, assistant directors, and all that good stuff." Joanne, an administrator at the same institution, noted that "we don't have a lot of depth." Ross, the president at Institution 2, also acknowledged the staff size challenge for small colleges. He remarked, "The fact that … small colleges' staffs are rather lean. You may or may not have people who really are ready to move up." As evidenced here, there might be a challenge to leadership development and succession planning at small colleges, even if all the plans were in place to build these capacities and develop internal successors. The fact there are fewer individuals to invest in strategically appears to be one issue in creating these strategies.

No Budget. The second challenge, *no budget*, is one of the two codes that occurred less than 10 times but remains salient to discuss in the results. The reason for this is inclusion relates to the need to finance strategies that develop leaders and plan for succession. As Darryl pointed out, "training budgets are the first things people reach for in a difficult financial environment." If the interview protocol asked administrators specifically about challenges related to leadership development and succession planning, budget would have likely been discussed more often. During Donald's interview, he relayed the source of the budget issues facing small colleges. He said,

> Small private colleges, particularly in the Midwest … our sector is challenged right now with declining numbers of college-going students. So, there are fewer students in the pools these days. It's mainly built around enrollment … very, very tuition dependent.

> And with a college of 1400 students, if you miss your class by 50, now you're cutting positions. So, you know, in many cases, we have a healthy endowment, but 90% of the endowment is restricted. So, we can't just, you know, live off the endowment...that's been the issue with not just us, but almost all private colleges in the Midwest and maybe, maybe beyond that.

When one considers Donald's assessment of declining enrollment leading to financial challenges with Darryl's remark about training budgets being one of the first expenditures to be cut, a clear image of why budget challenges for small colleges becomes an important factor to monitor when it comes to how these institutions invest in leadership development and succession planning.

Succession Planning. The code of *succession planning* was applied whenever a participant mentioned anything related to how leadership vacancies were filled at their institution. Similar to *leadership development* and *small college challenges*, *succession planning* was not truly a standalone code. Rather, it was coupled with the codes below to form a larger category for analysis.

Interim Leadership. All but four participants discussed the reliance on naming an interim immediately following a new vacancy in a leadership position at their institution. Interestingly enough, no administrators from Institution 4 mentioned the use of interim leadership. While this does not mean they did not rely on the use of an interim, they did not answer in a way I coded their response as such. The code occurred with a frequency of 13 across the eight participants who did mention this practice. Interim leadership was found to be used both as a placeholder, while the institution conducted a traditional search for a long-term replacement, and as a mechanism to evaluate an internal candidate. The former approach, using an interim as a placeholder, was best exhibited in the following quote by Jim,

> There are other situations where the department doesn't have a good second round of leaders, the department needs a shakeup, needs to change. And so, appointing someone internally is not appropriate. So, I have over the years, appointed folks external to the department and external to the university, to those leadership roles, usually on an interim basis, when it is a situation where the department needs some more activist attention, even while a search is ongoing.

The more common response, however, was the latter approach, naming someone as interim who eventually took on the role full-time. Sally recalled the success story of some interim leaders who were appointed. She explained,

> We've had some interim folks that were in areas with a broad enough background that have stepped in, and most recently one was appointed to the position. There was not a search. And the way that happened is we had been requiring all positions remain open at least for six months before we would fill them. So, in that interim role they were able to demonstrate, you know that they could manage this.

While the use of interim leadership is not specifically called out as succession planning, the use of internal capacity demonstrates the potential for succession planning and management to be used by small, private, not-for-profit colleges. The responses that garnered this code were almost split evenly among the two approaches. Six of the excerpts from the interviews indicated using an interim as a temporary leadership role in order to find a full-time replacement and seven of the excerpts recalled instances where an internal interim went on to become the full-time successor. Should the practice of interim leadership be coupled with purposeful leadership development, one could easily classify this practice as aligning with the aim of succession planning and management.

Board Involvement. *Board involvement* was discussed in the literature review as being an indicator of effective succession planning. While having a frequency of 15, only one-third of the discussions around *board involvement* were about succession planning or development. Most of the time, *board involvement* referred to their role on search committees. Joanne mentioned that during a presidential transition, the board chair was interested in hiring a coach for her and encouraged her to get involved in conferences and other professional development opportunities. However, the offer to hire a professional coach or to develop her as a leader was reactionary (as a result of the president's resignation), rather than a developed strategy.

When asked about succession planning at his institution, James recalled one board member getting involved on the topic but also observed the discussion's inefficacy. He remarked,

> I would tell you it's been pretty superficial, you know, and it was, I think, brought to the table conceptually by one of our trustees who works in corporate America, you know, where that sort of thing is certainly more prevalent.

While the board did have involvement in search committees, it became clear through the interviews that succession planning was not a strategy used by the institutions that participated in this research and it certainly was not driven at the board level.

External Hire. This code refers to all the instances that participants indicated external hires were either brought in to fill a vacant leadership position or when was the preferred way to go about replacing outgoing leaders. Interestingly, quite a few of the 18 occurrences of this code referenced higher education's culture of hiring externally over promoting internally. Darryl remarked, “It seems like in the faculty, and in the senior administration, there’s much less emphasis or much less value attached to sort of coming up through the ranks of the institution.” He went on to state,

> There hasn’t been, at the schools I’ve been in....much of a tradition of succession planning, of grooming, of preparing people to follow the president because I think [the] thought has been "No, you go out to the market for the president."

Darryl was not the only one to discuss the external hiring preference. Sally echoed, “You almost never have a president from this, you know, from where they were the Provost.” There were times when participants noted that external hiring, or at least external searchers, actually strengthened the legitimacy of an internal candidate. Donald asserted,

> I think even if we have a strong internal candidate … it reinforces their capacity when they have gone through a process where they’re selected for the role. So, I think it does them a favor also to have been … picked because of the strongest person for the job as opposed to just being appointed to the role.

The use of external hires, and external searches, are not unique or surprising. The frequency of which participants noted the preference of external hires, specifically for administrative roles, aligns with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The findings here were not related to any formal strategy. Rather, external hires were just the normal way of finding new leaders.

Formal Documentation of Plan. This code is the second code to be included in the discussion despite having less than 10 occurrences across all interviews. However, the importance of this finding lies in the scarcity of any succession planning documentation. The only mention of this practice came from Institution 2, where the institution began a worksheet of leadership potential throughout the institution. The worksheet consists of classifying the leadership potential of the leaders under each VP level into one of several categories. Ross, the president of Institution 2, describes the worksheet,

> Our director of Human Resources developed a project a couple of years ago where annually he meets with each of the vice presidents and conducts a review with them, that essentially, they lead....of their direct reports and others just below the level of direct report. And I don't have the document in front of me, but it's...who is ready to move to the next level, who could be ready in the next one to three years, or the next three to five years, or would never be ready to move beyond the current role. And so that has been a really good way to identify people who are either ready or have the capacity to get ready for advanced responsibility, and then to develop strategies for those who are not quite but could get ready to help them be ready. And again, we have seen some important internal promotions that have grown out of this exercise. And so, it's been very beneficial. He does the same with me, with the vice presidents, I share the results of that with the chair of the board. And so that's, that's been quite beneficial.

This one worksheet was the only thing that resembled the beginnings of succession planning and management across all four cases. For that reason, it is included in the findings.

HR Involvement. The involvement of the HR department was sporadic across all the cases. As mentioned above, the HR department at Institution 2 began the documentation of leadership potential throughout the organization which has led to some upward mobility for those identified as ready for promotion. Donald describes HR's involvement in that process in the same way Ross did above. He stated,

> Our HR office....asked [us] to identify sort of strong performers, people who are....are ready to step into advanced roles now, people who with a little development would be ready to do so, and then people who are … maybe, should stay where they are in their role. And so, all the Vice Presidents kind of went through their … division rosters and … categorize [sic] people in those ways based on their perceptions of their readiness for advancement. It was, it was useful.

Ross attributes the early success of this formal program to the Director of HR, showing the importance of that office. He remarked, “We’ve really benefited by a new Director of Human Resources, who arrived four years ago. He’s much more intentional about this than his predecessor has been. And that has been helpful.”

Whitney and Sally, both from Institution 3, discussed how the HR department at their institution oversees basic leadership development workshops and mentoring sessions. Whitney notes, “HR does an onboarding. And they have regular supervisor 101 kind of meetings.” However, these development opportunities appeared to be individual offerings apart from an overarching strategy to develop leadership capacity or internal successors.

Assessing Internal Talent. One of the actions in Rothwell’s (2015) succession planning framework is the need for organizations to *assess internal talent*. This action step was present in 10 of the 12 interviews, occurring with a frequency of 23. Participants presented several different ways in which they, or their organization, assessed the internal capacity for leadership and succession. As a result, Rothwell’s term was used as a code to classify all instances that indicated this action was taking place.

Continuing with the example of Institution 2, which had begun a worksheet to identify employees with the potential to move up at the college, Summer claimed that she “definitely utilized it [the HR process and worksheet] to be thinking about how to identify those folks for the right opportunities." This matching of potential to opportunity will be discussed again under the *succession planning and management* code.

Ross discussed how the assessment of internal talent has also been beneficial by providing data by which he has pushed back on the promotion of employees who were not classified as ready for promotion. He remarked,

> It also has given me a tool to push back a couple of times. So, somebody has come to me recommending a promotion to fill a vacancy.... [I'll] say, well, let's look at what you said, when we went through this exercise. You did not anticipate that this person would be ready for promotion, what's different? And in at least one case, that pushback led to not promoting in the way that was recommended. And I think actually, that was a very beneficial move for us, but ... I would not have had that clarity had we not been through that exercise.

The assessment of internal talent was not exclusive to Institution 2. James, a vice president at Institution 4 also noted how his organization pursues employees who have demonstrated potential. He explains,

> And then other times we ... we'll have ... employees who have been here for a while who have a fantastic potential and either myself or the Associate Dean or their direct supervisor will approach them ... because of ... their demonstrated potential ... their dedication and compassion to, you know, serving and working with students, etc. .... But it's also not unusual at our institution for us to, to see, and identify, and pursue folks who have great potential.

