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Constructing a Public Community College Presidency: A Retrospective Study

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Constructing a Public Community College Presidency:
A Retrospective Study

by

Annabel Brooks

A dissertation submitted
to the Doctoral Program Faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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This Doctoral Dissertation is Dedicated

to

Dr. Donald W. Pope

and

Aunt Jewell and Uncle Lester

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Abstract

This retrospective, qualitative case study examined the complexities of leadership in a community college setting under a single, long-term president. Six critical events were identified by 16 key informants as a basis for reflection on their views of the 23-year presidency of Dr. William Seeker at Florida Keys Community College.

The researcher found a highly participatory leadership model and a college that functions in a less hierarchical manner than is traditionally encountered in community colleges. The study further revealed that the president of Florida Keys Community College expanded the role of president by giving priority to the construction of a positive and productive learning culture, honoring local resources, both tangible and intangible. The driving force behind the institution throughout this 23 year period was the development of human capital. A philosophy of approaching tough decisions swiftly and deliberately while maintaining a sense of inclusion in the decision making process is a hallmark of this presidency. A better understanding of the role of the president is necessary for present and future leaders of community colleges, for the Boards of Trustees who act as policy makers, and for state legislators. Indeed, anyone who leads a public organization that must be responsive to local

community needs and to a local governing board can gain valuable insights from this examination of one community college presidency.

Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

Background

An inherent characteristic of America's democracy is the belief that individuals who truly want to achieve success will be able to find the venue to do so. The notion that the masses could access the American dream permeates every article of the Bill of Rights. As Thomas Jefferson observed, "Educate and inform the mass of the people...Enlighten the people generally, and tyranny and oppression of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day" (Williamson, 1997, p. 59). There are those who believe that this vision may exist only as an idealistic dream of the past. Birnbaum noted that, "in the United States, the educational narratives of the past have been stories of personal virtue, civic participation, democracy, and social justice" (2000, p. 3). He asserts that today there is a lack of equity in higher education.

One educational institution currently exemplifying this democratic and uniquely American ideal is the public community college. America's nearly 2,000 public community

colleges demonstrate both optimism and commitment by inviting adult students of diverse backgrounds and abilities to meet their learning needs with an open door policy. According to Peter Drucker (1999):

The community college was actually designed to educate technologists who have both the needed theoretical knowledge and the manual skill. On this, I am convinced, rests both the still huge productivity advantage of the American economy and the so far unique American ability to create almost overnight, new and different industries. (p. 151-152)

Public community colleges have had to make enormous changes in mission in order to adapt to student needs. Community colleges face many more challenges in the 21st century (Langer, 1997). These challenges include demographic adjustments, shifts in workforce needs, and changing realities about who students are and how they learn (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995).

Community colleges bridge the gap between public schools and the universities, offer initial training and subsequent retraining for the workforce, and offer lifelong

learning opportunities. Community colleges foster growth and development by providing for the needs of the corporate sector through education, thus impacting local, regional, and national economies (Roe & Baker, 1989).

The challenge of today's community college, then, is to develop the kind of organization that can responsively adapt to the rapid changes of the information age, while creating opportunities for personal, professional, and career enhancement for a diverse constituent population. Given the scope and influence of the community college movement, it is important to take a closer look at the leadership guiding the attainment of these ideals (Hammons & Keller, 1988). The successes of these multi-dimensional institutions are directly related to the leadership provided by their presidents (Fisher, 1984).

Research that examines how successful community college presidents lead has been scarce because the majority of these presidents have held their posts for less than 5 years. Ross et al., 1993, researched the tenure of college presidents over a span of 5 years (1986-90). The findings indicated that the average tenure for presidents of 2-year colleges was 5 years. Because fewer than 18% of

community college presidents have served more than 5 years at the same institution, there is little research on an individual veteran president (Evans, 1996). More focused study is needed on the particulars of long term, successful community college presidencies.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the complexities of leadership within a specific community college setting. A secondary purpose was to determine how constructivist theory contributes to the understanding of leadership dynamics through the lens of the research process.

Research Questions

Because the study is retrospective, critical events surrounding the history of the college were chosen to elicit perceptions of the informants about the presidency. Four questions formed the basis for this study:

1. How were events perceived by the president and other college stakeholders?
2. How did critical events steer the presidency over the span of 2 decades?

3. How was the community college presidency shaped and interpreted over time?
4. How did the lengthy tenure of the president impact the evolution of Florida Keys Community College (FKCC) and the constituents it serves?

Significance of the Study

A matter of grave concern among policy makers and leaders in academe is how to promote outstanding leadership for public community colleges of the 21st century (Vaughan & Weisman, 1997). The mission of public community colleges in Florida, according Florida Public Statute 240.301, is to provide a system of higher education that is of the highest quality, enabling students of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of income to become engaged in the search for knowledge and individual development (Florida Department of Education, 2000). The mission also states the need for responsiveness to local educational requirements and challenges. In achieving this mission, public community colleges strive to maintain sufficient local authority and flexibility while preserving appropriate legal accountability to the state.

Given the mission, leaders in community colleges need to be sensitive to empowering employees and students,

promoting leadership, and providing an environment where shared decision-making thrives (Rhoads & Valadez, 1996). The realization of this mission and the success of the community college itself, as with any other organization, hinges largely upon the president. Tremendous demands are placed upon community college presidents as they rise to the challenge of leading their institutions into an era of global competition.

Criticisms have arisen from public arenas concerning the lack of preparation for both high school and college graduates. Pelham (1996) offered that given the decline in state and federal funding the collective bargaining agreements limiting what the president can do, and the speculation that student enrollment numbers will begin to decline, there is little encouragement for seeking a presidency. Pelham makes the plea for further research on the role of the community college president with the following statements:

It is safe to conclude that the demands placed on college presidents are varied and often conflict. What choices does a president have in responding to this complex environment? What roles might a

president play in moving the institution through troubled and dangerous times? Answers to these questions may provide insight into how to be a successful president. (p. 5)

A better understanding of the role of the president is necessary for present and future leaders of community colleges, for the boards of trustees who act as policy makers, and for state legislators. In that the role of the president impacts so many constituencies, insight into the leadership process of this remarkable post-secondary institution can serve to inform all stakeholders interested in its governance.

The role of the community college president is especially significant in light of the recent reorganization of education in Florida. The reorganization was a result of the passage of Amendment Eight to the State Constitution in 1998 whereby voters indicated a need for a change, making education a fundamental value of the state. The amendment eliminated the Cabinet as the State Board of Education, creating a free standing appointed State Board of Education requiring the appointment rather than election of a Commissioner of Education. The Commissioner of

Education subsequently appointed a Blue Ribbon Committee to recommend a new single statewide oversight board for all levels of education, kindergarten through the university. These actions eliminated the centralized State University System Board of Regents, replacing it with local boards of trustees appointed by the governor. Thus, not only the leaders of community colleges, but also the leadership of all public higher education institutions in Florida must now give attention to honing the political acumen necessary to function effectively with locally based institutional governing boards.

One might argue that the virtues and strengths required of a community college president appear almost super human (Evans, 1996; Pelham, 1996). Given the short tenure of most presidents, the value of examining a successful, long-tenured community college presidency is clear. This study examined one president who weathered the myriad challenges of a dynamic and growing institution while achieving prominence along the way.

Organization of the Study

This chapter introduced a retrospective, qualitative

study conducted to gain an understanding of the complexities of leadership within a community college under a single, long-term presidency. Chapter 2 examines background information on the characteristics of the public community college with a focus specific to a Florida public community college and its presidency. Leadership perspectives, including transformational leadership, transactional leadership and emotional intelligence will be reviewed in Chapter 2 as well. Chapter 3 details the methodology of the study by examining the conceptual framework and design. Chapter 4 summarizes the study findings. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of emergent themes, and Chapter 6 presents the lessons learned, a profile of the president, and implications of the study.

Chapter Two
Literature Review

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with the body of knowledge that addresses the development of exemplary leadership practices and the functions of leadership in a public community college. The chapter is organized into four sections and pertinent professional theory, leadership research, and current and topical commentary are referenced and reviewed for each section.

First, background is provided on public community college characteristics in order to demonstrate the viability of these institutions of higher learning and their increasingly multifaceted nature. To further frame how community colleges meet their diverse needs, this section includes: a) roots of the public community college, b) the role and scope of the public community college, c) a review of the new breed of students, and d) literature on adult learning.

In this section, the significance of leadership in the

context of a community college is also explored by examining the community college presidency. This is followed by an examination of the public community college system in Florida.

Next, leadership theory is introduced to identify broader implications and perspectives on leadership. In this section the review of leadership practices is narrowed to a focus on transformational leadership in order to explore the meaning behind exemplary leadership. In that transformational leadership suggests an elevating and upward influence, it also serves as an umbrella for examination of two other significant concepts: transactional leadership and emotional intelligence. The literature relating to emotional intelligence provides insight into the subtle sources of interpersonal and intrapersonal abilities required of a skilled and sensitive community college president.

Characteristics of the Public Community College

Roots

As the community college establishes itself prominently amidst other institutions of higher education,

it celebrates some 100 years of service. The evolution of this uniquely American phenomenon heralds an age where information and knowledge are mainstays of the economy (Milliron & Leach, 1997). Authors such as Peter Drucker (1993) have predicted that institutions of higher education will give students new capabilities that extend beyond the scope of our imagination. The only question lies in how these institutions will provide such opportunities.

Terry O'Banion (1997) pointed out the imperative for understanding the complexity involved in meeting the needs of post-secondary students. As community college leaders enter the 21st century, a wide range of efforts are underway aimed at providing new and exciting insights into learning. Social scientists are exploring aspects of public education (e.g., social class, economics, race) and how these challenges support or hinder the learning process. Cognitive scientists are finding that people do not learn in a vacuum, but through social interaction (Greenspan, 1997). Human development researchers are studying motivation to uncover what makes people exert the effort to learn (Csikszentmihaly, 1996; Gross, 1991). Others are exploring how different intelligences, such as musical

talent or the ability to see things spatially, lead students to deal with and learn academic subjects differently (Gardner, 1983). These efforts result in today's educational leader having at his or her fingertips varied and powerful research on how students learn (Diaz-Lefebvre, Siefert & Pollack, 1998). Leaders of community colleges are better situated to relate to students, faculty, and staff when they understand and appreciate how learning occurs.

The public community college is a place where a great number of American students come to learn. Its roots reach back to William Rainey Harper, the president of the University of Chicago, who speculated that universities would fare better if they were not charged with the task of teaching freshmen and sophomores (Hodges & Milliron, 1997). The idea was put forth to create an institution that would ease the transition between high school and the university. The first publicly supported institution of this type was Joliet Junior College, founded in Chicago in 1901.

Private 2-year institutions, many of which began as 4-year institutions, dropped the last 2 years due to resource constraints. California, Illinois, Texas, and Michigan

established 2-year institutions in the early 1900s. The concept spread gradually, and by the 1930s most states had laid the foundation for statewide systems. Each public system of community colleges evolved out of its individual needs, with its own funding system, policy structure, and distinct areas of specialty.

Because each public community college, nationwide, evolved on its own, each developed its own individual culture. Enrollment grew faster in these 2-year schools than in the 4-year institutions, especially in bigger cities, and during the years of the Depression when additional schooling was an alternative to unemployment. World War II veterans who attended community colleges under the GI Bill led to an exponential increase in community colleges throughout the nation. In the 1960s and 1970s, record numbers of baby boomers sought a college education. Community colleges, with their open door policy, found themselves with an abundant supply of students. During this period, new community colleges opened with expanded degree options to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students. Many community colleges were placed in urban areas in direct response to the growing problem of urban

unemployment and poverty. Community college enrollment increased by 113% during this rapid growth spurt (O'Banion, 1997). The mission of community colleges changed to accommodate the expansion.

In the first few decades of the 20th century, community colleges were viewed as an expedient way to relieve universities of freshmen and sophomores. The second mission to emerge was the provision of technical programs for students wishing to go directly into the job market. In the 1960s this vocational mission gained in popularity. Dan Hull, (1993) suggested that many students needed a more direct career path, noting that, "we must give more than lip service to the reality that a university education is not for everyone" (p. 6).

The early junior colleges primarily offered associate degrees as the highest degree conferred. A secondary focus was on job training and economic development. In the 1960s, community colleges initiated economic development activities by creating programs to address workforce concerns. Degrees from community colleges expanded beyond the 2-year associate degree for students planning to finish the last 2 years at a university. The applied associate in

science degree emerged as a credential for those entering the work force and quickly became marketable as such.

Role and Scope

Public 2-year, post-secondary institutions, in the United States serve about 6 million students in credit courses and 5 million students in noncredit programs. Public community colleges enroll more students than public 4-year institutions, with more than 60% of community college students enrolled on a part-time basis (fewer than 12 credit hours per semester). The average age of the community college student is 30. More than 50% of those enrolled as full-time students also work full- or part-time. Of those who are part-time students, about 66% work. About one third of all students, in all post-secondary institutions (public and private, graduate and undergraduate), are enrolled in community colleges. Half of all minorities enrolled in higher education institutions, of any kind, are in community colleges, up from 40% in 1980 (Vaughn, 1983). Attention should be paid not only to the role and scope of community colleges, but also to the diversity of its students. Community colleges place such significant focus on students that attention to

demographics and to student profiles is paramount.