In each of these interview excerpts the participants acknowledge the importance of taking inventory of the leadership potential among their current employee base. Not every leadership vacancy was expected to be filled externally. Often, the participants noted the organization did rely on internal talent to address an opening.

Internal Hire. *Internal hires*, those employees who were promoted from within an organization, were discussed by 11 of the participants during the interviews. Although reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2, and here in Chapter 4, the predominant culture of higher education has been to hire administrators from outside the institution, this is not always the case. Sometimes internal promotion was necessary as a way to fit within budget constraints. Tara indicated this was often the case in her area, information technology, due to the pay discrepancy between the corporate and education industries. As a result, Tara noted that "because we don't pay equivalent to corporate, not many higher ed institutions do, we sort of grow our own in the technology arena." Darryl painted a more positive reason for hiring internally. He stated,

> There have been instances where a vacancy occurred, there was a person internally who looked like a good fit, the supervisor very much wanting to give them that opportunity. It was possible to sort of rearrange the work and get … it done and capitalize on their strengths and experience and that was done.

Lastly, Whitney gave an example of how her institution chose to replace an outgoing academic dean with a faculty member. She described the internal hiring process,

> The Dean of Arts and Sciences wanted to … go back to the faculty, so we took another Arts and Sciences faculty member to be the new Associate Provost for Faculty Affairs, an experienced chair. We did an internal search. They had to show that they had leadership

experience and they had to interview for a whole day with lots of different groups of people on campus.

Each of these three responses were slightly different. Tara discussed the limitations of compensation as a reason to promote internally. Darryl explained that internal promotions were pursued proactively by a supervisor and Whitney gave an example of the process by which internal hires could take their own initiative to apply for promotion.

Leadership Pipeline. The *Leadership Pipeline* (Charan et al., 2011) model was never explicitly discussed during the interviews. Rather, I used this code whenever a participant indicated they or their institution created pathways for leadership within a department or the college itself. This pipeline-type approach was notable in eight participants' responses, occurring a total of 31 times.

The first example came up in the interview with Conner. In his response, he lays out the case for why a *leadership pipeline* is needed in terms of development. He argues,

> I think for younger staff, getting leadership development can be really disorienting if you don't have access to the levers of power, right? So ... if you just go to like a leadership workshop and you'll learn about, I don't know, purposeful vulnerability or ... different management styles but you don't yet manage anybody ....what does that mean in my day to day? I think that having those kinds of ... foundational conversations can be helpful, but you have to quickly get it into context or else it starts to lose its meaning. It's kind of like me teaching my daughter you know, prealgebra .... I have limited sort of like examples for ... why it's really important that she does a single step at a time with every equation. So, I have to kind of like look for those… context anchors. And I think that the

same can be said for ... lower level staff. Staff who are sort of aspiring to a middle level job.

Conner's assessment that leadership development needs to be coupled with scalable context lends itself to the *leadership pipeline* idea of preparing leaders for one promotion at a time. Darren, one of Conner's colleagues at Institution 1 discussed how their institution has recently created a pipeline of sorts within their academic division. He pointed out,

> We have five schools, and they have school directors. .... And then there's associate dean and assistant dean, which are really working under the Dean of the College overseeing all of the academic operations and so all of those positions, school directors and the deans, are on termed appointments .... We don't go out and ever post an outside school director position and hire for them in that way. They're, they're much more called up from their own faculty.

One can see that Institution 1 reorganized around the idea of levels of leadership within the academic division where faculty have a route to administrative pathways, from school director, to assistant dean, and so forth. This scalable *leadership pipeline* appears to allow faculty to gain the necessary context that Conner discussed.

Poor or Nonexistent Succession Planning. One of the main parts of the research question deals with the ways in which small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities strategized around succession planning. One of the most glaring findings from the interviews was the lack of understanding or strategy put into planning for open leadership roles. In 11 of the 12 interviews, discussion around *poor or nonexistent succession planning* was evident. This code, along with *leadership pipeline* occurred 31 times, more than any other code under the *succession planning* category.

The responses from the participants were telling. Tara admitted, “You know, when I look at (institution) as a whole, I don’t know if we do that, that well.” When asked about succession planning, Darren observed, “I think it’s a mindset of it, ‘we’ll work it out when that problem arises’ more than a ‘let’s plan to develop staff that can grow into X, Y or Z in the future.’”

Darryl also noted the pervasive lack of succession planning practices across all the institutions where he has served. He said,

> There hasn’t been at the schools I’ve been in ... much of a tradition of succession planning, of grooming, of preparing people to follow the president because I think thought has been “No, you go out to the market for the president.”

A picture quickly emerges from the sum of the interviews that succession planning was not only missing, by and large, from the institutions and was not strategically applied. Replacement of key leaders happened routinely, without evidence of forethought or planning that is present in a holistic succession plan.

Succession Planning and Management. *Succession planning and management* refers specifically to the elongated nature of succession plan coupled with purposeful leadership development. This code only occurred 10 times across 50% of the interviews. A good example of *succession planning and management* comes from Whitney. She lays out her ultimate vision of how the methods she is putting in place will enable faculty to develop the needed leadership skills to progress up through the academic leadership ladder. She stated,

> So, we put the departments into six divisions. And we picked a faculty person to be a coordinator liaison ... they get two course releases, one each semester, to work with enrollment and advancement, to be the liaison to their respective departments on recruiting students and dollars ... on marketing strategies, on telling stories, on friend-

> raising with alums, and donors, you know, prospective donors. They're learning all kinds of things about the institution that they would not have learned. And I think those, those folks are well positioned to step into Associate Provost roles, to step into other kinds of leadership roles, because they're just getting skills outside of teaching and conflict resolution.... I really want to open up the opportunities for chairs as well. But you need something around the chairs to kind of build some of those skills in faculty as well.

Although Whitney never spoke about a formal succession plan, what she described in her response lays the beginning foundations of formal succession planning. Creating opportunities by which lower-level employees can gain skills with the express purpose of preparing them for internal promotion is what *SPM* aims to do.

Search Committee. The most often cited practice the four institutions used to fill leadership vacancies came by way of *search committees*. This pervasive practice, the idea that a group of employees are best suited to evaluate talent and select the best candidate, appeared in all but one of the interviews. *Search committees* were primarily comprised of faculty, staff, and administrators. There were instances when board members and students participated in this practice. This code is titled under *succession planning* not because it supports that strategy, but because it often is in lieu of *succession planning*. Ross gives the most succinct description of how the search process for new leaders is conducted. He remarked,

> Well, traditionally, we, we sort of used to the traditional process. We form a search committee. We develop a position profile, we post it. We wait for the position, the applications to come in. We screen the applications. We do phone interviews, we bring finalists to campus, and we hire somebody.

The only variance in the description of *search committees* came by way of hiring a search firm to conduct national searches. Once candidates were narrowed by the search firm, a traditional *search committee* met to evaluate the remaining candidates and make recommendations to the hiring managers.

Transparency. Interview questions related to *transparency* coalesced around probing participants about the extent to which employees throughout the organization knew about how leadership vacancies were replaced. By and large, most participants felt the majority of college employees knew the basics of the process, such as those described in the *search committee* and *interim leadership* codes above. Occasionally, a participant would state they were not sure if employees could recount what goes into the decision-making process or not. Whitney, the single academic administrator who participated in the interviews, pointed out that shared governance often predicates the need for greater transparency. She described,

> Gosh, everything that I do I have to share with everybody for comment and feedback. I mean, I think that's how we have approached doing searches, is get as much buy in and feedback, and get as many eyes on it as you can.

The use of *search committees* came up often as a way for broad participation in the process of replacing leadership vacancies. As a result, it did not appear to me that *transparency* related to hiring decisions was withheld from employees.

Other Findings. The only finding that did not relate directly to the research question was briefly described above in the *small college challenges* category. Budget, small staff sizes, lack of a large hierarchical leadership structure, setting aside time to invest in leadership development, and cultural challenges to internal hires were all present in varying degrees throughout the interviews.

Themes

Upon examination of the findings, several distinct themes emerged. All three themes discussed below directly relate to the research question. First, as it relates to the organic and self-driven and self-managed nature of leadership development in the sampled institutions, participants indicated their own development occurred mainly through external programs and participation in external professional groups. Internal development often lacked focus and intent (e.g., available budget), happening almost by accident. *On the job learning* was described by several participants as “trial by fire,” indicating the lack of an effective leadership development strategy.

The second theme relates to succession planning. Only Institution 2 had any formal mechanism in place to actively and consistently assess internal talent, develop that internal talent, and then use the information to promote internally. This finding aligns with much of the overview discussed in Chapter 1 that indicated succession planning as a challenge for the higher education industry.

Lastly, I observed, while most institutions were devoid of *formal* strategies of leadership development and succession planning and management, there was ample evidence of *informal* mechanisms that served these purposes. These *informal* mechanisms were both experienced by the participants in their own growth and development as leaders and are now employed by the participants in developing and promoting their subordinates.

Theme 1: External Leader and Leadership Development

The first theme became evident throughout every interview across all four cases. Participants discussed that one of the most effective leadership development experiences are those that happened *external* to their place of employment. When asked about effective leadership development, the second highest code applied was *external leadership development program*, only trailing *on the job learning*, discussed in theme 3 below. Darryl explained his development through these external programs. He stated,

> I thought of the CIC immediately, because I think that annual president's institute is quite valuable .... The focus is exclusively on the sort of leadership challenges at these kinds of private institutions. There aren't a lot of big privates in the CIC, they tend to be very much like (institution). So, there's a kind of a common understanding, a common vocabulary challenges and things being discussed. The programming is ... quite good in terms of both big picture thinking, but also a chance to get into the very nitty gritty stuff about board development. How do you work with your board of trustees? You know? How do you solve problems in those relationships? So, it's that's been very valuable for me.