A New Breed of Students

In a lengthy and substantive report (Cisneros, 1996) it was determined that average annual tuition and fees for public community colleges come to only about 40% of tuition and fees for public 4-year institutions. The total annual costs for full-time public community college students are about one third of those for their 4-year counterparts. Additionally, only about 30% of community college students received some kind of financial aid. Because they attended less costly institutions, because many were part-time students, and because most worked part-time or full-time, community college students did not qualify for much of the aid available to those attending more expensive 4-year institutions. The 1996 report indicated that more than 45% of community college revenue came from state government, about 20% from student tuition and fees, and the balance came from private contributions, the sale of training services to businesses, and federal aid. About 65% of the faculties of community colleges were part-time. Just 20 years earlier, that number was about 40%.

Community colleges also offer certificate programs

that generally require a year of study but sometimes less. They are designed very specifically to qualify a student for employment in a given field or to provide the basis for taking certification exams. Another growing number of community college students are not interested in an associate degree or a certificate of any kind. They have very specific and customized personal competencies in mind that can be achieved by just one or two courses, or they may simply be exploring personal enrichment courses.

The last several years have witnessed a new major threshold in the evolving mission of community colleges. America's economy has undergone wrenching change as markets have become global and foreign competition has intensified. New information processing and communication technologies have altered jobs in very dramatic ways. Community colleges have taken the primary responsibility for credentialing the highly skilled and motivated renaissance technicians demanded by employers in all economic sectors. This credential is the popular and valued associate in applied science degree (Carlsen & Burdick, 1994). The applied science degree has significantly increased enrollments in sub-baccalaureate programs. A recent congressionally

mandated assessment of vocational education indicated that while vocational enrollments on the secondary level are still diminishing, they are steadily rising at the post-secondary level. Community colleges have become the first choice in this country for preparing adults for the work force (Albertson, 1999).

The increase in the number of young people leaving high school for post-secondary education coupled with the increased demand from private employers for more highly skilled professional technicians represents a challenge with enormous consequences for community colleges (O'Banion, 1997). The 1990s produced evidence that profound economic shifts once again affected enrollments as mid-career adults returned to the community college (Johnson, 1997). The adult worker aged 35 to 54, who will comprise about one-half of the workforces by the year 2005, is the fastest growing consumer of continuing education. In 1995, nearly 50% of this group took some form of adult education, up from just 17% only 10 years ago, and almost half of the courses they took were directly job related. Most of these adult workers are going to community colleges to pursue continuing education credits.

The community college offers educational opportunities to individuals while at the same time maintaining an open door policy. Students entering a community college are encouraged to assess their abilities, remediate any areas of weakness, and combine rigorous academic study with career training. Women, minorities, and non-traditional students, who have not been afforded such educational opportunities through other venues, discover a sense of voice and place (Brody, 1985) at community colleges.

Adult Learning

The changing nature of our technologically driven society poses hurdles that alter the conception of what it now means to be an educated person. Adult theorist Malcolm Knowles coined the term *andragogy* in 1975 in an attempt to define the complex process of an emerging technology for adult learning. "Andragogy means the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1975). The concept of andragogy influenced and enhanced adult learning in the community college setting. This heightened awareness of the unique needs of adults within a formal learning context was a precursor to the development of junior colleges (that eventually became community colleges). The process that

Knowles developed for designing adult learning curriculum includes:

1. Setting a cooperative learning climate,
2. Establishing a structure for mutual planning,
3. Diagnosing needs for learning,
4. Formulating directions (objectives) for learning,
5. Designing a pattern of learning experiences,
6. Managing the execution of the learning experience,
7. Evaluating results and re-diagnosing learning needs. (p. 270)

The community college embodies the flexibility of andragogy. The publicly supported community college has accelerated a trend in America to empower individuals through higher education regardless of race, class, or socio-economic strata (Chappell, 1995).

This approach to higher education brings with it a vast array of challenges that must be met on a daily basis (Deegan & Tillery, 1985; Vaughan, 1983). Paramount to the

success of community colleges is the need to adapt to the ever-changing student body along with changing curricula ensuing from technology driven shifts in market demands. The community college has evolved to educate those technologists who seek both theoretical knowledge and manual skill.

Florida's Public Community College System

Florida's community college system began in 1927 with the establishment of St. Petersburg Junior College, initially a private college. Palm Beach Community College was endorsed by the Florida legislature in 1933, making it the first public junior college (Post-Secondary Education, 1993). Palm Beach Community College, and several others established through the 1940s, fell under a local county school system. The system encouraged careful administration of what was then called the junior college budget and encouraged local responsibility and involvement. An advisory committee of local citizens was established for each junior college; each of the local committees had an advisory relationship to the county Board of Public Instruction.

A turning point in the evolution of the Florida public

community college system took place in 1947 when James Wattenbarger, a doctoral student at the University of Florida, authored a recommendation to the legislature to include junior colleges as a part of the local school systems (Wattenbarger, 1953). Subsequently in 1955, Wattenbarger led a study for the Community College Council, which resulted in a publication entitled The Community Junior College in Florida's Future. In effect, Wattenbarger's publication would serve as the master plan in providing for 28 community colleges that would be within reach of 99% of Florida's residents (Albertson, 1999).

In 1955, when the Florida Legislature established the Community College Council, the council's first master plan recommended a comprehensive system of public community colleges in Florida. Its primary goal was to plan for the provision of post-high-school education within commuting distance of 99% of the state's population. The plan stressed the importance of maintaining reasonable costs, an open-door policy and geographic access.

In 1968, the Florida Legislature established independent local boards of trustees for community colleges, providing each board of trustees with legal

responsibility for maintaining and operating its local college. The Governor, with a great deal of input from constituents in local counties, appointed the trustees to the local boards. In 1972, the last of the 28 community colleges was established, enabling all who reside in Florida an opportunity to attend a community college.

In 1979, the Legislature established the State Community College Coordinating Board. The board was reorganized in 1983 when the Legislature established the State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC). The SBCC totally relinquished control to local boards of trustees, while coordinating adherence to statewide policies. The SBCC consisted of 13 members, including the commissioner of education and a student member.

All of Florida's public community colleges offer the first 2 years of a baccalaureate degree, vocational education, and adult continuing education. No local taxes support community colleges in Florida. Funds are primarily from the state and from student fees and tuition. Community colleges receive a considerable amount of federal dollars to create specific work-force programs. Half of the technical centers in the state are managed by local

community colleges; the other half are managed by local school districts.

The Educational Testing Service released a policy information report in 2000 entitled The American Community College Turns 100: A Look at its Students, Programs, and Prospects that gives a profile of the impact of community colleges in Florida. The report also revealed the following array of details concerning Florida's community colleges:

Florida's system of 28 public community colleges served slightly over 730,000 individuals in 1999-2000. An additional 93,415 were enrolled in recreation and leisure courses. The average age of [the community college] student is 31. About 35 percent are non-white and 60 percent of the incoming prior year high school graduates will need a college preparatory course in at least one of the following three areas: reading, writing, or mathematics. The [Florida] system granted 32,864 associate degrees in 1999-2000. (p. 1)

The Public Community College Presidency

The role of the community college presidency is

integral in implementing vision and mission. Changing demographics, emphasis on global labor shifts, and technology innovations demand systemic changes that ultimately flow from the vision of the college president (Hull, 1993). According to Drucker (1985), community college presidents are presented with the challenge of addressing seven sources for innovative opportunity. They are

The unexpected--the unexpected success, the unexpected outside event; the incongruity--between reality as it actually is and reality as it is assumed to be or as it ought to be; innovation based on process need; changes in an industry structure or market structure that catch everyone unaware; demographics (population/clientele changes); changes in perception, mood and meaning; new knowledge, both scientific and nonscientific. (p. 35)

These sensitive issues are grappled with daily in the community college classroom, the president's civic agenda, and boardroom discussions, that mandate [the president] to function as a critical link between business enterprise and human resourcing (Drucker, 1999).

The community college presidency may offer the finest leadership opportunity in higher education. It is a most difficult leadership role and, as such, requires an extraordinary person and appropriate conditions to conduct the office effectively. The president of a community college is the chief executive officer and as such sets the tone for the college. He or she is essentially responsible for daily operations, funding, establishing a vision, as well as analyzing and organizing the human resource directives. The president is ultimately responsible for teaching and learning and, to a large degree, determines the climate and culture of the college (Neumann, 1995).

Establishing a warm climate in which student success is facilitated is but one of many imperatives for the community college president. Because the success of a community college hinges so directly on the choice of president, a closer look at desirable competencies and characteristics of community college presidents is necessary. The president of a community college must understand the importance of bolstering positive relationships with all of his or her constituents, internally and externally. The need to promote a sense of

cohesiveness and harmony amongst internal constituents is of enormous value since these individuals define the college. According to Fisher (1984):

The degree to which the president is respected and admired by the faculty will be the extent to which he or she is able to inspire trust and confidence, the extent to which he or she is believable and can deliver. (p. 101)

A study done on leadership characteristics of community college presidents developed a compilation of competencies possessed by effective community college presidents (Hammons & Keller, 1988). The profile emerging from their research revealed strong leaders with particular skills in group dynamics. It was further noted that these visionaries possess a commitment to the mission of the community college along with high integrity, a sense of responsibility, persistence, and the ability to be flexible. An interesting addendum noted the need for community college leaders with high energy levels and psychological well-being. In attempting to decipher the role of the leader, it seems that, to a great extent, the burden of leadership falls upon the chief executive

officer, or president (Martorana, 1989).

An exhaustive research study on community colleges found that perhaps the most significant factor in community colleges is the choice for president (Cisneros, 1996). The position of president demands strong vision, intellectual clout, and charismatic leadership (Cohen & March, 1974).

Although, the power behind the public community college presidency lies with its appointed local boards, board members are viewed as both policy makers and advocates. Community college leaders are less steeped in academic ritual and collegial governance than university leaders, with more of an emphasis on practice (application) and local or regional needs. To their credit, community colleges have recognized the importance of leadership and have responded with professional development and leadership venues. They have initiated special efforts to develop leadership skills in women and ethnic minorities with impressive results. The ever-increasing representation of these groups among community college chancellors, presidents, and high-ranking staff demonstrates the priority given to equal representation (Evans, 1996).

Perspectives on Leadership

The study of leadership has intrigued scholars for many centuries. Cultured societies have sought to develop frameworks for civilization based on the prevailing stories about power and dominance (Martin, 1992). Integral to any oral history is the theme of leaders and followers. Leadership has served as a construct to enable mankind to define its values, precepts and tenets (Schein, 1986). Anthropological findings reveal that definitions of leadership terms appeared in Egypt dating back 5000 years. Egyptian hieroglyphics included terms for leadership (seshemet), leader (seshemu), and follower (shemsu) (Bass, 1990). Classics of Chinese origin place an emphasis on leader responsibility and issue advice concerning an inherent responsibility to the people who are being led. Sophisticated notions of wisdom and counsel, justice and judgment, and valor and activism were revealed in Greek culture.

Most modern definitions of leadership involve an examination of the context of the setting or organization in which it occurs (Nysted, 1997). According to Yukl (1997), there appears to exist a universal desire to frame

the culture of any given society within the parameters of leadership. He defines leadership as,

An influence on processes affecting the interpretation of events for followers, the choice of objectives for the group or organization, the organization of work activities to accomplish the objectives, the motivation of followers to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships and teamwork, and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people outside the group or organization. (p.5)

Six major perspectives on leadership tend to be cited by researchers in organizational leadership arenas. These perspectives are trait theories, contingency theories, power and influence theories, behavioral theories, cognitive theories, and symbolic theories (Bensimon, 1989). Bolman and Deal (1984) suggest similarly that there are four perspectives that explain the dynamics of leadership within organizations. The structural frame stresses relationships; the human resource frame concerns the needs of individuals; the political frame identifies allocation of resources; and the symbolic frame views the attachment

of meaning by examining values and beliefs.

Views of leadership have changed dramatically over the last 10 to 20 years. By way of examining the context of the organization, it is important to include the perspectives of those who make up the organization. Many postmodern leadership theorists view leadership through a social constructivist paradigm which entails not only viewing meaning from the leader's perspective but also from the followers' perspective (Meindl, 1995).

Much has been written about whether leadership dwells in the person or the situation (Foster, 1989). The charismatic leader, for example, possesses skills in projecting a vision, in communicating, in building trust and commitment, and in empowering, while maintaining a sense of power and identity. When researching charisma in the context of social distance, Shamir found that followers describe their leaders with more dramatic and positive descriptors when they feel an attachment to them (1995). This exploratory study revealed that leaders who are close to followers are also seen as setting high standards and possessing unconventional wisdom.

In recent years, an emphasis has been placed on

teamwork and participation. The challenge for the 21st century will be to integrate many approaches to leading and managing, and to design organizations that can effectively combine their complementary perspectives (Coleman, 1997). As Stanford psychologist Leavitt argues, the task will be

To encourage both, the dedicated champion and the dedicated team worker, even trying to encourage both to reside within the same body. It is a daunting task but one that will, perhaps, define a new era of managing and leading in our organizations. (cited in Ferguson, 1987, p.4)

Historically we find that charismatic leaders have personified the forces of change, unconventionality, vision, and an entrepreneurial spirit. Leaders from the traditional mold are temperamentally disposed toward lower levels of risk, preferring to administer rather than to truly lead, and are more inclined toward the pragmatic rather than the visionary (Bass, 1990). These qualities rarely provide innovation.

Bennis (1989) suggests that managers attend to the right things whereas leaders choose the right and noble things upon which to focus. One characteristic of

leadership, creativity, also necessitates other characteristics such as intuition, uncertainty, unconventionality, and individual expression. Management in the traditional sense runs counter to these traits (Csikszentmihaly, 1996).

As Covey (1989) discovered in his search for effective, character driven leadership theories, the emphasis of the last 50 years placed importance on insincere and manipulative ploys to maneuver employees into completing tasks. He suggested that by empowering everyone in an organization with tenets for success, the organization could go to a new and higher level of functioning.

Covey refers to a process he calls principle-centered leadership which requires a developmental approach and an adherence to universally held principles (1989). The evolution from principal-centered leadership to principle-centered requires a willingness to change. Covey points out that by attending to universally held fundamental principles, individuals naturally adhere and respond to organizational goals in order to feel good about themselves. The result is an integration of individual and

organizational goals. In effect, this propels individuals to become more self-actualized.

The interdependent people described in relation to principle-centered leadership demonstrate an awareness and understanding level identified by Argyris (1957) in a maturity/immaturity continuum. With self-actualizing individuals, managers worry less about the need to show consideration and more about how to enrich their jobs in order to provide challenging and meaningful duties. As leaders of organizations tap into an individual's need to grow and exercise more responsibility in his or her work life, a sense of accomplishment increases and productivity increases.

Principle-centered leadership is viewed by Covey as a model for fostering high-functioning individuals within high-functioning teams. These individuals are seeking meaning and accomplishment in their work, having satisfied their basic needs (Maslow, 1954). As a result, these people tend to be primarily self-motivated, and are capable of being very self-directed. Motivated and enthusiastic individuals thrive under a proactive, conscious leadership approach.

A distinction must be made between leadership theory and fads in leadership. Since both tend to mirror a worldview and facilitate an understanding of ideological belief, fads are difficult to isolate and set apart from theory-based models of leadership. An operational definition of a fad is an application of a technique that temporarily makes things appear better however produces little in the way of enduring results (Birnbaum, 2000). Fads fail to address the enormous complexity associated with dimensions of leadership.

There is a considerable degree of complexity and depth required in evolving toward a thriving organizational environment (Drath & Palus, 1994). Rensis Likert was one of the first leadership theorists to present the sobering notion of the depth required to inculcate lasting change. He noted that one important factor in organizational change is allotting time for individuals to develop leadership habits (1961

Drucker, 1993, echoed a similar sentiment when describing distinctions between intellectuals and managers within the post-secondary setting. Intellectuals are able to use their specialized knowledge within the organization

but need the balancing effect of managers in order to maintain a focus on the performance of the organization. This balancing effect allows for fulfillment and completion of the mission, while allowing for the incorporation of creativity and order into the process (Drucker, 1988).

In coming to terms with a workable construct of organizational interpretations, the subject of reality appears again. It has been suggested by a new wave of postmodern organizational theorists that the very way in which objective reality is viewed is at the heart of organizational interpretations (Evans, 1997; Overman, 1996). Ken Wilber (1995) coins the term "fractured worldview" in describing the evolution of ideas concerning the nature of reality. Wilber's interpretation suggests that the invisible world of emotions and symbols is integral to understanding the world. Theories based on Heisenberg's quantum physics yield to a larger vision of how organizations are constructed.

Dennard (1997) expands on the idea of quantum theory stating, "Quantum/chaos theory is emerging, and a vision is within reach that characterizes nature in less hostile terms than the linear, control-oriented ones perceived by

Descartes, Bacon, Darwin and Hobbes" (p. 150). As the fields of social science, humanities, postmodern public administration, and transformational leadership move away from linear and rationalistic views of thinking, the need to understand the subtle dance of human energies becomes more pressing.

Public institutions of higher education have a history of striving to address human needs by adopting models of exemplary leadership. Ample literature suggests that leaders of public institutions of higher education are presented with tremendous challenges in that the leadership framework must be congruent with theories of learning, the language of meaning, and the transforming of human lives (Burns, 1978). Leaders of these institutions answer to a student population with varying expectations, needs, and areas of interest.

Bernard Bass (1990) conducted research at West Point that revealed the imperative for leaders to serve first as followers in order to better understand the needs of those they would lead. The West Point study, in addition to highlighting the importance of context, also reinforced the importance of moral development in the education of

leaders. Servant leadership speaks to issues of examining moral development within the organization, linking a moral implication to leadership (Greenleaf, 1977). Robert Greenleaf viewed leaders as responsible for serving, rather than commanding.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership suggests a transcending and upward movement. Burns pointed out that, "transformational leadership results in mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (1978, p. 3).

Transformational leadership is complicated in that it "occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 20). Burns sees leadership in terms of the relationship between leaders and followers who are acting interactively to attain a purpose. The nature of that interaction can be either transactional or transformational in nature. Bass (1985) expanded Burns' (1978) work by categorizing the four components inherent in transformational leadership. The components are idealized influence, inspirational

motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Leaders engaged in transformational leadership are able to manage attention as they convince others of the merit and value of the commitment they hold (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). In that leaders exercise influence upon human lives, it is within their purview to touch upon the tough philosophical questions of identity. Communication and commitment, along with clarity and enthusiasm, engender a cyclical process whereby a vision can grow. As leaders guide others in coalescing and distilling a vision, individuals come to create a unified sense of purpose (Gardner, 1999).

To suggest, however, that one can readily and without effort understand and subsequently model transformational leadership would be naive. Fiedler's point is well taken in suggesting that an individual's leadership style reflects their basic needs and motivations (1967). Fiedler felt that, at best, it takes years of psychotherapy [or intense reflection and rigorous self-monitoring] to enact substantive changes. He was not optimistic that there would be dramatic shifts in values without considerable effort.

Fiedler warned of short-term fixes and fads.

Burns speaks of the conscious aspects of leadership stating, "The undergirding process of transformational leadership is making conscious what lies unconscious among followers" (1978, p. 40). Avolio, adding to the same theory, suggests that transformational leaders can attain a level of moral development that is elevated as a result of conscious life (1994).

Transactional Leadership

In order to fully understand the ramifications of transformational leadership, the complementary construct of transactional leadership should also be explored . By suggesting that leaders have a range of strategies to choose from, it is suggested that they must be able to activate both transformational and transactional qualities, where appropriate, to effectively undertake change. Transactional and transformational leadership are equally important, even though they vary in impact.

Although there appears to be a temptation to dwell exclusively on transformational leadership, ideally leaders should exercise both. In Burns' seminal work, Leadership, he carefully examined implications for the concept of

transactional leadership (1978). Transactional leadership involves "exchanging one thing for another" (p. 4). He characterized transactional leadership as the exchange of valued things that serve the individual interests of participants, in contrast to a collective effort toward common interest. Transactional leadership gratifies the individual's basic and primarily extrinsic needs (Sergiovanni, 1992). Negotiation, exchange, and contractual dimensions between manager and employee, thus the name transactional, distinguish transactional leadership. Bass (1985) further notes that a reward and penalty aspect exists within transactional leadership.

Emotional Intelligence

While leadership theory presented a framework for explaining many dimensions in the workplace, a number of researchers discovered another delicate force at play through studies in neuroscience and psychobiology (Goleman, 1995). This unique set of abilities and aptitudes is referred to as emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence in relation to transformational leadership has also found its way into scholarly academic publications and journals. Through research on social

intelligence by Thorndike (1932) and on multiple intelligences by Howard Gardner (1983), it is now believed that rather than possessing a singular intelligence, individuals possess a much broader repertoire of intelligences than was once thought.

It has been suggested that transformational leaders mobilize and direct energy (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1990). Critical to understanding how leaders motivate others is the determination of how the emotional energies of those being led are developed. Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Zerbe make the following observation about the connection between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership. They noted that, "The various linkages with emotional elements suggest in particular that there is a need to borrow knowledge from the emotional fields of study in order to develop a fuller understanding of transformational leadership" (2000, p. 224). Bennis and Nanus (1985) go so far as to say that leadership is truly about the emotional level of interactions.

Salovey and Sluyter (1997) define emotional intelligence in this way: "[It is] the ability to perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist

thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth"(p. 5). Bass has speculated that real transformational leaders have a way of leading from their hearts (1990). Emotional intelligence determines how we manage our relationships and ourselves (Campos, Campos, & Barrett, 1989).

The emotional competence framework includes: self-awareness (knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources, and intuitions), self-regulation (managing one's internal states, impulses, and resources), motivation (emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals), empathy (awareness of others' feelings, needs, and concerns), and social skills (adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others (Goleman, 1995).

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new concept. Emotional intelligence describes abilities distinct from but complementary to cognitive function (Cooper & Sawaf, 1996). Rather than standing outside the realm of leadership, emotional intelligence can be viewed as a vital component to successful leadership ability.

Do the seemingly intangible attributes of self-

awareness and emotional savvy come into the world with us as infants or can we learn to cultivate these characteristics of emotional intelligence? Although this does not occur automatically or without effort, individuals can strengthen and grow with increased life experience and maturity. Goleman (1995) said that emotional intelligence, like other capacities, actually increases if encouraged to develop. According to Goleman, "the ultimate act of personal responsibility at work may be in taking control of our own state of mind. Moods exert a powerful pull on thought, memory, and perception" (p. 83).

Primal qualities such as managing impulses and transforming upsets into opportunities enable the emotionally intelligent individual to create a climate and culture that invites learning and productivity (Denham, & Grout, 1993). As Goleman (1995) stated, "Coming up with a creative insight is a cognitive act--but realizing its value, nurturing it, and following through calls on emotional competencies such as self-confidence, initiative, persistence, and the ability to persuade" (p. 100).

Emotional intelligence determines how we manage our relationships and ourselves (Hillman, 1960). Rather than

standing outside the realm of leadership, emotional intelligence can be viewed as a vital component to successful leadership ability in that a leader is called upon to influence others to perform. As leaders influence others they are called upon to master the delicate dynamic of meaning making. It is evident that this process entails more than mental or cognitive abilities. Drath and Palus state that, "Given this way of thinking about meaning, meaning making then consists of the creation, nurturance, and evolution (or revolution) of these cognitive and emotional frameworks" (1994, p.4).

The benefits associated with linking emotions with the world of work offer an improved understanding of the work setting. The ways in which individuals interpret the emotions surrounding the work experience directly affect the way they feel and behave at work (Denzin, 1984). There are those positions within organizations that require the individual to exhibit emotions that are diametrically in conflict with what he or she is really feeling (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Deborah Lupton explains a significant reason to devote attention to the role emotions play in the workplace by examining the term emotional labor (1998).

Emotional labor is used most specifically in relation to dealing with other people's feelings, particularly as part of the goal of maintaining harmony within a social unit or workplace.

An example of emotional competency training for leaders may be found at American Express with a program established for their financial advisors in 1992. The purpose of the program was to encourage leaders to function as emotional coaches for the employees reporting to them, thus leaders were enlisted as allies in parlaying the role of emotion in the work place toward positive change. Leaders were versed in how to communicate in a manner that demonstrated that they could effectively manage their emotions. This successful training revealed the significance of several emotional competency domains, including self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skill (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990).

The ultimate act of personal responsibility at work may be in taking control of our own state of mind (Davis, 1994). Desirable abilities such as those defined as emotionally intelligence entail drawing upon characteristics from the cognitive and emotional domain.

Blake Ashforth summarizes how emotions play a vital role in leadership and ultimately in organizations with the following observation, "The premise seems to be: capture the heart, and the head and hands will surely follow" (Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Zerbe, 2000).

Summary and Overview

Chapter 2 examined background information on the characteristics of the public community college by examining the roots, role, and scope of the public community college. The governance, organizational structure, and hierarchy of Florida's public community college system were also examined. A further narrowing of focus provide addressed leadership in the community college setting. The literature review described how Florida's public community college presidents operate with local and autonomous governing boards of trustees, placing tremendous responsibility on the president to hone political acumen.

Because 21st century college leaders are faced with providing an environment where shared decision-making thrives, it was prudent to examine how employees and students are empowered. This led naturally to exploring a

distinction that separates community colleges from other institutions of higher education, its new breed of adult students. Literature on adult learning was reviewed to further distinguish the ways in which community colleges meet diverse needs.