Jim also relayed the importance that *external development programs* played in his development as a leader. He remarked,

> So, the first one that occurred to me is The Executive Leadership Academy ... it's designed to be like an ACE fellowship but for those who can't leave their job for a year .... it is for vice presidents who aspire to a presidency. And I had that opportunity thanks to a president at (institution) who nominated me and supported me, and I don't think without that experience I would have gotten the presidency as quickly as I did after that. They ... worked on rounding us out, and they prepared us for the candidacy process and (I) learned all sorts of stuff there. The other one that occurs to me off the top of my head is when I became a VP for advancement, I didn't know anything about advancement. I was just moved into that job by a president who saw potential in me, and I was sent to the

> (organization) fundraising institute .... it is a regional, intensive, small group conference, sort of best practice sharing conference that helped me go from knowing very little about advancement, to having a fair amount of expertise in a relatively short timeframe and also gave me a great network.

These two experiences demonstrate how two presidents experienced effective leadership development through external programs. External programs are different from formal education programs, such as a doctoral or advanced degree programs, and are typically run by a professional organization within the higher education industry. The question remains, however, as to whether or not these external development opportunities are afforded to all current and emerging leaders or are only utilized by upper administrators? More on this will be explored in Chapter 5.

Theme 2: Lack of Formal Succession Planning

As noted previously, the only institution to have any formal succession planning strategy was Institution 2. In sum, the strategy was to classify the workforce into several categories and keep record of those who have the identified potential to take on new roles and responsibilities when the opportunity presented itself. Summer recalled,

> We did an exercise earlier this year ... where we ... answered a series of questions about succession planning, which partly led to recommendations of individuals for that workshop, that multimonth workshop that I talked about ... I think (the exercise) helped me to think about who were the individuals ... who really had that potential and drive to move, others who maybe it wasn't known, or they, they seem pretty content, and others for whom really they needed more of a performance improvement plan in order to actually be more successful in their role. And so, I would say, that certainly has resonated

> with me in thinking about the individuals who I categorized in different ways and trying to ... think about what could be done to assist each of them ... in the different places they are in, in their career, but particularly those who have that opportunity to excel. I think that's ... what I was talking about in terms of that plan that I've thought about, but not yet had the chance to implement ... was how do you not only develop people but develop them, so they'll remain with your institution?

Summer's quote sums up the beginnings of a formal succession plan. This new practice has already yielded fruit for the institution. Ross, the president, pointed out,

> We had someone just three or four months ago who was promoted to a director level of one of our larger units. And she had been identified in that process as somebody with the capacity for leadership. We had a vacancy in that case, we actually did an external search. We were not having success and the vice president was tempted to hire to fill the position, someone that maybe we weren't so excited about. And I said, "well, let's go back and look at the document. You know, we had this person internally identified. Why don't we go to her?" And she's doing great, so that that process has served us very well.

What is significant about this theme is the institution only started this practice after hiring an HR director who had private sector experience. Ross observed,

> We happened to get lucky to hire a Director of Human Resources who had been in the corporate sector for 15 years and then in another higher education setting for eight or 10 years. He brought this capacity with him. But if we didn't have him, I don't think we would be doing it the way we are.

Upon reflection on the research question, it became clear that Institution 2 was an outlier in terms of succession planning strategies. The worksheet and exercise the administration at

Institution 2 underwent was a direct result of hiring a director of human resources with corporate experience, where succession planning is more prevalent. This unique outlier among the cases examined in this research will be discussed again in Chapter 5.

Theme 3:* Formal *vs.* Informal *Leadership Development and Succession Planning and Management Strategies

The third theme was the difference between *formal* and *informal* strategies employed by the institutions to accomplish both leadership development and succession planning and management. As it relates to leadership development, the *formal* mechanisms used by the institutions primarily existed external to the organizations, as mentioned in theme 1. *Informally*, however, there were several methods that administrators used to develop their subordinates. First, the prevalence of *on the job learning*, took many forms. Mentorship, committee work, and "trial by fire" were all mentioned as being primary conduits for growth, both in participants' own experiences and in the experiences they provided to subordinates. A good example of how leadership development happens informally came from Whitney. She stated,

> There were certainly folks that either sought me out saying, "I'm kind of interested in this, can you tell me more about it? Do you think I'm a good fit?" Or I sought them out and said, "I think you'd be really good at this, would you consider doing this" and kind of talk to them and there were ... people that I had turned down because we had more applicants than jobs. And so, I talked to them about "Okay ... we didn't hire you this time for these reasons, but we really liked you. We think you have a lot of potential. Here are some other things that I think you and I could work on, getting you ... in charge of this committee or that committee and I think that would be a really good opportunity for you

> or have you talked to your department chair about when it might be your turn to be the department chair?"

Darren, a vice president from Institution 1, discussed the importance of iterative learning that happened in his career. He argued,

> What I feel is the most valuable or the most important pieces were just given the opportunity ... to do and learn ... learn on the fly, if you will .... early enough in my career (I was) given the opportunity to take ownership ... with some guidance of upper management and senior staff or whoever it might be at the time, but being able to ... run with a program, and succeed and fail as it may, in an environment that fostered that, I think gave me a perspective on things.

Connor echoed this experience during his interview, calling for the freedom to fail and learn on the job from new responsibilities. He stated,

> You need ... permission to fail and new responsibilities. And you need the room to process those failures and, and the opportunity to ... try again. And, and that's going to happen on the job .... that needs to happen with real consequences and the real implications so you can learn to deal with those too. It can't just be a simulation. So, I think that ... these (leadership) skills get ... honed really well on the job.

In both excerpts, it was clear that *on the job learning* was a preferred method of developing employees toward desirable competencies and skills. Darren had experienced this first-hand in his previous roles as he grew over the course of his career and Connor spoke candidly about the role that failure plays in developing leadership skills. In neither case was the learning *formal* in terms of structure or intentionally organized. Rather, learning happened as a result of doing the normal, everyday work assigned to an employee in a particular role.

Succession planning and management happened informally as well. The example of Institution 2 notwithstanding, the other three institutions displayed some form of informal succession planning and management. Consider these three examples from each institution.

Joanne, from Institution 1, described how she helped “map out” the career trajectory of a direct report. She recalled,

> We really had a gap and who was going to handle ... planned giving ... and I had a conversation with someone who I thought would be appropriate, who could pick it up, and it would be a good next step for them professionally. And so ... I mapped out ... what would help them ... gain that skill set and move into ... that role. So, I have regular meetings with my staff ... we do annual evaluations, but I have standard meetings too, where I help understand what it is they’re doing ... where they want to go and then how I can help them get there. And ... it’s worked.

Joanne’s excerpt is similar to formal succession planning and management in that she identified a potential successor to a role, organized the development needed to get the employee the requisite skills, and then repeated similar steps with her remaining staff.

Institution 3 indicated they began to scratch the surface of succession planning by first discussing replacement planning. The step of identifying who would step into a role in the case of emergency, while certainly not strategic succession planning, is one way to begin a broader conversation about natural pathways of responsibility within the organization. Jim, the president of Institution 3, stated,

> We have a senior vice president who would clearly pick up the ball, should I be hit by a bus or whatever. And so that role is clear. And I’m sure to involve that senior vice president in any critically important conversation because I want ... her input. And two,

> because if something happens in a transition, and I'm not around, she needs to be aware of how we got through these decisions and what's going on. That includes my interactions with the Board of Trustees. So ... when we do an executive committee meeting of the Board, she goes with me ... she's in the room as big decisions are made and therefore can give continuity should it become necessary. After that, the (institution) had a number of other vice presidents but had not defined succession planning ... so we decided to do that about two months ago when, when the COVID thing started because we talked about, "okay, what happens if (name) is out sick, and (name) is out sick? And we're in the middle of this crisis? And what do we do then?" And so, we defined a next layer down .... I asked each vice president to define two layers down. So, if the Provost is out, which Associate Provost is the next in line, and so forth, and so on. So, I think we have made more progress in that lately.

The inclusion of the vice president in board meetings are the kinds of *on the job learning* experiences that are discussed above and begin to stray into the territory of *succession planning and management*. Identifying a replacement is one way to begin a succession plan, but to couple it with development experiences takes the plan to the next level of sophistication.

Although Institution 4 had the least amount of evidence of *informal* succession planning, there was some evidence of how the foundational ideas of *succession planning and management* were being discussed, particularly as it related to annual performance reviews. Darryl discussed during his interview the changes they had recently made to the annual performance review process. He explained,

> (We should) use the performance review as an opportunity to look at the work that's been done over the past year. Talk about the match between the task and ... employee skill set

> ... see if you can optimize that match. .... There's no sort of one size fits all approach to supervision. You can't ask people to work the way you like to work because some people don't like to work the way I like to work. Some people want lots of feedback. Some people want to be left alone. Some people want to solve the problem themselves. Other people want someone cheering from the balcony for them. So, I mean, I think a good manager gives people what they need to succeed. And you can't know that if you're not having a discussion about where people are with their work and their career.

There are two things in this excerpt that display *succession planning and management*, first, Darryl indicates, at least annually, supervisors should utilize the performance review as a way to assess internal talent and the match between employee and task. Secondly, he is encouraging managers to have deeper discussion around where the employee is today and where they want to be in their career. This foundational conversation is a key element in matching developmental opportunities to the current internal talent available to a manager.

Each of these three institutions have, in small ways, begun the work of building towards a model of succession planning that works for their institution. The aim of this research was to provide insight to small college administrators on how peer institutions have approached these needed strategies and to suggest potential action steps in practice to achieve these ends.

Case Comparison

As a case study, I not only looked at the individual responses of each participant, but also at how each institution utilized resources to develop leaders and plan for succession. Table 4 describes some of the basic variances between each institution in how the participants responded to questions about leadership development and succession planning and management. Please note the succession planning column includes practices that are in lieu of succession planning and management strategies.

Table 4

Leadership Development and Succession Planning Case Comparison

Institution	Top three leadership development codes used (number of occurrences)	Top three succession planning codes used (number of occurrences)
Institution 1	On the job learning (18)	Poor/nonexistent succession planning (18)
	Mentorship (10)	Leadership pipeline (13)
	Conferences (9)	Board involvement (7)
Institution 2	On the job learning (11)	Assessing internal talent (14)
	Responsibilities outside of job role (11)	Internal hire (10)
	Mentorship (9)	Leadership pipeline (9)
Institution 3	On the job learning (12)	External hire (7)
	Mentorship (12)	Leadership pipeline (7)
	Responsibilities outside of job role (7)	Search committee (6)
Institution 4	Formal education programs (12)	Search committee (5)
	External LD programs (6)	Internal hire (5)
	Mentorship (3)	External hire (5)

Note. Colors in the table represent similar responses across institutions.