An overview of the broad complexities of leadership was presented to provide insight into how leaders mobilize and direct energy. The significance of leadership in the context of a community college presidency was reviewed, as were perspectives of leadership including the leadership practices of transformational leadership, transactional leadership and emotional intelligence.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 highlighted both the importance of the community college, a remarkable post-secondary institution that impacts many constituencies, and the value of studying a community college presidency. The literature reviewed here demonstrates that the presidency is a suitable topic for study if one is interested in better understanding the qualities that characterize a successful community college. It also provides a foundation for examining the presidency from the leadership perspectives of an exemplary, long tenured Florida

community college president, his peers, trustees, and executive staff. That is the purpose of this retrospective, qualitative study of one community college president who successfully mastered the challenges of a dynamic and growing institution while achieving prominence along the way.

Chapter Three

Methods

Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter, a rationale is made for the choice of the methodology as well as a justification for deciding on a particular individual to study. The decision to utilize constructivism as a conceptual framework is examined and the case study approach is discussed. The design of the study is explained along with the process for collecting and analyzing data. The researcher's point of view is examined, and finally, the limitations of the study are reviewed.

Overview of Purpose and Research Question

The primary purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the complexities of leadership within a specific community college setting. A secondary purpose was to determine how constructivist theory contributes to the understanding of leadership dynamics through the lens of the research process. The critical events that influenced a 23-year veteran community college president in making and

sustaining leadership decisions provided the basis for eliciting conversations about the presidency. The following questions were posed to key informants:

1. How were events perceived by the president and other college stakeholders?
2. How did critical events steer the presidency over the span of 2 decades?
3. How was the community college presidency shaped and interpreted over time?
4. How did the lengthy tenure of the president impact the evolution of Florida Keys Community College (FKCC) and the constituents it serves?

Constructivism as Conceptual Framework

As this qualitative, retrospective study explored a single college presidency as seen through stakeholder interpretations of critical events, constructivist theory provided the appropriate conceptual framework from which to approach the work. A predominant philosophical assumption in qualitative research is that reality is socially constructed as people interact with their environment (Atkinson, Heath, & Chenail, 1991). Constructivism follows the principle that knowledge is not passive but built and rebuilt as new ideas are incorporated into prior experience.

Constructivism is best understood by coming to terms with it as an active approach to knowledge creation rather than a passive reflection of realities. A tenet of constructivism is that individuals create knowledge as they assimilate new ideas into existing schema (Wilson, B., 1996). Constructivist thought is not restricted to higher-level learning but pervades all evolutionary processes (Wilson, E., 1998).

Individuals, who construct what they know on the basis of their own experience, generate constructivism. The world we consciously live in is derived from the cumulative experience we have had and the categorization of that experience to frame our worldview (Glaserfeld, 1992).

Jonassen offers a succinct definition of constructivism:

Constructivism, founded on Kantian beliefs, claims that reality is constructed by the knower based upon mental activity. Humans are perceivers and interpreters who construct their own reality through engaging in those mental activities. Thinking is grounded in perception of physical and social experiences, which can only be comprehended by the mind.. We all conceive external reality.. differently,

based on our unique set of experiences with the world and our beliefs about them. (1991, p. 10)

Constructivism is often viewed as a theory of cognition. Gagne and Dick (1983) suggested that there is no direct access to external reality, except by way of arranging categories within cognition that serve to organize experience. Jean Piaget, 1973, one of the first psychologists to examine constructivism, developed a theory of genetic epistemology of the different cognitive stages through which a child passes while building up a model of the world.

Piaget and Inhelder (1966) proposed years earlier that cognition is not based only on the object of thought, but also on the exchange or interactions between subject and object resulting from the action and reaction of the two. As a major contributor to the theory of cognition, Piaget viewed psychological development as constructive in nature. He believed that the basis of learning was discovery. Piaget and Inhelder believed that, "to understand is to discover, or reconstruct by rediscovery, and such conditions must be compiled if in the future individuals are to be formed who are capable of production and

creativity and not simply repetition" (p. 19).

In order to better understand and articulate how the mind works, constructivists make assumptions about the basis of reality. Reality is a term of great interest in dialogue about constructivism. Paradigms that involve a goal of transforming knowledge do so within a social-historical context.

A social-historical view illustrates how the construction of knowledge is embedded in the cultural and historical milieu in which it arises (John-Steiner, 2000). Constructivism suggests that there is a need to somehow find meaning in the world. Billett (1996) states that individuals undergo a process of reconciling as they add new knowledge to prior experiences. This reconciling is often facilitated with the aid of someone who has achieved a level of mastery in a given domain (Csikszentmihaly, 1996).

The subject of how people deal with complexity in an organizational setting reveals constructivist conditions that have been identified as cognitive apprenticeship (Farmer, Buckmaster, & LeGrand, 1992). Individuals with levels of mastery, often called experts, can render bridges

in order to help individuals who are beginners or novices. Experts acquire such a rich inventory of domain specific knowledge that they often activate this engagement intuitively (Klein, 1992). This engagement process between experts and novices is highly constructive in nature with enormous implications for research in the workplace.

Constructivism also helps to clarify the process researchers utilize in qualitative inquiry. Steier (1995) suggests that many constructivist processes fail to take into account the role constructivism plays for researchers who are engaged in the act of constructing:

There have been many who have adopted a constructionist label to what is still defined by objectivist inquiry. Here we find those who take, as an object of study, other persons' constructions of reality as something to be understood in an objective manner, somehow apart from the researchers' own tools and methods. (p. 70)

The nature of qualitative research involves interpreting the complexity and depth inherent in socially constructed situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Constructivism lends itself to concerns about epistemology, ontology, and

methodology from the interpretive framework of qualitative research (Guba, 1990).

As a concept, then, constructivism can be defined in many ways, which bear directly and indirectly on how individuals and organizational culture are viewed. In response to the individuals who construct roles, the organization evolves into a paradigm with rules and structure. Tierney (1988) believed that constructivism is essential to understanding not only individuals but organizations too. He posited that organizational culture is much like a web in that every action and behavior affects the entire system.

One way in which knowledge is constructed is through the meaning that is attached to perceptions and events by leaders. The management of meaning requires a leader to construct reality and enlist others in supporting that version of reality (Beattie, 1997; Davis, Maher, & Noddings, 1991). The idea that organizational culture can be constructed, as opposed to existing as an objective, static reality gets to the heart of constructivism.

By examining the symbolic meanings of the complex variables within a college setting, the leader can

establish a foundation from which to relate, assist, and ultimately leave a lasting influence (Clark, 1970). Constructivist thought is consistent with the emerging models of what best exemplifies community college leaders (Hammons & Keller, 1988). The profile that emerged from Hammons & Keller revealed strong leaders noted for their ability to envision, harness, and engage others in the community college mission. In that leaders must create their version of exemplary leadership in order to distill and communicate the benchmarks required to meet this goal, leaders who are comfortable with reality construction are ideally suited to serve as role models for future leaders.

Case Study

The method used in this study was a qualitative case study approach utilizing the classic tools of observation, interviews, and the narrative tool of collective storytelling. Yin (1984) offers a definition of case study:

A case study is an empirical inquiry that:

1. Investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when
2. The boundaries between phenomenon and context

are not clearly evident; and in which

3. Multiple sources of data are used. (1984, p. 23)

The case study approach allowed for the discovery of distinctive and aesthetic features in this study.

Richardson, 1990, explained how sorting through elements of the research enables important moments to emerge: "The collective story displays an individual's story by narrating the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs, rather than by telling the particular individual's story" (p. 25). Through interview and observation, the unique characteristics of each case are examined and explored, uncovering a wealth of information valuable to the researcher and reader. As Merriam (1988) noted:

Investigators use a case study design in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and it's meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, and in discovery rather than a confirmation. (p. xii)

Eisner posited that a case study is a thorough look at one setting. A feature of case studies, according to Eisner

(1998), is their attention to particulars. The flavor of the particular situation is valued at least as much as from aggregated data from multiple subjects. This flavor is maintained "by sensitivity to what might be called the aesthetic features of the case" and an "awareness of its distinctiveness" (p. 38).

The uniqueness of a particular phenomenon can be accessed through the use of case study in that there is considerable insight to be gained in learning from individuals who have had remarkable experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Merriam identified four essential characteristics of case study research, which may help to define it in the context of this study:

Case studies focus on a particular phenomenon, situation, event, or program. [In that they are descriptive] the end product of a case study is a rich thick description of the phenomenon under study. [Because they are heuristic,] case studies illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. [In that they are inductive,] case studies rely on inductive reasoning and generalizations are made as a result of studying

the phenomenon emerging from the examination of the data collected in context. (1988, p. 11-12)

An important factor in establishing a case study is allowing for a small enough sample to ensure that substantial material can be accumulated on the subject. Bridwell-Bowles (1991) suggests spending ample time with each individual to facilitate a broader exploration of context, and develop a deeper relationship between subject and researcher.

This case study of Dr. Seeker's presidency at FKCC created an opportunity to traverse the landscape of the college experience in such a way that others can gain knowledge of what it means to be a community college president with 23 years of service. As I conducted research for this study, I did not divorce my values, perspectives, and paradigms from the process. The very rich tapestry of the presidency of Dr. Seeker, and my entree into that world as a participant/observer enabled me to attach meaning to the implications and dimensions of the college's leadership.

Subject and Setting

For this case study on the leadership of a Florida

public community college, I chose Dr. William A. Seeker. In addition to his status as an individual with a wealth of experience and well-documented successes to share (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), Dr. Seeker's 23-year tenure as president of Florida's smallest public community college also influenced the selection as the focus of this study.

The study examined Dr. Seeker's leadership qualities by looking at the critical events of his 23 years at FKCC. During this time he achieved a reputation in Florida for promoting diversity, exhibiting political acumen, building community coalitions, and parlaying the creative and resource rich student population bases in Monroe county into a vibrant institution. FKCC has a current enrollment of 4500. When Dr. seeker assumed the presidency the college's enrollment was 750.

Point of View

In a very real sense, the researcher accompanies the subject in a search for meaning. Values, perspectives and paradigms play a role as it is only from the very rich tapestry of everyday lives that meaning is made. The interpretive filters and screens we utilize to glean meaning add to the breadth of knowledge, so the fusion of

beliefs that influence a researcher's point of view guide a study. In that qualitative inquiry provides a medium for telling what we know, the researcher is compelled to examine his or her own philosophical and ideological constructs that frame the research (Eisner, 1998; Merriam, 1998). In order to speak to the way in which the researcher approaches the lived experiences of the individuals he or she studies, the researcher must declare a point of view (Malone & Malone, 1992).

The point of view of the researcher entails the utilization of language that contours and structures experience. Because experience is influenced by the kinds of questions asked, the conceptual framework of the researcher largely determines the way in which reality is presented. Eisner introduced the subject of self as instrument and the importance of viewing oneself as an instrument (1998). He further implied that the salient points in a study are not always the most obvious ones. The implication is that researchers must possess a frame of reference for their work. He suggested that the researcher's personal insight is a valuable benchmark for discerning meaning. Peshkin insists that subjectivity will

be evident in any study and that researchers are far better acknowledging this than pretending it does not exist (1988).

In my previous role as a community college administrator at FKCC, I interacted and actively participated with staff, legislators, trustees and presidents. Given this history as a participant, I was able to enlist this experience to fulfill the purpose of participant observation. As field notes were recorded and reviewed, I identified and paid attention to recurring themes. This is the nature of participant observation.

My involvement with FKCC has taken many forms beginning with my graduation from high school and subsequent enrollment at the college (despite my initial intentions to go elsewhere in the hopes of leaving the small island community I had called home for so long). I had no way of knowing then how meaningful my experience at this tiniest community college would be and how that experience would impact my life, eventually bringing me back full circle to the college as focus of this research.

Years after my first experience at FKCC, I returned to the college, by now a familiar landmark. While attending

the law enforcement academy there, I met the college president, Dr. William Seeker, during one of his daily walks around campus. I came to know him better in my capacity as spokesperson for the police academy.

I functioned in a leadership capacity first in law enforcement and later in a community college setting when I was hired by Dr. Seeker to serve on executive staff. In the course of my career, I gained leadership experience with three sheriffs and two community college presidents. Because I was privileged to observe the practicalities and daily nuances of leadership working directly with the chief executive officers of these organizations and developed an interest in how leaders lead. My professional role for the next 20 years as a communications/public relation's practitioner provided ample opportunity to explore community colleges and my growing interest in leadership. This study evolved from an interest in leadership, a love for community colleges, and a desire to understand the construction of the presidency at FKCC.

Data Collection

Qualitative research typically involves two types of data collection methods: participant-observation and in-

depth interviews. Additionally, document review can provide insights and corroboration. Given the nature of this research project, the primary methods of data collection in this study were semi-structured, in-depth interviews and participant observation. In-depth interviewing allowed the gathering of "descriptive data in the subjects' own words so that the researcher develops insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 96).

Participants

I gained permission early in 1999 from Dr. William Seeker to study his presidency (Appendix C). Discussions with this president helped to form an idea of potential participants. I sought assistance from the executive director of the Florida Association for Community Colleges in identifying colleagues who had knowledge about the presidency of FKCC. I had become acquainted with some of the participants in this study during my years as a community college administrator at FKCC and for St. Johns River Community College which proved to be very helpful in recruiting participants.

I initiated official interviews over the summer of

2000 in order to determine the feasibility of the study. I gathered preliminary data in order to set the parameters of my exploration. I then obtained approval of the University of North Florida's Institutional Review Board (Appendix D).

There were 16 participants in this study, 2 community college presidents, the then Executive Director of the Florida Community College System, 4 executive level administrators from other Florida community colleges, 4 executive level administrators from FKCC, 4 current and former members of FKCC's Board of Trustees and Foundation Board, and a legislator.

The 16 individuals were given a cover letter and consent form explaining the purpose of the research project and the importance of each respondent's participation (Appendix A and B). Participants were advised of the participant/observation nature of the study and consented to be observed at local board meetings, meetings with the Council of Presidents, staff meetings, legislative hearings and at the Florida Association for Community College Trustee orientations. Dr. Seeker issued a letter of approval to function as the primary informant of the study (Appendix C). The University Of North Florida Institutional

Review Board then approved the parameters of the study (Appendix D).

Critical Events

Because the study focused on this leader's reaction to specific critical events during his tenure, the interpretation of those events initially served to guide the process. During the initial contact securing the perceptions of each key informant, the 16 were also asked to identify critical events in the current president's tenure. Informants revealed the following six, readily identifiable, critical events:

1. Beginning of Dr. Seeker's tenure under the cloud of a previous administration's scandal,
2. Settling the waters under the new administration,
3. Re-establishing credibility for FKCC,
4. Building partnerships and campuses,
5. Rebuilding the main campus following the structural failure of the old buildings,
6. Sorting through the aftermath of Hurricane George.

I then returned to the site to gather more information, conduct in-depth interviews, identify documents for review, and gather the interpretations of the selected key informants. The multiple methods of

observation, interview, and artifact review gave depth to the study, while establishing the validity and reliability of conclusions.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided fluid and intimate conversations about a 23-year presidency. The quality of my relationships with the respondents and my ability to encourage their trust played an enormous role in the degree to which I was able to collect sensitive data.

Copious field notes were taken during my on-site visits however interviews from case study participants constituted the majority of information. An examination of historical artifacts provided a valuable marker for looking at the progress of FKCC before the leadership of Dr. Seeker and subsequent to his appointment. Multiple sources of data collection such as observation, examining institutional effectiveness markers, accreditation reviews, student records, legislative documents and input from community constituents, provided insight into the many dimensions of this community college presidency.

Interviews and observations occurred at 18 meeting locations in Florida over the course of a year. I attended

3 president's council meetings (2 in Tallahassee, 1 in Orlando), 3 FKCC Board meetings (Key West), 3 Trustee meetings (1 in Tallahassee, 1 in Orlando and 1 in Apalachicola), 3 FKCC executive staff meetings (Key West), 3 Rotary meetings (Key West) and 3 legislative workshops in Tallahassee. Questions and observations yielded an ever-expanding database of historically based insights surrounding the events. Observations and artifacts were used as tools of validation. Files included observation field notes, interview notes, E-mail correspondence, and journal reflections. Also included were printed materials such as vision statements, resumes, flyers, and other correspondence. After compiling the data, I separated it into three parts:

1. raw data from interviews and interview notes (telephone and electronic notes)
2. observation notes
3. artifacts.

Interview questions were used not as a formal script, but rather as a rough outline. The questions with which I began the interviews were open for review and modification, especially after the first interview. Each interview was recorded in hand-written notes to maintain a record of the

participant's responses. I utilized field notes in order to document emotional reactions. This type of open-ended interviewing was not only comfortable, but also most revealing as it made room for serendipitous responses. Interviews were conducted in person and on the telephone with follow-up contacts.

Data Analysis

In this study, new categories began to emerge as the data was examined in relationship to the professional literature. This speculation, according to Merriam (1988), is "the key to developing theory in a qualitative study" (p. 141). As this study progressed, symbols and metaphors emerged from participant interpretation of events. To a large degree, this turn of events helped to frame the study. Using observation and interview, my findings were categorized and classified, using themes.

Eisner (1998) explained the alchemy of utilizing themes as a data analyzing approach. In seeking themes, there is a search for recurrent behaviors or actions, the features of a given situation that inspire confidence that events interpreted and appraised are not atypical or strange, but instead indicative of the situation. Paramount

to uncovering the heart of the data was repeating the process numerous times, until a pattern emerged. Finding themes or patterns required intense scrutiny in that they were often overlooked in favor of superficial factors. As themes coalesced into a meaningful shape, it was often difficult to distinguish whether they were distilled from the data gathering process or had essentially become a data analysis tool.

Corroboration

The findings in this study were verified through structural corroboration. Eisner (1998) explained the need for structural corroboration: "For a study to be structurally corroborated, one needs to put together a constellation of bits and pieces of evidence that substantiate the conclusion one wants to draw" (p. 55).

The findings were triangulated in the sense that all the data was analyzed, particular themes were discussed with each participant, and conclusions were shared with all participants. The validity and trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis were addressed through respondent checks, both formal and informal, to determine the accuracy

of my depiction of their perceptions and the appropriateness of categories. The final draft of my study was reviewed by all 16 stakeholders affording them an opportunity to corroborate information and insuring that confidentiality had been maintained.

Limitations

This study by design deliberately focused upon a single institution, Florida Keys Community College. Although the setting is arguably quite small, the size enabled an intimate and in-depth examination. The unique isolated geographical location of the college may limit generalizability, but this limitation is countered in part by the universality of leadership behaviors.

Another limitation of the study is the deliberate focus upon participants who are defined formally as leaders. These leaders hold positions as members of the executive team from two community colleges, the statewide Chancellor of community colleges, two community college presidents and former and current members of the local FKCC Board of Trustees and Foundation. Although student and faculty perceptions are of unquestionable importance in

community colleges, those perceptions were beyond the scope of this doctoral dissertation.

Chapter Four

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the complexities of leadership within a community college setting. In that there is considerable agreement concerning the importance of learning how leadership emerges in colleges, the dimensions of one community college presidency were examined in this study. Critical events surrounding the history of the college were chosen to elicit perceptions of the informants about the presidency. The study was further delimited to perceptions of the college leaders, state level community college executives and members of executive staff from community colleges. Four research questions guided the study:

1. How were events perceived by the president and other college stakeholders
2. How did critical events steer the presidency over the span of 2 decades?
3. How is a community college presidency shaped and interpreted over time?
4. How did the lengthy tenure of the president impact the evolution of EKCC and the constituents it serves?

Subsequent to the president's consent to participate, I narrowed the key informant pool down to 16 individuals who had multiple experiences in the community college system and specifically with FKCC. In addition to administrators and Board members from the college, state level decision makers and other employees of the Florida Community College System (some of whom were formerly employed at FKCC) also agreed to participate.

Critical Events

During the first stage of interviews, a subgroup of informants assisted in identifying the following six critical events that influenced the presidency:

1. Beginning of Dr. Seeker's tenure under the cloud of a previous administration's scandal,
2. Settling the waters under the new administration,
3. Re-establishing credibility for FKCC,
4. Building partnerships and campuses,
5. Rebuilding the main campus following the structural failure of the old buildings,
6. Sorting through the aftermath of Hurricane George.

The resulting chronology provided the basis for eliciting conversations about the presidency. I subsequently conducted in-depth interviews on site, in regional locations for the Council of Presidents and for trustee meetings, and in the state capitol. The key participants included these 16 individuals: (a) 2 community college presidents, (b) the Chancellor of the Florida Community College System, (c) 4 executive level administrators from other Florida community colleges, (d) 4 executive level administrators from FKCC, (e) 4 former and current members of FKCC's local Board of Trustees and Foundation, and (f) a legislator.

Through observation, interview, and artifact review multiple types of data emerged that gave both breadth and depth to the study. Validity and reliability of the findings of this information were reinforced through triangulation of data sources and structural corroboration.

Personal interviews along with a number of follow-up telephone conversations and electronic messages constituted the majority of information from the case study participants. Interviews and observations occurred at meetings at locations in Florida over the course of a year.

I attended three president's council meetings (two in Tallahassee, one in Orlando), three FKCC Board meetings (Key West), three Trustee meetings (one in Tallahassee, one in Orlando and one in Apalachicola), three FKCC executive staff meetings (Key West), three Rotary meetings (Key West) and three legislative workshops in Tallahassee.

The four research questions were posed to each of the key 16 informants to elicit unstructured conversations about the presidency. Copious field notes, observations, and an examination of historical artifacts further enhanced the data gathering stage of the study. Artifacts included institutional effectiveness markers, accreditation reviews, audits, accounts from newspapers, legislative documents, and Dr. Seeker's doctoral dissertation on leadership.

The artifacts provided corroboration of participant's interpretations of events and provided insight into the many dimensions of the presidency of FKCC. Although the first and second research questions deal directly with critical events, I found that each of the questions spawned information concerning other events viewed as significant to respondents. It was as though the process of interviewing served to encourage the participants to

recover long forgotten facts and to salvage insights as a result of the process.

The findings are presented from interviews, observations and artifact review with interview findings presented as direct quotes, while artifacts and observations are presented in narrative form. This provides a steady flow of corroborative information to accompany direct quotes. The presentation of findings is introduced by an overview of the college, the context in which the presidency evolved. The primary information sources for this brief history were artifacts and documents

A Brief History of the Presidency

FKCC was established by the Florida legislature in 1966. Dr. William A. Seeker was appointed as the third president of FKCC on July 1, 1979. As the new president, he stepped immediately into the task of completing the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center and presided over the grand opening with a play written by Tennessee Williams. The Tennessee Williams Fine Art Center was the first of a continuous string of unique programs that were developed. Dr. Seeker's vision for developing the Tennessee Fine Arts

Center into a thriving artistic hub funneling local talent toward academic and theatre related associate degrees enthused employees and the community. The Center successfully cultivated the natural harvest of an island community, rich with cultural heritage and inherent beauty.

The underwater classroom, located in the Gulf of Mexico adjacent to the college, has captured the attention of students from around the world, enabling them to earn highly specialized and valuable diving degrees. Programming that draws attention to FKCC includes the highly sophisticated Army Corp of Engineers diving program.

Superb student programming at FKCC has earned praise and accolades from academic arenas regionally and abroad. The legislature acknowledged the many contributions of Dr. Seeker and FKCC in following an unprecedented recommendation by the college's Board of Trustees to name the new campus in honor of Dr. Seeker. The newest \$75 million campus, home to 4500 students, makes FKCC one of the most technologically advanced, state-of-the art educational facilities in the world. As a result of the rich culture of the island community and the diversity of programming for visitors, over a million tourists attended

museums, theatres and cultural events in 1995-96, according to the Visitors Profiles report, Linking the Economy and Environment of Florida Keys/Florida Bay. These contributions to faculty, student, staff and community needs establish Dr. Seeker as a gifted visionary and committed veteran president with much to share concerning 21st century leadership.

Dr. Seeker's 23-year-long presidency makes him one of two presidents among the 28 Florida Community Colleges with over 20 years of service. Shortly after I initiated this study, Dr. Seeker announced that he would be retiring when his current contract with the FKCC Board of Trustees is completed. This factor offered me a rare opportunity to engage respondents in a reflective and retrospective review of the presidency as they in turn began to concern themselves with the arduous task of seeking a replacement for Dr. Seeker.

Research Question Findings

Research Question One:

How Were Events Perceived By the President and Other College Stakeholders?

At the onset of the interviews, I engaged participants in the process of identifying six critical events. These events were believed to be instrumental in the evolution of the tenure of the president. As interviews progressed, it became obvious that events one and two blended together so seamlessly as to define 'the early years'. There appeared to be no clear distinction between them. Similarly, events three and four became redefined as 'the middle years' and events five and six as 'the later years'. A re-categorization emerged as follows:

1. The early years,
2. The middle years,
3. The later years.

The early years. A respondent introduced the unusual circumstances of the former president's departure by responding in rather vivid and dramatic detail:

I had left town when Dr. Smith [previous president of FKCC] came under scrutiny. I was aware that the Division of Community Colleges was concerned with the attention that FKCC was receiving in regard to him. One day I looked up to see a Federal Marshall with a subpoena for

me to testify about Dr. Smith. As you might imagine, I was horribly uncomfortable to be put in such a position. I testified and told the truth.

The former president of FKCC was the subject of considerable debate due to inappropriate behaviors at the college. Subsequent to an investigation by federal authorities, Dr. Smith voluntarily resigned from the college. According to the FKCC catalog, Dr. Merrill Symonds was the first president of FKCC, serving from 1966 to 1967. Dr. Smith served as president from 1967-1979. Shortly after his resignation, the search for a new president began.