The data presented in Table 4 differs slightly from the themes mentioned above. Theme 1 concluded the second most oft-cited code that co-occurred with *effective leadership development* was *external leadership development programs*. Table 4 does not show the same outcome as it is a raw count of how often a code was applied at each institution. The same difference exists between theme 2 and Table 4. Theme two demonstrated the lack of formal succession planning strategy whereas Table 4 is the sum of all methods used by the institutions to replace outgoing talent.

Several notable observations can be made after review of Table 4. First, as it relates to leadership development, *mentorship*, *on the job learning*, and *responsibilities outside of job role* all appear across multiple institutions. These three high frequency codes also rank in the top four most used co-applied codes with *effective leadership development.* Theme 1 above highlights the other code that was co-applied alongside of *effective leadership development: external leadership development*. While Chapter 5 will highlight the finding from theme 1, it is salient to this study to note the other three *effective leadership development* strategies that administrators labeled as effective.

The second observation that can be made from Table 4 relates to succession planning and management. While there is some consistency across cases with codes such as *leadership pipeline* – found in three institutions, *internal hire, external hire, and search committees,* – each occurring in two institutions, the pattern is less clear on what is considered effective. As a result, theme 2 identifies the inconsistency and lack of succession planning and management practices found in small, private, not-for-profit colleges. Table 4 confirms this finding.

Summary

Chapter 4 reviewed the results of the study. I identified 43 unique codes during the analysis of the 12 interviews. Three categories were used to classify the codes: *leadership development*, *small college challenges*, and *succession planning*. Additionally, three primary themes were summarized. The first theme identified that effective leadership development was associated by interviewees with what happened external to the institution, the second highlighted the lack of formal succession planning across the four cases, and the last theme discussed how the majority of leadership development and succession planning and management strategies described by participants were informal. *Small college challenges* was the outlying category that was not part of the research question, but contextualized some of the other findings. As a result, the codes under *small college challenges* represent *other* findings of the research.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Recent research points to the need for higher education to invest more time and resources in developing future leaders. From the outgoing baby-boomer generation, to a new set of challenges facing the industry, the need for greater attention on leadership development and succession planning and management is clear. The current study demonstrates the varied understandings and experiences that administrators at small, private, not-for-profit institutions have in the related practices of leadership development and succession planning and management. The findings described in Chapter 4 will be discussed in this chapter and recommendations for practice and future research will be presented.

Problem Overview

Higher education is currently facing the challenge of replacing an aging, outgoing leaders while simultaneously entering an era of declining enrollments, changing demographics, increased public scrutiny, and diminishing public investment (Gigliotti, 2017; Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Floyd 2016; Thompson & Miller, 2018; Waters & Hightower, 2016). As an industry, higher education has also been slow to adopt succession planning and management strategies the private sector has utilized to provide continuity of leadership and as an investment in the development of future generations of leaders (Betts et al., 2009; Cavanaugh, 2017). However, the adoption of corporate practices cannot be assumed to be ideal or practical for higher education. Both practitioners and researchers have called for more strategy and resources to be committed to leadership development and succession planning and management efforts throughout academia (American Council on Education, 2017; Butin, 2016; Pfaff, 2019). Small, not-for-profit colleges and universities often have fewer resources to invest in leadership development and succession planning and management strategies. As a result, this subset of colleges and universities are at great risk to succumb to the financial and enrollment shortfalls to keep their institutions viable (Beyer, 2019; Eide, 2018).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple-case study is to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. This may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build better leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet the shortage of qualified leaders within the industry.

Research Question

What practices have small, not-for-profit, private colleges engaged in to (a) develop leaders and leadership and (b) develop succession planning and management strategies to ensure continuity of leadership?

Summary of Methodology

This study used a qualitative, multiple-case study approach. A total of 12 participants from four, private, not-for-profit colleges participated in the research. I used convenience and purposive sampling to identify potential institutions to include in the study. The president of each institution was contacted with a request to engage their administrative team to be part of the research. In each case, the president either suggested administrators for participation or asked them directly to participate. I followed up on each recommendation to ensure their willingness and qualification. Each participant met the following criteria:

1. Hold a title of formal leadership within the college or university (e.g., president, vice-president, provost, dean);
2. A minimum of two years of experience in a formal leadership role (at any college);

3. Work for a college or university that is classified as a small, private, not-for-profit institution in the Midwest United States (see definition of small college in Chapter 1).

Semistructured interviews lasting approximately 30-60 minutes were conducted to gather data. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed to produce the findings presented in Chapter 4.

Major Findings and Discussion

The research question was comprised of two parts. First, I wanted to discover what leader and leadership development practices were used by administrators at small, private, not-for-profit colleges and second, what succession planning and management strategies were used by the same group of leaders. In sum, the findings indicated that most of the leader and leadership development codes that had the highest frequencies were a mix of internal strategies and methods. Specifically, *on the job learning*, *mentorship*, and *responsibilities outside of job role* were the three most cited methods from the participants. Several of the participants indicated these internal leadership development experiences were not planned, but rather came as a result of unstructured or unplanned learning while on the job, informal mentorship, and being assigned job roles beyond their own due to the nature of small colleges' reduced staff size. Informal and formal strategies and methods, both in leader and leadership development and succession planning and management will be discussed in Theme 3 below. One outlying leader and leadership development method that often occurred alongside the code *effective leadership development* was *external leadership development programs*. Juxtaposed to the other top three most cited methods, *external leadership development programs* refers to formal development programs that happen outside of the institution. This finding will be discussed more in Theme 1 below.

Regarding the second part of the research question, I found little evidence of formal succession planning and management practices. However, several responses indicate all of the colleges did execute some practices that could be coupled with leader and leadership development and formed into succession planning and management strategies with minimal effort. For example, Institutions 1, 2, and 3 all had some form of a leadership pipeline established, but lacked any formal and intentional plan to move employees through the pipeline and towards higher levels of leadership. Succession planning and management recommendations are described in more detail in Theme 2.

Theme 1: External Leader and Leadership Development

Throughout the 12 interviews, a myriad of approaches for developing leaders, and ultimately leadership capacity throughout the organization, were discussed. I used the flexibility afforded through semistructured interviews to probe deeper as to which leader and leadership development strategies or experiences were considered most effective. The four codes that co-occurred with the highest frequency (in parentheses, overall occurrence across all interviews) alongside of *effective leadership development* were *on the job learning* (20), *external leadership development program* (15), *mentorship* (14), and *responsibilities outside of job role* (10). Of these four, the outlier is *external leadership development programs*. The other three methods primarily happened internally. Occasionally, a participant would mention a mentorship experience or job assignment beyond their role that was external to their place of employment, but predominantly those codes were linked to internal experiences.

Level of Leadership, Resource Challenges, and External Development Programs. Theme 1 focuses on the external nature of the outlying *external leadership development program* code. There are several possibilities for *external leadership development programs* occurring alongside of *effective leadership development.* First, because the participants all represented the highest levels of leadership in an organization, there were likely few, if any, internal programs and strategies that would target this level of leadership within an organization. For college administrators who wanted more development, external programs are likely to provide the largest learning opportunity. Many of the participants noted the formative experiences of attending external programs run by higher education organizations such as the American Council on Education, the Council of Independent Colleges, and other professional organizations.

Second, small, private, not-for-profit colleges are likely to lack the resources to invest heavily in human resource development. Whether the lack of resources is primarily financial, due to budget constraints, or in human resources, as departments are not often large, the problem of taking limited dollars or people and investing in talent development, especially specialized development for a small target group or single individual, would be challenging. Relying on outside organizations to provide development may be more cost effective than attempting to organize these efforts internally. Additionally, *external development programs* are likely to offer the added benefit of injecting new ideas and practices for colleges that would counter internal-only approaches to leadership development.

External Leadership Development and the Importance of Building Social Networks. One potential avenue that deserves deeper discussion (and is a possible future research avenue) is the importance of external leadership development opportunities for upper-level administrators through the lens of the *network-enhancing framework* proposed by Cullen-Lester et al. (2017). Chapter 2 briefly covered this modern conceptualization of leadership development that argues for leadership development programs that aim to enhance (a) an individual's intrapersonal and interpersonal competencies; and (b) the relational and social aspects of the individual and the teams on which they participate. These relational and social aspects refer to one's capacity to maximize the social network connections held by the individual and teams. Cullen-Lester et al. argue the framework furthers the view of "leadership as an outcome of multilevel social dynamics" by "including social and leadership networks as critical components of these dynamics" (p. 133).

Several of the participants mentioned the social networking aspect of external leadership development programs. Darryl remarked,

> I thought of the CIC immediately, because I think that annual President's Institute is quite valuable because you're...surrounded by peers, only by peers. The focus is exclusively on the sort of leadership challenge at these kinds of private institutions....So, there's a kind of a common understanding, a common vocabulary, challenges, and things being discussed.

As shown in this quote, Darryl highlights the importance of connecting to peers facing the same struggles and challenges as he does as the president at his institution. The need for *external leadership development programs* likely grows as one moves up through the leadership levels at their institution and internal peers become scarce. Leadership development programs at small colleges should evolve as leaders move up through hierarchical levels to include more external leadership development aimed at not only learning new leadership skills and competencies, but also with the aim of expanding one's social network which provides access to a larger view of the industry and potentially new ideas and standards.

Cullen-Lester et al.'s (2017) framework addresses the view advocated by Day and Dragoni (2015) that leader and leadership development should focus on the aspects of "expanding individual and collective capacity to be effective in leadership roles and to bring about effective leadership" (p. 134). Much of the content of this present research investigated the ways in which small colleges developed individual leaders. However, it should not be interpreted as only investigating leader, but not leadership development. The intentional development of a leader should also result in the overall enhancement of leadership throughout the organization. Without first focusing on the efforts to develop individuals within an organization, it is hard to improve the overall collective. As Charan et al. (2011) pointed out, "many managers often work at the wrong level" (p. 9). Hence, the inclusion of Charan et al.'s (2011) leadership pipeline framework as one way to understand the impact of leader development on the overall leadership development of an organization. Cullen-Lester et al.'s (2017) framework may prove to be an approach to mediate both leader and leadership development in the context of *external leadership development programs*.