Another respondent offered initial insights into the early years by noting the unusual conditions surrounding them:

I felt compassion for Dr. Seeker when he first arrived in Key West. You know the [prior] situation was distasteful and puzzling to everyone. I remember thinking, this new man, Seeker, can he turn all this around? I observed him at civic functions in those early and busy days as Dr. Seeker took over as leader of the college. I remember knowing that he

was from Texas and having lived there once myself, I wondered how he would cultivate the ability to move among such a sophisticated group of artists, Europeans transplants, musicians and generally displaced eccentrics.

Further observations were made by this informant concerning the somewhat hopeless state of affairs in the aftermath of the turmoil and upheaval at the college subsequent to Dr. Smith's leaving, "At one point in all of the chaos before Dr. Seeker arrived, I recall discussions that perhaps the college should be closed. The community truly had a bad taste in their mouths about Dr. Smith's leadership."

A respondent who was part of the community during the early years, shares recollections of Dr. Seeker as he filled the role of president, "I remember being aware that a new president had been hired. He certainly seemed like a good choice. On a couple of occasions we did business together. He was very forthright with identifying problems and then immediately offered solutions." The same respondent perceived that there was a kind quality about the new president and correlated this characteristic to of Seeker's behavior during the early years, "I don't remember

thinking much about his being from Texas. I guess because he seemed to blend right in with Key West. I remember that he was very accepting of others."

Dr. Robert McLendon, president of St. Johns River Community College, is Florida's other veteran community college president. He consented to be identified in this study and spoke freely of the early and difficult circumstances of Dr. Seeker's presidency with vivid clarity. Dr. McLendon, an avid historian with remarkable recall regarding military strategies, likened the capacities of the new president to an astute military leader. He phrased it as follows:

Dr. Seeker was able to grasp very quickly the circumstances that contributed to the turmoil around the presidency. In fact, Dr. Seeker's single greatest attribute is his phenomenal ability to evaluate and understand the people with whom he works. He was able to make a quick and factual assessment of the circumstances he faced upon arrival and he was able to develop solutions. Dr. Seeker has a personality which inculcates security and stability and even peace in the people around

him. The very daunting situation in the upheaval in this college's life was quickly contained and ultimately eliminated, bringing to bear the personal traits and human relations skills that are so much a part of the essence of Dr. Seeker.

A college employee observed the new president's ability to engender trust and pave the way for open communication with the following observation about a ritual that the new leader started that would come to define him and his style of leadership:

Doc [Dr. Seeker] really did settle very turbulent waters. He was so informed about community college issues and fit in so well. He was in sharp contrast to the previous president and had a very different style. I remember that he made rounds everyday. It made employees feel at ease.

The early years at FKCC posed a significant challenge to the new president. How would he turn the tide of negativity? What characteristics or qualities would he call upon to begin anew? Dr. Seeker, a man who believed in setting goals, attaining them one by one and then crossing them off his list, left few details to accident. How would

this seemingly meticulous and self-directed man be capable of embracing such a wide range of constituents as president of FKCC?

When the presidency he had prepared for was within his reach, he revealed a certain pride while recalling his first impressions of FKCC with remarkable detail and candor:

The screening committee for the presidency search was composed of 12 people. They screened out the top ten applicants. The criteria [were] 3 years as an administrator in the community college system, experience as an instructor, and a doctorate. The ten people were interviewed and three were chosen to return for a second interview. I made the cut. I prepared for the first interview and had a sense that it went well.

Dr. Seeker explains how he came to learn he was the new president of FKCC:

I had gotten the flu while in Key West and remember having a pretty high temperature. All three of the candidates were interviewed on the same day. After my interview was completed, I went to find a quiet

place. I found the Black Angus Steakhouse. By now, I'm sweating profusely, and at this point realizing that I'm pretty sick, and in walked an employee from the college. He wanted me to know that I was being offered the job and told me that the Board was still in session and wanted me to return with him. When I walked in to the boardroom, everyone stood up and applauded. I was offered a salary of \$29,000 and a 1-year contract.

The salary of \$29,000 was only slightly more than Dr. Seeker was earning as a Vice President at another urban Florida community college:

I remember feeling a bit unnerved on the flight back to Tampa. One of my goals in life was to become a college president and yet there was the feeling of, wow, did I dream this? As soon as I returned to work at Hillsborough Community College I wrote a letter of resignation and handed it to Dr. Scaglioni, the President.

Dr. Seeker shared personal facts that influenced his decision to become a community college president:

My folks were poor. We would have been considered

lower class. No one from my family had ever graduated from high school. My mom finished eighth grade and my dad finished the third grade. I lived out in the sticks. My mom became a licensed vocational nurse from a technical school in North Carolina. She worked all of her life as a nurse. When I was in school, my mom was one of the few moms who worked outside of the home. I watched my mom work all day long and then come home and make dinner and take care of our house, and then make lunches for the next school day. When I worked during the summers she always packed my lunches. She made time to work and to spend time with us. She really wanted me to go to college. I remember, by the time I was in my freshman year in high school she was pressing me to keep my grades high so I could get into a good college.

William Seeker was a captain in the US Army in the Rifle Company of the 22nd battle group. Seeker received a double masters degree in Biology and Education from Sam Houston University and a PhD from Texas A & M in Higher Education Administration where he was offered a graduate

assistant position. While at Texas A & M, he was recruited to become a football linebacker by Bear Bryant. Seeker holds the distinction of membership in Phi Delta Kappa, significant experience as a cancer researcher at MD Anderson Cancer Institute in Houston, Texas, and experience as a college instructor for at New Mexico Military Institute.

Dr. Seeker recalls the moment when he decided to go to college:

My parents came from the generation where when you were old enough your parents pulled you out of school and put you in the cotton fields. I remember one very hot summer day when I was 15. Most of the other kids' families were migrant workers. We were probably considered rednecks. Anyway, I was picking cotton and sweat was running down my forehead. Something kicked in and I made a decision. I went home that night and told everyone that I wasn't doing this the rest of my life (back in those days we did serious talking over the dinner table). I told my folks that I was going to college.

Bill Seeker, one of two children, believes his family

instilled important ideals that he still values:

My Dad was a Marine Corp hero. He was a very highly decorated sergeant between 1929-1933. Back then being in the Marine Corp qualified you for being a police officer. Dad was a police officer. When he returned from the war, he was the PR person for the local electric company. He was a trouble-shooter. If cows got electrocuted, and this happened frequently, he would finesse the difficult problems. He was good with people. My dad could hardly read a newspaper. My mom had a sharp sense of humor.

The topic of family emerged as Dr. Seeker characterized his development as a leader. Dr. Seeker consciously set out to construct a culture at FKCC reminiscent of family. Study respondents viewed the understanding of institutional culture as family as integral to the success of the presidency and the college. David Armstrong, the newly appointed Chancellor for Community Colleges (who consented to be identified in this study), reflected on the "early years" at FKCC and offered these insights as to the notion of culture defined as family:

I can remember immediately sensing this incredible culture at FKCC. The location has such rich elements of culture. It's really impossible, however, to separate Doc [Dr. Seeker] from that larger culture. He has played so big a role in defining the college. FKCC operates very much the way a family does. Other presidents would love to have that kind of relationship with staff and the community. It's rare.

The president of FKCC personally embraced the broad mission of the community college before beginning his career as a community college president. Like many community college students, he had similarly set his sights on higher education as a means to improve his life. This critical distinction, I believe, sets Dr. Seeker apart from many college presidents who did not have to climb out of poverty into a position of power. He phrases it accordingly,

I identify with the community college because it's a blue collar institution. When I see students pulling themselves up by their bootstraps, I remember doing just that. I have personally signed over 3000

degrees (AA's and AS's). At FKCC I've pinned over 700 registered nurses. I have conferred certificates to over 500 police officers. When I do this, I know that they now have an opportunity to do important and powerful things in the world. I personally sign every diploma and it always registers as a great moment. Nurse pinnings are big events to me.

Respondents recognized the willingness of this new president to embrace the community and the culture. One respondent expressed this sentiment stating, "Those who longed to maintain a college in Monroe County soon realized that they were both relieved and pleased with Dr. Seeker."

The middle years. The middle years presented an economic upturn, which provided many opportunities for the management team and Board of Trustees. With astute strategic planning, they took advantage of these opportunities and the college began to flourish. A respondent comments on the visible effects by noting that "before very long, it seemed that wherever you went there was talk of campuses in Marathon and Islamorada."

The middle years were a decade of continuous growth that led to the building of the Charlie Toppino Welding

Technology Lab as well as the Ron Saunders Student Center and the Physical Development Building. The evolution of the college depended largely upon the dense island community context (Key West). The 1970s and 1980s held great promise for the Florida Keys as new roads were completed connecting the long string of islands with modern engineering. An increased boost in tourism alerted the business owners to an opportunity to parlay the vast beauty into economic prosperity. The new economic prosperity revolved around the legendary natural beauty of the Florida Keys. The Florida Keys is home of the only living coral reef in the continental United States. Island culture has long been defined around the coral reef, which has yielded both a way of life and recreation for natives. Life on such a small island entails a necessary engagement with all manner of people.

Dr. Seeker created connections that endured and yielded more and larger connections, while at the same time enabling the smooth execution of daily operations. A respondent sums up the end result:

Doc understands that it really is all about people.

That is by far the most important aspect of

leadership. We get too caught up in policy and procedure and carving out boxes that no one fits in. What it boils down to is direct relationships with people. This is the only thing that ultimately affects the success of an organization

The evolution of diving programs is a large part of the history of FKCC and aptly demonstrates the synergy of existing resources and the development of opportunities upon which the college leadership team has capitalized. In the prosperous middle years diving programs grew exponentially. One such initiative, the expansion of the lagoon, is described in the FKCC catalog:

One of the most impressive features of the diving program is the lagoon that is used for confined water training in all scuba classes. The lagoon is equipped with two entry /exit points with ladders on each side. It also has two underwater platforms; one located at a depth of 14 feet and one at 30 feet. These large platforms are used primarily to evaluate and practice underwater skills such as buoyancy control and mask removal.

The underwater lagoon was designed with the needs of navy

frogmen, special forces units, and local marine law enforcement needs. Frequent visits by the Corp of Engineers and their need for continual and rigorous training in a realistic, underwater setting provided further impetus for growth of the diving facilities. The lagoon provided practical application opportunities for diving students. An informant commented on the unusual setting and how it functions:

Features of the lagoon include an underwater obstacle course, a submerged bus, car, and boat. Of course there is plenty of marine life to see, along with the timbers of the famous Spanish Galleon, the Atocha. This underwater training area, the finest of its kind, is available for highly diverse dive requirements and to dive students during non-classroom hours for practice or pleasure diving.

The middle years yielded such a plethora of improvements that one respondent viewed these years as a defining era in the reputation of the college:

FKCC functions so naturally as a resource in the community it is referred to as "the College of the Keys." Except for a few higher education programs

offered at the navy base (St. Leo College, for example) FKCC is "the" source for higher education in the Keys.

The later years. Upon reflection concerning the influence of various events on FKCC, a respondent who had occasion to work on legislative issues with Dr. Seeker suggested that events weren't really events so much as opportunities to redefine strategies. It was phrased in this way:

The orchestration of events under the influence of Dr. Seeker was directly due to his high level of charisma. This deep sense of confidence, one would think comes from education, experience and inordinate fine-tuning. I believe this attribute drives everything else. It's infectious and it's truly impossible to not get excited about whatever it is he's trying to engage you in. Whether it's recouping from a hurricane, an enrollment issue, funding or lobbying against something that will hurt FKCC, you want to get behind it. What he projects to people during the legislative process or in any other setting is a sense of profound wisdom. He's

comfortable in his own skin. Adam Herbert [former president of the University of North Florida and former Chancellor of Florida's Board of Regents] has it too. So does McLendon [president of St. Johns River Community College].

One respondent recalled the rebuilding of the campus subsequent to severe deterioration due to structural weaknesses. This respondent reflected on the process by way of noting how the president facilitated relationships:

During the rebuilding of the FKCC campus I was struck by how it all came together seemingly effortlessly. I saw then that how you approach any project pretty much defines your skill as a leader. A true leader is a person who individuals will follow. A leader's philosophy and vision only serves others if approached with an open mind and a forum of communication for all of those involved. A leader's charismatic demeanor portrays a commitment to loyalty to his colleagues and employees.

Critical events such as Hurricane George again place the spotlight on the fragile nature of the ecosystem and the

necessity to maintain the balance between growth and harmony with the environment.

A respondent who observed Dr. Seeker through several critical events noted the following:

I was present through the demolition and rebuilding of the college campus and through the extensive hurricane damage of Hurricanes George and Irene. I found that during these challenging times, Dr. Seeker was a democratic leader whose personality motivated all he came in contact with. Be it staff members, students, other college presidents, legislators or the community at large, he always managed to bring them together toward a common goal and accomplish the most complicated tasks with little to no resistance.

The devastation due to hurricane damage from Andrew, Irene and George not only impacted the entire Keys' community but also became a constant challenge to FKCC's ability to function. As a result of so much destruction from hurricane damage, Dr. Seeker time and time again requested relief compensation from the legislature. One

respondent noted the circumstances of one such visit to Tallahassee:

John Thrasher was speaker of the House. I remember Dr. Seeker calling upon the legislature for hurricane relief. Everyone knew the Keys had been hit pretty severely with these natural disasters. FKCC would have been essentially put out of business without aid. I marveled at how Dr. Seeker lobbied to keep FKCC afloat and at how he turned this into an educational opportunity. Had he [Dr. Seeker] not already been established as a serious community college player, I doubt that he would have had success. Everyone knew Doc to be a major 'player'.

While the hurricanes posed financial burdens on FKCC, they also presented human resource emergencies, as many families were struck so hard that decisions as to whether or not to stay in the Keys were very real concerns. A respondent recalled how the college continued to function accordingly:

Hurricane Andrew impacted the enrollment of the college severely. Damage from Hurricane George posed a serious threat to us also. Because of Doc's

reputation and alliances, he was able to go to bat for us in Tallahassee. During Hurricane George, Doc's home was hit pretty hard. Even though he had been hit so hard personally, no one would ever have known it. He insisted on keeping the college open around the clock. We called all our employees to determine if everyone was safe. We issued paychecks manually so people could take care of urgent needs. Because employees lost so many homes, David Armstrong made a personal trip to offer assistance.

Research Question Two:

How Did Critical Events Steer the Presidency Over the Span of Two Decades?

Although the events gave a chronological structure to the study, respondents focused more on the role the president played in leading these events than the events leading or defining the presidency.

One respondent noted how Dr. Seeker's leadership ability in the context of community helped her define how she views leadership. The explanation was reminiscent of mention made in this literature review detailing how leaders are able to manage attention as they convince

others of the merit and value of the commitment they hold (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). An informant's memories of the building process reflected:

The President enjoys power. Power is not to be abused, but to be used in a deliberate and calculated way to achieve desired results. Power is directly related to his relationships with people. By knowing and understanding key people, the President maximizes his ability to direct the college. The president feels power is most effective when it is the least obvious- this means taking advantage of opportunities [events], understanding the players, and having decisions follow what appears to be a natural course.

During the final phase of triangulation whereby respondents were asked to review this study, more discoveries were made concerning how events served to impact not only the presidency but also individuals at FKCC. As is true of qualitative inquiry, several events not identified as critical became a focal point in the study. By way of example, one respondent noted this

As I reviewed the findings and conclusion section [sent as part of triangulation process] I realized

that the event [not included in the six critical events] that probably impacted Doc and all of us at FKCC the most was a difficult Board member we found ourselves with and the ensuing challenges that this posed. An individual was appointed who appeared to lack the commitment to the best interest of the college or the personal skills to work within the confines of a professional team. The Board member appeared to be primarily interested in pursuing her personal agenda as well as her business agenda. The realization that this must be dealt with and the confrontations that followed caused enormous stress for Doc and all of us.

When probed more about how this situation evolved, the respondent continued:

There had existed for some time a faction within the community that resisted Dr. Seeker and anything he did. This dated back to when Dr. Seeker was first hired. My belief is that the disdain for him was because he stood for "professionalizing" the college. This essentially meant that contracts and legal procedures were going to be executed according

to state protocol. The fact that Doc was an unknown entity disturbed some who resisted conforming to state regulations.

There were remnants of an island survival mentality which encouraged natives to stick together at all costs. The irony here is that I am native-born and raised on this island. I believe the college served as an example of politics "not as usual." Doc paid a high price for this however, in that there were those who never forgave his audacity.

A long time resident of Key West who is a board member and had been involved peripherally with the college for years recalled observations over the years in regard to Dr. Seeker's leadership ability as it related to his experience in organized sports and the military:

There is a relationship between military experience and participation in team sports and the formation of his [Doc's] leadership style. Each of these activities clearly emphasizes the importance of working together, i.e., team building, to accomplish defined goals and objectives. Accordingly, most who

participate in either or both activities learn to talk the talk. Not all are as able "to walk the walk". Nonetheless, even modest competency in the talk can be effective at a superficial level in creating a leadership facade. Relative effectiveness is dependent on both the skill level of the purported leader and the sophistication and/or vulnerability of the led. There is, however, a significant difference between knowing and practicing leadership techniques and being a leader.

Another respondent similarly made reference to Dr. Seeker's background as an explanation for his handling of the Board of Trustees. This respondent viewed the relationship between the president and the Board as critical to the success of the presidency and the success of the college. The respondent said,

Dr. Seeker's training as a military officer added to the development of structure and organization that is so necessary in a smooth running institution. A president's survival is in many ways more than anything else, related to his relationship with his Board of Trustees. Dr. Seeker quickly built

consensus with his Board and has maintained it ever since. This relationship with the Trustees has to be accomplished while building effective relationships with the many publics, i.e., students, faculty, etc. in the college community.

Florida Statute (FS 240.319 and 240.325) and Florida State Board of Education Administrative Rule (FAC) 6A-14.0247 specifically address the role of the FKCC Board of Trustees by charging them with responsibility for establishing college policy. Except under clearly defined circumstances, Board action must result from a decision of the whole, and no individual member of the committee can take official action for the Board unless authorized to do so.

As stated in the FKCC Board Rule Book, Rule 6Hx-8-1.02. Along with 229.031 FS in reference to Quorum, "No business may be transacted at any meeting unless a quorum is present." The responsibilities of the governing board must include establishing broad institutional policies, securing financial resources to support adequately the institutional goals, and selecting the chief executive officer and stability of the institution.

A significant function of the District Board of Trustees includes the oversight of an annual audit of FKCC. The college has an impressive record of superior audits. The results of the most recent audit disclosed no instances of noncompliance. No material weaknesses were noted over financial reporting and in general operations.

Dr. Seeker's interest in fiscal accountability is reflected in his doctoral dissertation. A quote in which he cited H.V. Webb's Community Power Structure Related to School Administration (1956) speaks to this same idea of preparation for leadership by working closely with the community (which trustees represent), "The school administrator who is not prepared or qualified to study his community may find himself an unwilling victim of circumstance" (p. 39).

An examination of Dr. Seeker's dissertation served as an additional lens in that it provided insight into his early perspectives on leadership. His research as a doctoral student at Texas A & M identified top leaders in two communities in Texas. He examined the formal organizations in which these leaders participated, investigated the interaction patterns between persons

identified as leaders, and compared the results of four different procedures used in identifying the leaders of the two communities. The significance that Dr. Seeker attached to exploring power potential, formal and informal decision-making, and ultimately the factors of age and length of residence in the community of top leaders revealed his early sensitivity to issues of community influence and power.

Questions posed in Dr. Seeker's doctoral dissertation, Power Structure and School Bond Elections (1969) grapple with pivotal leadership issues. The questions that Dr. Seeker asked reveal a broad understanding of the role of leader in a community context. Are there individuals who because of a particular trait such as family background, personality, or financial status, emerge as leaders and influence voters? Is it possible to correctly identify these groups and individuals as a power structure in educational decision-making? If these leaders exist, do they influence the public through their leadership in formal organizations?

Research Question Three:

How is a Community College Presidency Shaped and Interpreted Over Time?

A respondent who had occasion to observe the group dynamics between presidents in a meeting of the Council of Presidents, remembers the shaping of the presidency in terms of assuming a power position among state level peers at the Council of Presidents meeting:

As I watch Dr. McLendon [Florida's other long-tenured president] and Dr. Seeker sitting around the table at the Council of Presidents meeting, there is a distinct difference in style between them and many of the others. Many of the other presidents pontificate and offer opinions on every subject. If Dr. Seeker speaks, it contains substance. Dr. Seeker is never the first to speak nor is he ever the last to speak. Dr. Seeker starts with eye contact. He looks you directly in the eye. He watches you as intently as you are watching him. He never interrupts you and he really listens. He reads body language and interprets signals. Perhaps it's in part due to his military experience. Paratroopers

are crazy, you know. He's been around the track and doesn't have to wear \$600.00 shoes to impress you.

He is a body at rest.

The capacity to listen crops up many times as respondents relay the behaviors that motivate them. One executive staff member said it accordingly,

Everyone who serves on Doc's staff knows that he is available. Different points of view are heard and he really listens. Most of the time, he gets input from all involved.

Dr. Seeker reminds me of a "folksy" leader, in the tradition of the Southern states' folksy leaders. Doc relates to faculty and staff pretty uniformly, again, based on informality.

When asked about the ways in which the president motivates those with whom he interacts one respondent noted,

The president motivates others by keeping them informed in a "down home" and "these are the cards on the table" manner. He praises for a job well done and rewards where appropriate. He teases for a job not well done.

And another made note of a deep level of caring indicative of the concept of organization as family:

My answer is limited by the fact that I have not known other leaders personally from a high-level management position reporting to those individuals. However, based on general knowledge, I'd say that characteristics which distinguish Dr. Seeker are his long tenure in his position, his informality, his exceptional efforts to have the employees of the college function as a "family," and his genuine care and concern for his employees.

This respondent's understanding reflects what the literature review describes as a charismatic leader. A charismatic leader possesses skills in projecting a vision, in communicating, in building trust and commitment, and in empowering, while maintaining a sense of power and identity. An emotional involvement appeared to be revealed in the respondent's description as well. House (1977) in his seminal work defined charismatic leadership as a leader's major and unusual impact on those who follow. The literature reminds us that charisma alone can sometimes lead to manipulating others in order to achieve undesirable

aims. Transformational leadership, however, requires more than personal charisma.

Reference is made in the interviews of the small and intimate feel of this smallest public community college in Florida. One informant made an observation about larger community colleges in contrast:

Community colleges like Miami-Dade are huge and have to be run very much like a business. Eduardo [Miami-Dade president] is very effective. He runs the college like a business. Community colleges have to be much more reactive than a University. Community colleges needs are highly individualized. In K-12 even minor changes take a long time to implement. Community colleges have the opportunity to be on the cutting edge. This sets community colleges apart. Community colleges need dynamic leadership. The problem with tenure is that everyone can always say "we tried this before" as an excuse to not implement new ideas.

FKCC's president appears to gently engage solutions to challenges before they become insurmountable. The same

respondent commented on the effortless ease, with which this leader handles the college's expansion:

Other leaders I have observed in his field have a more autocratic leadership style, with little to no ability to adapt to situations that need flexibility. They [the characteristics of President Seeker] facilitate smooth transitions in regard to any change or need, the staff members and management have.

Loyalties of the college management team to their president reflect in their daily duties, and when situations do not go in the college's favor, they express a sense of security that it was not due to Dr. Seeker's lack of persistence or dedication to the goal.

A 23-year long tenure as president requires a balance of active engagement with private regeneration. Perhaps the ability to discern how to balance the two accounts for such a lengthy tenure in the role of president. The paradox of a leader who thrives on public deeds and yet covets the time away that enables him to give so freely of himself emerged as the study progressed. A respondent made the following observation about the duality between Doc's desire to make

connections and his strong need to regenerate himself, "Doc, surprisingly, is not a society person. His almost generalship quality might reliably be called grace - a sort of elegant isolation, yet not at all alienation from the general populace of the community or island he loves to serve."

An interesting observation from a respondent made note of the need for community college leaders with high energy levels and an ability to balance psychological well being. The notes from another respondent's interview came to mind at almost the same moment:

In talking with colleagues who have worked or are working at other community colleges, I have been surprised to hear of at least several cases in which the president is distant from staff members and also cases in which the president "rules by fear." I think that these cases can serve as (in gestalt terms) the ground against which Doc stands in contradistinction. By working to make FKCC a cordial, relaxed, friendly environment, Doc sets up a corporate culture, which enables motivated, productive team behavior. Because it is generally a

forgiving environment, staff members feel unconstrained to try new things or take some risks.

The noteworthiness of this characteristic and the impact it has on the overall functioning of the college reverberated through the interviews. One staff member summed up his assessment with this explanation, "Doc does not micromanage, [in fact Dr. Seeker] encourages consensus decision-making. He's visible on campus with his walkabouts and available to all constituencies. He encourages ideas built on consensus decision-making."

Another respondent referred to the characteristic that is observed daily with more than daily implications, "Very few other college presidents know everyone's names. Every single day [Dr. Seeker] walks entirely around every office in the college. He makes himself available. He wants to know what's going on." A respondent who has not lived in Key West for some time, but worked at the college for four of five of the critical events worded it this way:

Dr. Seeker surrounds himself with competent people and gives them the opportunity, support, and recognition to excel. He further gets things out in the open and even encourages the "acting out" of

problematic issues. He believes in getting to the heart of things.