Finally, this use of *external leadership development programs* should not be taken as an exclusive approach to developing leaders and leadership. A mixture of both internal and external strategies would not only serve to allow for the advantages of external programs above but would also keep leaders engaged with subordinates at their institutions through participation in development activities alongside of current and emerging leaders. Moreover, higher level leaders in the organization may be the best suited to delivering low-cost internal leadership development opportunities, furthering enhancing the leaders' influence in their internal network.

Theme 2: Lack of Formal Succession Planning

The second major theme to emerge from the research aligns with the second part of the research question pertaining to succession planning and management. In alignment with much of the literature around succession planning and management and higher education (Baker et al., 2019; Betts et al., 2009; Cavanaugh, 2017; Hempsall, 2014; Klein & Salk, 2013; Miller &

Bisbee, 2006; Ruben & Gigliotti, 2017), I found little evidence of formal strategy or resources given to this practice, with the exception of Institution 2, which had begun implementing some of the foundational work of succession planning and management. Interestingly, Institution 2 had recently hired a Director of Human Resources who had experience from the private sector, which was likely the contributing factor in the introduction of these practices.

As noted in Chapter 2, the lack of leadership preparation was a recurring theme in much of the literature (Gigliotti, 2017; Hempsall, 2014; Morris, 2012; Pepper & Giles, 2015; Preston & Floyd, 2016). Succession planning and management and leadership pipelines have been discussed as strategies to better prepare leaders in higher education (Baker et al., 2019). Theme 2 not only confirms the lack of these strategies and practices, but it also demonstrates some foundational steps that small, private, not-for-profit colleges can employ to build out those strategies and practices.

Adapting Corporate Models to Higher Education. Chapter 2 presented Rothwell's (2015) seven-step model of succession planning. These seven steps: (a) make the commitment, (b) assess present work and people requirements, (c) appraise individual performance, (d) assess future work and people requirements, (e) assess future potential, (f) close the developmental gap, and (g) evaluate the succession planning program, were almost entirely missing from the practices of these four institutions, with the exception of Institution 2. Institution 2, upon hiring a new HR Director, developed two practices that aligned closely to Rothwell's (2015) seven-step model. First, they developed a talent assessment worksheet. According to Ross, it "has been a really good way to identify people who are either ready or have the capacity to get ready for advanced responsibility, and then to develop strategies for those who are not quite...ready." Second, they developed an internal leadership development cohort program that is led by an external facilitator. Donald describes the participants of this internal leadership development program as those “who have been identified by their vice president as having...significant leadership potential.”

Although the focus of this research was not to measure the effectiveness of the strategies or to compare them directly with succession planning and management models such as Rothwell’s (2015) seven steps, it is helpful to filter institutional behavior through the lens of these models as a way of framing the gaps in practice. Adapting a model like Rothwell’s (2015) for small, private, not-for-profit colleges could prove to be beneficial to practitioners. Institution 2 has laid the foundations of what could turn into an institutional strategy for developing leaders for succession as well as for higher education at large. Under Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework below I propose such an adaption for higher education.

Academic Leadership Pipelines. Baker et al.’s (2019) research on leadership pipelines in higher education calls for administrators to begin developing faculty’s leadership experience prior to assuming a department chair role. Moreover, the researchers also discovered that faculty are not only unprepared for leadership positions, but also are lacking encouragement to develop leadership aspirations. One institution in this multiple case study, Institution 3, has taken steps to address these issues. Whitney, the Provost, described their approach for developing future leaders among the faculty that grew out of a recent reorganization. She said,

> We put the departments into six divisions. And we picked a faculty person to be a coordinator liaison...to their respective departments on recruiting students and dollars...on marketing strategies, on telling stories, on friend-raising with alums, and donors....They’re learning all kinds of things about the institution that they would not have learned. And I think...those folks are well positioned to step into Associate Provost

> roles, to step into other kinds of leadership roles, because they're just getting skills outside of teaching and conflict resolution.

As can be seen from this approach, Whitney chose individuals from the faculty to gain the necessary skills to prepare them for higher levels of academic leadership. She paired these individuals with experiences that targeted competencies outside of the classroom and identified them as potential Associate Provosts. The pairing of succession planning with leadership development is the type of strategy that was not often uncovered during the interviews and stands as an example of the type of work to be formalized in a succession planning and management strategy.

Theme 3: **Formal** ***vs.*** **Informal** ***Leadership Development and Succession Planning and Management Strategies***

As previously discussed, *on the job learning, mentorship,* and *responsibilities outside of job role* were the three informal methods of developing leaders that appeared most frequently and were cited as the most effective experiences that administrators recalled in their own development and in the development of their employees. These three methods of developing leaders, however, were often detached from intentional strategy or measured outcomes. For this reason, I classified them as informal. Below are several examples, taken from this study, and recommendations of how to create formal mechanisms from informal methods of leader and leadership development.

Creating Formal Mechanisms From Informal Examples. Committee work, delegation of decision making, iterative learning, and initiative taking were all mentioned as ways in which the participants either gained skills throughout their careers or ways in which they encouraged and provided opportunity for their subordinates to "try on" leadership. While the informal mechanisms that came about organically throughout the careers of the administrators that participated in this study will always play a role in leader and leadership development, the need to formally embed these mechanisms would serve to enhance the strategies advocated for in the Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework presented below. These examples closely align to the examples found in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Committee Work. Many of the participants described the use of committee work as one way of broadening the skill set of an employee, aiding their growth in becoming more influential, and allowing others to see their leadership potential. Darren described the success of committee work amongst his staff. He stated, “there’s definitely been...some upward mobility in the middle management level for staff that has done committee work to broaden their scope of experience.” Committee work can be seen as both *on the job learning* and *responsibilities outside of job role*. For small, private, not-for-profit colleges, committee work can be used as an effective tool to grow, as Darren stated, an employee’s “scope of experience.” One could easily attach the idea of growing another’s “scope of experience” as a significant way to impact the development of leadership ability through the growth of institutional understanding and collaboration across departments and divisions within the organization.

The assignment of emerging leaders to specific committees would be one way that *on the job learning* and *responsibilities outside of job role* methods could be adapted as intentional leadership development strategies. For example, an emerging leader from a student support department could be assigned to an academic committee as a way to expand their institutional understanding and form relationships with academic leadership. Should the employee be promoted into a role similar to that of the Dean of Student Success, this experience would enhance their ability to take an academic view of challenges such as student retention issues.

Moreover, due to the social networking with faculty afforded by committee assignments, the employee would have the added effect of being known by a portion of the faculty and their influence would be more quickly gained among disparate parts of the organization. This intentional committee assignment example is another practical implication of testing Cullen-Lester et al.'s (2017) *network-enhancing framework* to the development of leaders and leadership within higher education institutions.

Challenging Assignments. There were many other examples of informal *on the job learning* and *responsibilities outside of job role* that were evident throughout the interviews. Challenging subordinates to make leadership level decisions with the room to fail and try again came up several times. Both Conner and Darren, from Institution 1 spoke about this form of iterative, *on the job learning*. Darren gave an example of how he approaches this informal practice, "I sit back and say, 'I'm not going to decide, I will confirm I agree with you, but you're going to decide and we're going to go from there.' Because they need to feel empowered to lead." This form of delegating decisions to subordinates can help both the leader and the employee. The leader gains the insight into the employee's willingness and ability to take leadership while the employee gains the experience of making a decision that has a larger impact on the organization. Ultimately, leading others in this way gives them an opportunity to experience leadership and may encourage them to aspire to higher levels of responsibility and leadership within the organization. As previously noted, research by Grotrain-Ryan (2015) uncovered the role of challenging assignments to the development of participants in the ACE Fellows program. Similarly, small college administrators can use challenging assignments coupled with formal leadership development programs, such as those described in Rivas and Jones' (2015) study, as tools to stretch emerging leaders, while allowing a safer space to provide room for failure and subsequent iterations of the assignment as a formal mechanism for leadership development.

Mentorship. The last informal mechanism that appeared often over the course of the interviews was the role played by mentors. *Mentorship* was almost never described by the participants as a formal arrangement between them and the mentor. Rather, they often discussed how a former supervisor mentored them or how they set aside time to listen to their employees and provide mentorship in decision making. Tara displayed this desire to mentor her staff when she stated, “I felt like that I had a really good mentor early on in my career and I try to pass that back to my team.” The phrase “I try” emphasizes the unplanned and informal approach to using mentorship. Tara did not indicate that she structured the relationship for purposeful mentorship. The question remains as to whether or not that would be beneficial or even improve the effectiveness of her mentorship.

Joanne, by contrast, did describe her efforts to structure meaningful conversations with her staff that attempts to connect an individual’s career aspirations and any gaps they have in getting to that goal. She stated, “I have standard meetings....where I help understand....where they want to go and then how I can help them get there. And...it’s worked.” The opportunity for small colleges to leverage *mentorship* more formally lies in its ability to mix leadership cross-divisionally, allowing relationships between supervisors and emerging leaders across the institution to happen more frequently. Part of the first component in the Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework is to embed the plan in the strategic plan of the institution. One way to accomplish this is to simply facilitate more collaboration between the various parts of the organization. Ruben and Gigliotti (2017) highlighted the unique organizational model of most colleges and universities as “loosely coupled elements, decentralization, and ‘shadow systems’” (p. 35). Through structuring more collaboration, institutions break down these siloed systems while also providing a structure for more informal mentorship to happen as current and emerging leaders work together to solve challenges and expand the network of individuals over whom hope to influence.

Succession Planning and Management. Lastly, as noted in Theme 2, succession planning and management across these institutions was overwhelmingly nonexistent or primarily informal. With the exception of the formal mechanisms that were recently instituted by Institution 2 and the beginning of a leadership pipeline practice found in the academic division in Institution 3, only two informal practices occurred with a high enough frequency to warrant discussion.

First, the use of interim leadership was mentioned 13 times throughout the interviews. In each instance, interim leadership was described as a stop gap intervention while a formal search process was conducted. Several times, however, the individual who was named as interim ended up earning the job. This approach stands out as an opportunity to assess talent and develop leaders. While “strategy” was never mentioned as a reason for naming an interim appointee, I believe the use of interim leadership could be a powerful tool in overall succession planning and management. In the talent assessment process, interim leaders can be identified in the event that a leadership role became available. Institutions can use the vacancy as a short-term development and assessment tool. Even in the case where an outside individual was hired to fill the vacancy, the interim leader could go back to their original role having gained experience from the temporary leadership assignment. Additionally, formalizing this practice could lead to more internal candidates moving up through the internal leadership pipeline as a natural result of seeing the employee enact the leadership potential identified through the talent assessment process. Ross provided an example of this scenario when he recalled, “we had an internal promotion to Vice President a couple of years ago...the (former) Vice President left unexpectedly...and...we had the confidence to name her as the interim.” In this instance, the institution identified someone as having potential, named the employee as interim, and then hired them full-time into that role.

The second informal succession planning and management strategy was the purposeful building of leadership pipelines (Baker et al., 2019; Charan et al., 2011; Conger & Fulmer, 2003). While this strategy borders on formal development, it is discussed here as informal due to the description of the leadership opportunities being available rather than targeted. Darryl describes the leadership development investment made in employees through the Vice Presidents at his institution. He said,

> I would say...half of the six VPs...are working pretty actively to prepare their “number two” people...to perhaps compete for the job. I think the key word is “compete.” I don’t think there’ll be any sense that they would just be anointed or that it would be handed to them. So perhaps that’s not a succession plan formally, but they are...talented people who are getting some years and building some muscle as leaders and... if an opening occurs, they’ll go for it.

This example illustrates that leadership development is present, but not attached to an outcome. The Vice Presidents are building capacity in their direct reports but not for the expressed purpose of leadership continuity at the institution. As Darryl stated, it is “not a succession plan formally.” While the development of these individuals may benefit the industry as a whole, it may or may not benefit the institution directly.

Cultural Impact

One potential question that arises out of formalizing a series of informal methods of leadership development and succession planning and management pertains to the cultural impact the formalization has on a small college. While not directly addressed in the interview protocol of the study, I acknowledge there could be impact on the culture. Chapter 2 covers Rothwell's (2015) six categories of succession planning and management that institutions should consider when building out their strategy. The six categories: (a) direction, (b) timing, (c) planning, (d) scope, (e) dissemination, and (f) amount of individual discretion, each represent potential opportunities to not only implement a holistic succession planning and management strategy, but also represent the ways in which the plan can shape culture. One practical example from Rothwell's description would be the scope of the plan. If the plan and methods only target the top levels of leadership, or only the people identified as potentials for higher levels of leadership, how would that limited scope impact the overall culture of development and employee morale? Another might be that a formal succession plan could draw staff and faculty attention, possible resulting in additional competition to be promoted which might negatively impact institution if it has a more family-like culture (Bolman & Deal, 2017).

Other researchers advocate for ways in which institutions can build a development culture for every employee (Kegan & Lahey, 2016). In *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*, Kegan and Lahey present examples of how several organizations built a culture of development that permeates the entire workforce. While the investigation of each organization's culture was not part of the present research, practitioners and researchers could investigate how the recommendations here shape, change, and challenge organizational culture.

Case Comparison

Table 5 outlines the several strengths and opportunities of each institution that participated in this study. The table is not an exhaustive list of all strategies, methods, and interventions related to leadership development and succession planning the institutions engage in or omit from their practice. The table is a brief look into what opportunities small, private, not-for-profit colleges could consider implementing strategically to grow leaders and plan for succession in their own organization.

Table 5

Strengths and Opportunities Case Comparison

Institution	Strengths	Opportunities
Institution 1	Two of the three administrators discussed the importance of iterative learning, allowing subordinates to make decisions and allow for failure. This behavior demonstrates a commitment to on the job learning.	Darren mentioned the heavy use of committee work at Institution 1 but none of the participants discussed it as a strategic asset to intentionally grow leaders. Contrasted to the responses from participants of other institutions and this appears to be an untapped opportunity.
Institution 2	One major strength of Institution 2 is use of an external facilitator in their internal leadership development program. A similar practice appeared in the literature in the form of executive coaching. While not technically the same, the reliance on outside expertise is a good example of how colleges with limited resources can offer robust development programs.	This study highlighted the foundational practices of Institution 2's assessment of internal talent process. While this practice provides the beginning steps of developing a robust succession planning and management framework, there is an opportunity to embed this practice throughout the organization, couple it with purposeful development, and transparently promote it as a tool to invest in employees. As it stands now, the internal development program is known only to a few. Greater transparency and awareness throughout the institution might strengthen its use as a development tool.

Institution	Strengths	Opportunities
Institution 3	Institution 3 established a leadership pipeline structure in their academic division. Whitney described work that is provided outside of the job role that enables faculty members to not only gain new skills and competencies that would more readily qualify them for promotion into an Associate Provost role, but also provides the needed space to shift values, a significant component of Charan et al.'s (2011) leadership pipeline framework.	The president of Institution 3 discussed the preliminary steps in identifying a successor in an emergency situation. This approach to succession planning falls short of a developed, long-term, and intentional succession planning and management strategy. Leadership development opportunities can be coupled as part of replacement planning and extended to include more than a single replacement candidate.
Institution 4	One of the participants at Institution 4 described how the use of committee work, a form of on the job learning and responsibilities outside of job role, is used as a purposeful development tool. Choosing emerging leaders to serve on committees, as Tara noted, is an active way to develop leaders and prepare them for greater roles as they become available.	James, a vice president at Institution 4, described how he and others have approached individuals who demonstrate leadership potential and targeted them for opportunities within the organization. There are opportunities to formalize this type of assessment of internal talent and engagement of emerging leaders similar to the formal internal talent assessment worksheet described by Institution 2.

Examining the key strengths and opportunities of these four cases demonstrates the ways in which leadership development and succession planning strategies are both implemented successfully or fall short of their potential. Small college administrators could use this table as one way to quickly frame tangible ways in which they could correct their own institution's disjointed practices or elevate successful strategies more broadly throughout the organization. The table also allows each case to be understood neither as having all leadership development and succession planning strategies perfected nor as having them in complete disarray. The status of leadership development and succession planning strategies at any given institution is a mixture of planned and unplanned success as well as opportunity. One way in which small colleges can better ensure the planned success of strategies is presented in the Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework below.

Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework

Using the findings from this study, a framework for a formal succession planning and management strategy that could be implemented by small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities would contain the following components:

- Embed a succession planning and management strategy in institutional outcomes and strategic plan;
- Assess internal talent and identify gaps in current and future leadership capacity;
- Identify internal and external leadership development opportunities including formal and informal, and internal (lower cost) and external (higher cost) development tools;
- Link formal and informal leadership development opportunities to potential or current leaders based on level of leadership and the internal talent assessment process (succession planning), as well as develop an overarching leadership development strategy taking advantage of economies of scale in using certain opportunities;
- Assess results of the succession planning and management strategy and leadership development through both internal and external upward mobility.

This adaptation of Rothwell's (2015) model simplifies the succession planning and management strategy for institutions that have fewer financial and human capital resources to dedicate to the process, as well as some flexibility in terms of being less prescriptive about hiring internally, needing abundant financial resources, or burdening administrators with excessive work.

One caveat that should be noted is that even with a succession planning and management framework that is embedded in institutional practice, there are times in which external hires would still be necessary or advantageous. For example, if an institution is in need of a significant leadership change due to poor student outcomes or significant enrollment concerns, requiring a new approach or someone with a track record of results, an outside hire may be warranted. This individual would inevitably bring with them an outsider perspective that an internal candidate may not have. In other words, the proposed framework is not to be understood as a requirement when filling an open leadership position. Rather, it is a strategy that would enable small colleges to grow their own leaders *intentionally*, saving time, money, and resources when filling open leadership positions as well as providing a clear pathway for promotion for those who are emerging leaders. Below is a detailed explanation of each step of the framework.

Embed a Succession Planning and Management Strategy in Institutional Outcomes and Strategic Plan. In this study, I found that most leadership development and succession planning strategies happened without a concerted, long-term commitment or strategy from the institution. Administrators would note that although they set aside professional development funds, those funds were the first cut when the budget became stretched. This practice appeared to be more of an "add-on" or optional strategy when the resources of the institution were plenty and expendable when the resources dried up. The haphazard approach to leadership development and succession planning was one of the main drivers that led to this research and were addressed in the problem of practice in Chapter 1.

Small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities can actively choose to combat this problem by treating leadership development and succession planning and management as core outcomes to be guarded in lean times, promoted even when there are few internal promotion opportunities available, and continually assessed for improvement. Without this commitment and embedding (what) in the strategy of the institution, the problem of too few and too many unprepared leaders could continue to challenge both the institution and the industry as a whole. Baker et al. (2019) called for the need to better outline performance and assessment measures of current leadership roles in colleges and universities, aligning them to the institutional strategy. This approach will provide the justification for current leaders to invest in future leaders.

Assess Internal Talent and Identify Gaps in Current and Future Leadership Capacity. Institution 2 provided an achievable example of the second component of a strategic succession planning and management framework. Administrators at the college compiled a spreadsheet of internal talent that was reviewed annually. This spreadsheet was used in recommendations for open leadership positions as well as identifying individuals to participate in an internal leadership development program. As evidenced in the interviews, the actual work of developing the spreadsheet and updating it appeared to happen one time per year. This practice would not place too much additional work on small colleges that lack a robust human resource department. Small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities can adopt this practice and improve upon it. One such improvement would be to not only keep a formal document that identifies current talent and future leadership potential of the institution’s employee base, but should also be updated to track progress, upward mobility as employees are promoted, and development strategies that are assigned to each employee. Not only would these improvements allow a supervisor to track development on and individual level, but it would also allow the institution the ability to see the growth in overall leadership capacity throughout the college.

As discussed in Theme 1 above, leadership development strategies and tools (or interventions or opportunities) should be matched to the level the current employee occupies.