As one respondent reflected on recent decisions concerning the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center, it was obvious that everyone agonized over the difficult options, including Dr. Seeker. The Center, designed 2 decades ago, was engineered with modern facilities for play production, stage craft, acting and directing, music, photography, painting and print making, sculpture and ceramics. The Center ushered in many one-of-a-kind, though costly, original performances and had commanded a prime place in the heart of the community. The fate of the Center is now being negotiated with a gentle caution bordering on reverence. This respondent recalled,

Just recently, due to worsening fiscal limitations, it seems to me that Doc has become more aggressive. For example, he was reluctant to address the huge expense of the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center, but under his direction, we are now dealing directly and assertively with that problem, though there may be political fallout in the community.

Another informant made note of the most recent budget

cuts and the voluntary surrender of a portion of their salary by employees:

I recall when we were faced with budget cuts. A voluntary pay reduction came under discussion at a Board meeting. Under consideration was the possibility of employees taking six unpaid days or taking a 5% pay cut. Bill Seeker implemented it. When someone in the Keys loses their jobs there is no option except to leave. The president implemented a secret ballot to take the 6 unpaid leave days in order to not have to let employees go. There was this overwhelming response from employees to support it. I saw it as a very positive thing. Not many colleges around the state that would have gotten that response. This required leadership ability from an internal perspective.

One Board of Trustee member noted other attributes of the president by saying,

Not to put too fine a point on it, his attitude is not of a hopelessly correct man whose work couldn't stand the test of time and critical scrutiny. He is a leader who displays deep feeling along with

critical detachment, along with wit. It somehow is an outward form of inward grace.

A particularly revealing interview recalled how a natural learning found its way into so many conversations with the president. The participant shared a description of the depth and caring of one such relationship:

I remember this one chap whom we all know [in Key West] who had occasion to become embroiled in narrow escapes with drugs. He's now a high-powered executive who looks back with a strange fondness for Doc [Dr. Seeker]. He has been heard saying, "Oh, how kind Doc could be and how unkind he has been, both at exactly the right moments. Imaginatively unauthoritative, he became a figure who understood the need to be carried out into real life in a fragile ship of courage."

This ability to turn the most casual of moments into learning opportunities appears to be one of this leader's strengths. Perhaps it is in this love for education that he makes a meaningful mark. He views education not as a compartmentalized endeavor but rather as a continuous function of the position. Hutchins (1970) noted the model

for this proclivity in ancient Athens: "Education was not a segregated activity, conducted for certain hours, in certain places, at a certain time of life. It was the aim of the society. The city educated the man. The Athenian was educated by culture, by paideia" (p.133).

As one participant noted, "Very few other presidents know everyone's name on campus. Every single day he walks entirely around the college. He makes himself available. He insists on knowing what is going on." Yet another respondent saw this "folksy" style as a detriment to the president, "By and large, he plays this bumpkin role too well and folks believe it, creating an image that is not too flattering." Regardless of each individual's feelings about the pros and cons of Dr. Seeker's image, the president's ability to laugh at himself while encouraging others' to do likewise creates a climate where people feel at home. It was observed by a management team member,

He likes to joke with people - sometimes he'll play little practical jokes, like taking flowers from someone's desk and putting them on someone else's desk. He often develops themes he'll talk about with different employees - for one it might be football,

with another the college they graduated from, etc. When the Bush-Gore extended election was going on, he and I had a running joke about jumping off the 7-mile Bridge if Bush (me) or Gore (him) won. He functions familiarly [similarly] with the Board members. He's businesslike in Board meetings but doesn't take himself too seriously.

The philosophy and purpose of FKCC is to recognize the changing nature of the world and to strive to educate individuals to play an active and meaningful role in their world and community. The interactive nature of the president's influence and the subsequent influence of the college on community members' lives appeared again and again in respondents' recollections: "Dr. Seeker has a social/psychological leadership ability that elicits loyalty and commitment from all he comes in contact with."

Numerous respondents note how the national focus on the Keys as a natural resource has translated into opportunities for FKCC to capitalize on environmentally focused programs. One such respondent stated it this way,

I believe the college has been a critical resource to the citizens of Monroe County. There is such a

marked cost differential down here that the college had to gear its resources accordingly. An example is the great need for service workers in the tourism industry. [The college brokered] an alliance between local hospitality businesses [hotel/motel]. FKCC has proven instrumental in keeping local talent at home.

In describing how the president feels about power and its use, one respondent made the following observation concerning the seeming paradox of a leader who rises to a position of power and authority and then appears to feel a reluctance to utilize that very power:

My feeling is that Doc would prefer not to have to wield power at all, that ideally everyone would do their jobs well and no conflicts would arise which would require the use of power. Therefore, he sometimes seems reluctant to use the power of his position. He does not like conflict, and sometimes shies away from using power, because to do so will create or escalate conflict.

The mention of the president's strong second-in-command creeps into the discussion of power as one respondent notes the following perception:

Bill has done a very good job at many levels. It may be impossible for a president to be all things to all people. They [those who lead the college] are practicing as a pragmatic steward of the college.

So much of all of this is reliance on a strong second-in-command to function as the 'bad guy'. Bill in many instances feels as though he must support his people.

An informant who has thought about how the president delegates makes this observation, "My sense is that it is a recent thing that Doc has delegated into the power equation. Nature abhors a vacuum."

One respondent felt the college was holding its own with room for improvement:

I think the president has been an effective leader on one level. The college is running smoothly, some of the curricula are exceptional, and most of the students are getting good value for their tuition. Could we be doing a better job? I think so.

Research Question Four:

How Did the Lengthy Tenure of the President Impact the Evolution of FKCC and the Constituents it Serves?

In order to accurately assess the president's tenure in terms of outcomes, it is important to review the mission of the college. FKCC's 2000/2001 Strategic Plan focuses on the growth of the college, reflecting a commitment to student success. It further reflects the democratic nature of governance at FKCC. The mission, which is reviewed every 5 years in preparation of the accreditation self-study states,

Florida Keys Community College is a comprehensive community college responding to the diverse and changing needs of Monroe County. The college offers quality education and activities that are innovative, accessible and affordable in the areas of university transfer, workforce development, college preparatory, continuing education and cultural enrichment. The college provides a student-centered atmosphere conducive to scholarly inquiry, critical thinking, and personal growth.

The first goal states,

Provide high quality academic instruction to assist and guide students in achieving educational goals for an Associate in Arts degree, an Associate in Science degree, an Associate in Applied Science degree, Certificates and Advanced Technical diplomas.

The second goal states, "Develop the student's personal and professional growth through academic and career planning, financial aid, disabled student services, guidance and counseling, testing and evaluation, and acceleration programs." The third goal goes on to clarify, "Increase the student's awareness of cultural and life-enhancing opportunities through student activities, outreach activities, cultural events, public exhibits and events highlighting cultural diversity, social and community concerns, and local community involvement." The fourth goal addresses responsiveness to the community, "Provide up-to-date learning facilities and equipment using technology to increase responsiveness to the changing demands of business, industry, and the community."

According to one participant, a huge part of leading the college involves achieving consensus among and between

the above-mentioned diverse opportunities and constituents,

He is a 'walking leader' who on a daily basis talks to staff on campus. He knows each staff member and what's going on in each department. He uses this information in the decision making process. He believes in the saying, "Keep your friends close and your enemies closer." This helps him navigate the rough waters. Dr. Seeker is extremely skilled at reading people.

Another college management team member respondent tells of the larger implications of the broad leadership strategy at the college that holds individuals accountable for each other:

I think there is a sense of ownership. People like to talk about the college as a family, though I think some of the family feeling has been diminished by some of the hard decisions we've had to make over recent years. Some don't like the family rubric; they believe it runs counter to workplace realities. But people do like to feel a part of the place and that they are valued for themselves. Doc does a good job of reinforcing this. We celebrate ownership

during Fat Fridays [a day-long cleaning up of the college followed by a celebration] and at other meetings and events through the year.

Dr. Seeker has interlaced a rather pragmatic philosophy that includes approaching the tough decisions in such a timely fashion that they are manageable and maintaining a sense of inclusion in the decision making process. References were made to the president's persistent and enduring quality to mend bridges by this respondent,

At the administrative level, dissent tends to work itself out in consensually arrived at recommendations and decisions. Faculty dissent may not really rise to the level of dissent. Maybe it is more like grumbling, often ill informed. Doc likes to keep a handle on this grumbling although the Dean of Instruction addresses it directly at lower levels.

A Miami Herald (1993) article makes mention of challenges faced by FKCC's president by referring to financial uncertainties,

As president of Florida Keys Community College for 15 years, Bill Seeker has learned to live on a

budget that might be abruptly whittled by thousands of dollars at any time. The college gets 70% of its 6 million a year in operating funds mostly from the state sales tax (the rest comes from tuition), so when these taxes dip, state agencies can-and do-have their budgets cut.

The president likens the uncertainty posed by natural disasters and an uncertain economy to a personal budget dilemma, "It's something like making out a grocery list without knowing how much money you have in your pocket".

One respondent summarized well the perceptions gleaned from all key informants on this last research question concerning the impact of Dr. Seeker's lengthy tenure on the college:

The long serving and successful presidents bring qualities that we see in Dr. Seeker with them to their positions. A president either has these qualities or does not. It really is as simple as that. While these leadership qualities can be polished on the job, they really cannot be created on the job. They are inherent. I bet you would find significant characteristics in common with

presidents who have served 15, 20 or 25 years. Dr. Seeker and other long serving presidents exude good health and physical strength.

Conclusions

At the onset of the interviews, I engaged participants in the process of identifying six critical events that were believed to offer insight into the evolution of the president. Events one and two blended together seamlessly to define 'the early years'; events three and four became redefined as 'the middle years'; and events five and six as 'the later years'. The early years at FKCC accentuated a significant challenge to the new president. Observations emphasized the somewhat hopeless state of affairs in the aftermath of turmoil and upheaval subsequent to Dr. Smith's [former FKCC president] leaving.

The circumstances surrounding the new presidency, as observed by respondents, observations, and artifacts required an ability to inculcate security and stability. Employees observed the sharp contrast between the previous president and Dr. Seeker. The new president of FKCC set in motion meticulous and self-directed goals as he

simultaneously embraced a wide range of constituents in the process.

The metaphor of family emerged time and time again. The development of Dr. Seeker's leadership ability was clearly influenced by his sense of family. Study respondents viewed the understanding of institutional culture as family an integral component to the success of the presidency and the college.

The middle years at FKCC presented an economic upturn with continuous growth that led to the building of the Charlie Toppino Welding Technology Lab, the Ron Saunders Student Center and the Physical Development Building. The new economic prosperity revolved around the legendary natural beauty of the Florida Keys. Dr. Seeker created connections that endured and yielded more and larger connections, while at the same time enabling the smooth execution of daily operations. The middle years yielded a plethora of improvements that came to define the excellent reputation of the college.

The later years included critical events such as Hurricane George, placing the spotlight on the fragile

nature of the ecosystem and the necessity to maintain the balance between growth and harmony with the environment. The devastation due to hurricane damage from Andrew, Irene and George not only impacted the entire Keys' community but became a challenge to FKCC's ability to function.

During the final phase of triangulation whereby respondents were asked to review this study, more discoveries were made concerning how events served to impact not only the presidency but also individuals at FKCC. As is true of qualitative inquiry, events not identified as critical became a focal point in the study. Events weren't really events so much as opportunities to redefine strategies and build relationships. Although the events gave a chronological structure to the study, respondents focused more on the role the president played in leading these events than the events leading or defining the presidency.

Chapter Five

Themes

In qualitative research an effort must be made to manage the study in such a way that it reflects cohesiveness and understandability. One way to ensure manageability is to assign themes to the emerging data. Eisner (1998) defines themes as the messages that occur as the events are observed. I organized the experience garnered from respondents accounts by utilizing themes as a data analysis technique.

The process of generating themes takes time and reflection. Capturing the themes of a case study involves the discovery of not simply what is, but often those qualities that are hidden or overshadowed (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997). Lawrence-Lightfoot explains the lengthy process most aptly:

For the portraitist, then, there is a crucial dynamic between documenting and creating the narrative, between receiving and shaping, reflecting and imposing, mirroring and improvising. The effort to reach coherence must flow organically both from

the data and from the interpretive witness of the portraitist. (p. 12)

The ever-present dance between the data and the manner in which the researcher interprets it posed a challenge throughout the study. Van Maanen (1988) makes the connection between the use of language and broadening the reader's understanding of experience:

The essence or nature of an experience has been adequately described in language if the description reawakens or shows us the lived quality and significance of the experience in a fuller or deeper manner. (p. 11)

I discovered also that the complexity involved in analysis doesn't fit neatly into pre-assigned categories. The themes that emerged reveal a symbiotic progression of connections that represent this presidency.

Theme One: Symbolic Meanings

The setting of FKCC is in and of itself rich with cultural symbolism. The William A. Seeker Campus of FKCC stands majestically as a tribute to an institute and the man it is named after. The avante garde, art nouveau

buildings in the always novel and original Key West defy description. Nothing people