This approach would align with the leadership pipeline model put forth by Charan et al. (2011) and supported in research by Dai et al. (2011). Charan et al. (2011) posited that in most organizations "there is little acknowledgement that different levels of leadership exist and that people need to make skill and value transitions at each level" (p. 4). The question becomes, how, and in what ways, do leadership development strategies change in small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities? In other words, the development opportunities should target the skills, competencies, and values the employee needs to modify if they are to move up the pipeline. A great example of this that emerged from the interviews came from Institution 3. As discussed in Theme 2 above, Whitney, the Provost at the institution, developed an action learning opportunity that gives faculty members institutional experience outside of their normal role working alongside of the admissions and advancement teams at the institution. According to Whitney, these experiences help prepare the faculty "to step into Associate Provost roles, to step into other kinds of leadership roles, because they're just getting skills outside of teaching and conflict resolution." This kind of leadership development is not "cookie-cutter" or "one-size fits all." Rather, it is intentionally targeting the deficits of those who are identified for the experience. Practices like this should be replicated in the succession planning and management framework.

Identify Internal and External Leadership Development Opportunities Including Formal and Informal, and Internal (Lower Cost) and External (Higher Cost) Development Tools. Once an institution better understands their current leadership potential it must also identify what it is currently doing, both formally and informally, to develop its emerging leaders. Informal mechanisms that are readily available should be used more formally, as argued in Theme 3, but there should also be the flexibility for leaders to use the strategies informally for the "in the moment" opportunities for development. Formal mechanisms allow for what Baker et al. (2019) call "anticipatory, rather than reactive" strategies for development succession planning and management practices. However, as is often the case, leadership development opportunities present themselves organically and in the moment. Leaders should assess these instances as they review their strategies and practices and note their efficacy in developing leaders. A mixture of both strategic and formal as well as organic and informal practices should be used and encouraged in this framework.

This study reviewed several formal and informal methods employed by the institutions that aimed to develop leader and leadership development at their institutions. *Committee work, on the job learning, responsibilities outside of job role, and external leadership development programs* were all listed as being effective. Small colleges should review their own strategies in light of these findings to determine opportunities for new approaches as well as ideas that present low cost avenues for approaching the need to develop current and future leaders. Once current and new strategies are identified, the institution would then move to step 4, outlined below.

Link Formal and Informal Leadership Development Opportunities to Potential or Current Leaders Based on Level of Leadership and the Internal Talent Assessment Process as Well as Develop an Overarching Leadership Development Strategy. The mixture of both formal and informal leadership development strategies becomes one of the key decisions that leaders of small colleges must make. Internal, informal opportunities are happening quite frequently, as evidenced by the results of this study. *Mentorship*, *on the job learning*, and *assignments outside of one's job role* are organic events that occur in the work life of an employee. These events quite possibly happen more frequently at small colleges where a smaller employee base predicates the need for cross-training and a broader understanding of the processes and needs outside of one's department. While informal leadership development events can be reflected upon after the fact, this succession planning and management framework calls for adding formal development alongside of these informal, and often unstructured, methods of developing future leaders.

Several examples in Chapter 2 provide various approaches to formalizing leadership development. Berman (2015) and Ruben et al. (2018) both reviewed formal leadership development programs aimed at specific populations within colleges and universities. Grotrain-Ryan (2015) highlighted the effectiveness of the formal, external, ACE Fellows program. The mixture of challenging assignments, coaching, and peer mentorship were all rated favorably by the participants. Rivas and Jones (2015) highlighted the formal action learning programs put forth by a Texas university and demonstrated the ways in which they promoted career movement for faculty members, broadened administrative understanding, increased institutional commitment, and lead to both internal and external promotions for participants.

The commitment to broaden the scope and intentionality of leadership development beyond the informal, organic opportunities that occurred in the experience of the participants of this study will contribute to accelerating and improving the development of future leaders for both small, private, not-for-profit institutions and the industry as a whole. I understand the nature and scope of these informal and formal strategies are contextually bound to the institution and their resources.

Assess Results of the Succession Planning and Management Strategy and Leadership Development Through Both Internal and External Upward Mobility. As mentioned in Rivas and Jones' (2015) study above, one of the outcomes of a formal leadership development program was the promotion of employees both internally and externally. As the higher education industry struggles to replace the outgoing baby-boomer generation of leaders

(Betts et al., 2009; Grotrain-Ryan, 2015; Klein & Salk, 2013), each institution must play a role in investing in leadership development to benefit of the industry as a whole. Measuring the effectiveness of a strategic succession and management plan through the promotion of participants both internally and externally is one of the ways the institution can measure the ultimate outcome of the program. Certainly, other measurements could be added as a way to make changes for better outcomes (e.g., number of identified promotion candidates who received some form of informal or formal development per year, improvements in a candidates' readiness for promotion compared to previous years). The preparedness of a recently promoted employee, the retention of high performers, and the improvement of student outcomes could all be assessed in light of the skills and competencies gained by individuals who are receiving the developmental activities and strategies. This fourth and final step is critical in the ongoing success and efficacy of any program instituted by a college.

Implications for Theory and Future Research

This study sought to discover the best practices of succession planning and management and leader and leadership development strategies used by small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities through investigating the experiences of their administrators. These administrators were also leaders themselves and beneficiaries of leadership development and succession planning practices. The data provided here demonstrate that four methods of leadership development stood out among the four institutions of the case study. The code, *effective leadership development,* appeared most frequently alongside of *on the job learning* (20), *external leadership development programs* (15), *mentorship* (14), and *responsibilities outside of job role* (10). Researchers have a variety of avenues to explore for future research. Mentioned previously, the outlier among the four most effective methods was *external leadership* *development programs.* Further research should investigate the use of Cullen-Lester et al.'s (2017) network-enhancing framework for leadership development to test if it may explain why higher levels of leadership find *external leadership development programs* to be highly effective. The present researcher posits that as upper-level administrators ascend an organization's hierarchical structure they naturally have fewer internal peers and must rely on outside sources for development.

A potential second focus of future research could be to investigate perceived advantages and disadvantages of internally promoted leaders in small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities. If research demonstrated little or no advantage to promoting leaders from within, then this research and others calling for succession planning practices for colleges and universities (Betts et al., 2009; Cavanaugh, 2017; Miller & Bisbee, 2006; Walseth, 2009) would be called into question or disregarded. Conger and Fulmer (2003) argued for and demonstrate with anecdotal evidence the efficacy of succession management in impacting business outcomes and leadership preparation in the private sector. Would higher education produce a different result?

Lastly, researchers could repeat this study with a different group of colleges and universities. Public or for-profit institutions, both with different challenges, access to resources, and business models, may produce different results. Often in practitioner-based research, private and public college data are reported separately for this very reason. The results of this study could be enhanced and extended by a replication study focused on a different subset of colleges and universities. Quantitative studies that survey larger sample might also reveal whether the present studies can be verified within a larger sample of institutions.

Implications for Practice

The findings of this research study have implications for practitioners in the higher education industry. The Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework presented above could be one way that colleges with limited resources could prepare for leadership vacancies as well as increase the competencies and skill sets of their current leaders. Through targeting a mixture of formal and informal methods of leadership development, the succession plan would move beyond short term emergency planning and into the realm of strategic planning around human capital needs and potential. Colleges and universities would be encouraged to adapt the findings in this research to their unique situation and strengths. For those with larger budgets, more investment in external development programs may provide the highest return on investment. Where there is less funding but more internal human-capital capacity, internal development programs coupled with *on the job learning, responsibilities outside of job role,* and *mentorship* may be the more feasible path to building a sustainable leadership pipeline.

Additionally, the results of the multiple-case study demonstrated that three of the four institutions had no formal mechanisms in place for intentionally developing leadership within their organization. Administrators across the industry would be wise to evaluate their human capital strategy in light of this evidence and consider changes that would prepare them for future vacancies.

Limitations

The study's multiple case study design limits the generalizability of the results to other institutions in that a small sample size was used. The population of small, not-for-profit colleges and universities further limits the applicability of the results for large, public, or for-profit institutions of higher education. Additionally, the population and sample were geographically limited to the Midwest United States, which may also limit the application of the results to other national or international institutions. However, theoretical generalization might be possible (Mayring, 2007), especially where the reader considers the case descriptions and the similarity of the sample to their context.

This study relied on a convenience sample and volunteers, who were purposefully selected due to direct experience with the topic the study focuses upon. The participants did not represent the entire population at each institution. The sampling technique used poses a threat to the research in that it limits the degree to which the sample represents the actual population of administrators and institutions (Salkind, 2010). Gathering data from individuals outside of upper-level positions in management was not in the scope of the present study, but could be the focus of future research into the efficacy of leader and leadership development and succession planning and management strategies. The sampling techniques used may have limited the degree to which the study's results can be assumed to apply to other institutions. However, as a qualitative case study, the focus of this study was to explore the topic more than provide findings that can be applied to other institutions.

Salkind (2010) defined volunteer bias as "a specific bias that can occur when the subjects who volunteer to participate in a research project are different in some ways from the general population" (p. 1609). Volunteer bias may be present inasmuch as the participants have a particular view or bias related to the research question they may want to further. Participants (or institutions) who did not volunteer may also have different perspectives that were not included in the study's findings. To combat volunteer bias, researchers can employ several strategies, including ensuring clarity of the communications to potential participants, assurances of confidentiality and anonymity, explaining the relevance of the study to the volunteer's practice, demonstrating the researcher's perceived level of authority, and keeping the study as short and straightforward as possible (Salkind, 2010). This study utilized all of these strategies during the recruitment and interviews with the participants. However, volunteer bias may have affected the results in unknown ways.

Conclusion

This multiple-case study explored the ways in which leader and leadership development and succession planning and management were experienced and implemented from the experience of administrators. It was discovered the vast majority of effective leadership development experiences came in the form of informal and internal opportunities including *on the job learning, responsibilities outside of job role,* and *mentorship.* The second most cited effective leadership development method, *external leadership development program,* was the outlier of the methods due to its formal and external nature. Additionally, I discovered that little succession planning and management strategies were developed or implemented in three of the four institutions covered in the research. This finding supported the higher education literature reviewed in Chapter 2. I proposed a simplified Small College Succession Planning and Management Framework as one way in which practitioners could adapt a corporate model to small, private, not-for-profit colleges and universities that often lack the necessary resources to invest in broad leadership development and succession planning and management strategies.

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Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Request for Participation

Dear X,

I am a doctoral student in the Ed.D. in Organizational Leadership program at Abilene Christian University working under the guidance of Dr. Stuart Allen, Professor of Organizational Leadership, writing to ask if your institution would be willing to participate in my dissertation study. The purpose of this research is to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States. Exploring the experiences of administrators may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet the shortage of qualified and experienced leaders in higher education. Your institution has been identified as a small (<3,000 students), private, not-for-profit institution in the Midwest United States and qualifies as a potential site for this multiple-case study.

If your institution would be willing to participate in this study, I would need access to 2-3 administrators who will be asked to be available for an interview either in-person, by telephone, or online that lasts approximately 60 minutes. I will send them separate invitations to participate along with a consent form that meets the standards of the IRB at Abilene Christian University. All information gathered during the interview about you and your institution will be kept confidential (identifying information will be excluded from the published study).

As a current college administrator, I understand the nature of our work and the uncertainty presented to us in the current environment. I believe that the challenges we face today and in the future only serve to heighten the need for institutions like ours to better understand how to best develop the next generation of leaders. Thank you for your consideration in assisting me in this research project. I look forward to working with your institution and learning from the experiences of your administrators.

Sincerely,

Bradley Jackson
XXXX@acu.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Appendix B: Email to Participants

Dear X,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation study. I have received approval from Abilene Christian University's Institutional Review Board to proceed with the data collection of my research. The interview will last approximately 60 and will be conducted via a Zoom meeting. Below is a link to my interview calendar for the first three weeks of June. Please select a date and time of your choosing. If there are no available dates or times that align with your schedule, please email me with your next available time. All information gathered during the interview about you and your institution will be kept confidential (identifying information will be excluded from the published study).

Additionally, I have attached a consent form that outlines further details related to your participation in the study. Please sign and return before or during your selected interview time. For your convenience, I have also attached a digital option for signature.

I look forward to learning from your experience as an administrator and am grateful for your willingness to participate in my study.

Sincerely,

XXXX
XXXX@acu.edu
XXX-XXX-XXXX

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Dear Mr. / Ms. X,

You are being invited to participate in a research study on leader and leadership development and succession planning and management strategies by Bradley Jackson, a doctoral student in the Ed.D. Organizational Leadership program at Abilene Christian University. In the body of this letter you will find important information about the study and expectations of participants. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions that you may have regarding the procedures, your involvement, and any risks or benefits you may experience.

Purpose of the Study
In particular, this study seeks to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the Midwest United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. As a participant, you will be asked to take part in an interview session between you and the researcher.

Due to the nature of the study, you may find the interview to be enjoyable and rewarding as it may grant an opportunity to reflect on current organizational practices. However, there are no direct rewards, payments, or incentives for participating.

Risk and Benefits
The primary risk of this study is breach of confidentiality. However, steps will be taken to minimize this risk. Personal identification data will be treated as confidential and be included in research records. Consent forms will be stored separately from interview transcripts. Once transcribed, audio recordings will be deleted and pseudonyms will be used in the transcript instead of real names. Therefore, there are minimal risks expected for the participants of this research study.

Privacy and Confidentiality
Information collected about you will be handled in a confidential manner in accordance with the law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as with members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Aside from these required disclosures, your confidentiality will be protected by implementing the following precautions: While the interview will be recorded, the recording device will be securely stored and only the researcher will have access to it. Recordings will be deleted after transcription by the researcher or a confidential transcription service. All identifying information will be removed from the transcript and pseudonyms (fake names) will be used instead, where only the researcher will know the true names. All transcribed copies of the interview will be stored in an encrypted and password protected format to eliminate ease of access, with only the researcher and his dissertation chair having access. All consent forms will be destroyed after 3-5 years' time, per completion of the study. Your name and your organization's name will not be included in any published study report.

Data Collection

This research will require roughly 60 minutes of your time. During this time, you will be interviewed about how your organization uses leader and leadership development strategies and succession planning and management strategies to plan for current and future vacancies in the leadership roles in your organization. The interview will be conducted in a location of your choosing (e.g., your office) and will be audio recorded.

The results of this study will be presented to a dissertation committee designated by Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas and later may be published in journals read by academic researchers and practitioners with interest in leader and leadership development or succession planning and management strategies.

Contacts

If you require any information about this study, wish to receive a copy of the results from this study, or speak to the researcher you may contact me at the following email: XXXX@acu.edu or my dissertation chair, Dr. Stuart Allen at: XXXX@acu.edu. If you have any other questions regarding your rights as a participant in this research you may also contact the Office of Research Services at Abilene Christian University at xxx-xxx-xxxx or osrp@acu.edu. You may also contact ACU's Chair of the Institutional Review Board and Executive Director of Research, Megan Roth, Ph.D. Dr. Roth may be reached at:
xxx-xxx-xxxx
320 Hardin Administration Bldg., ACU Box 29103
Abilene, TX 79699

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You are not obliged to continue once the study has begun. Therefore, if you choose to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time for any reason. If you choose to withdraw, all information obtained from you during the study will be destroyed and will not be used in any way.

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read (or have been read) all the information provided any your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form.

____________________	____________________	________________
Printed Name of Participant	Signature of Participant	Date
____________________	____________________	________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent	Signature of Person Obtaining Consent	Date

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

Reminders to the Researcher:

Before each interview, ensure that you have received a signed consent form from the participant. Once verification of the form is received, and you have confirmed with the participant that you will be recording the interview with their permission, start the recording device.

Open with Script:

Hello X. Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study which focuses on the experiences of small, private, not-for-profit college administrators and their use of succession planning and management and leader and leadership development strategies. Could you please confirm for me that you have received, signed, and returned the consent form for your participation in this study?

Thank you. Before I begin with my interview protocol, I would like to briefly review the procedure that we will be following today and remind you of your rights as a participant. This interview will last approximately 60 minutes. If follow-up questions are needed after the transcription of this interview, I will reach out to you and schedule a follow-up time of your choosing.

Please remember that your participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question during this interview or withdraw from the study completely. I will keep all identifying information confidential and will protect the identity of both you and your institution. There are minimal risks to your participation in this study.

Now that I have covered both the procedure that will be used and your rights as a participant, do you still agree to participate?

Thank you.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this multiple-case study is to discover the best-practices of leader and leadership development and succession planning in small, not-for-profit, private colleges in the United States through exploring the experiences of administrators. This may aid in understanding and addressing how colleges can build better leadership pipelines and employ succession planning and management to meet the shortage of qualified leaders within the industry.

Research Question

What practices have small, not-for-profit, private colleges engaged in to a) develop leaders and leadership and b) develop succession planning and management strategies to ensure continuity of leadership?

Demographics:

1. What best describes your gender?
    a. Female
    b. Male
    c. Prefer not to say
    d. Prefer to self-describe
2. Is your institution located in the Midwest United States?
3. Is your institution classified as a small, private, not-for-profit college?
    a. (The Carnegie Classification of a small college consists of institutions that have less than 3,000 students)
4. What is your current job title?
    a. Example: president, vice-president, provost, dean, etc.
5. How many years of experience do you have in upper administration in a small, private, not-for-profit institution?
6. How many years of experience do you have in academia?
7. How many years have you been employed by your current institution?
8. How would you describe your college?

Start Main Interview Questions:

To answer the first part of the research question:

1. What formal and informal methods are used by your college to develop leadership competencies in faculty, staff, and administrators?
    a. How are individuals identified for these opportunities?
    b. Is this a formal program? Is it scheduled annually?
    c. Who oversees these programs?
    d. What competencies are targeted?
    e. Have those who completed formal or informal development activities advanced in your institution?
    f. Are financial resources dedicated to these efforts?
    g. Do you consider the current methods to be successful?
2. How has your current or previous organizations invested in formal leadership development for you personally?
    a. Which of these development strategies have been the most impactful?
3. In what ways have you intentionally developed your direct reports and have those efforts been effective?

To answer the second part of the research question:

4. What succession planning strategies does your current institution use to strategically plan for future leadership vacancies?
    a. What level of leadership is targeted by the succession plan?
    b. Is it documented?
    c. How long has it been in place?
    d. How frequently has it been updated?

e. Formal or informal?
f. Who oversees the plan?
g. Is there a pool or are specific individuals identified for specific positions?
h. Is leadership development tied to the succession plan?
i. Do you feel that these strategies are effective?

5. When vacancies have occurred in leadership positions at your institution, what steps are taken to find the right candidate to fill the role?
    a. Specifically, are the steps outlined or is the succession plan followed (if it exists)?
6. What levels of your organization are active in the decision-making process of replacing and developing leaders in key positions in your organization?
    a. What role does the board of director play?
    b. What role does the president play?
    c. What role does upper administration play?
    d. Is there any faculty and staff involvement?
    e. What role does human resources play?
7. Do you perceive that the employees of your college have a clear understanding of the institution's succession planning and leadership development strategies?
    a. Is there a strong culture of promoting talent from within or hiring talent from the outside?
8. What would you consider the best or most successful practices of leadership development and succession planning at your college?
    a. Are there any further best practices you can share based on past experiences with other institutions?
9. Is there anything you would consider unique about your college that influences or guides its approach to leader and leadership development or succession planning?
    a. Mission?
    b. Religious affiliation?

Close of Interview:

This concludes our interview. Thank you for your participation in this research study.

Stop recorder. Ask if the participant would like to receive a transcription of the interview and confirm any contact information in the event that a follow-up interview is needed.

Appendix E: IRB Approval Letter

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY
Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
320 Hardin Administration Building, ACU Box 29103, Abilene, Texas 79699-9103
325-674-2885

May 27, 2020

Bradley Jackson
Department of Organizational Leadership
Abilene Christian University

Dear Brad,

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project titled "Preparing Our Future Leaders: Lessons from Small College Succession Planning and Leadership Development",

(IRB# 20-079)is exempt from review under Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects.

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

Megan Roth

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs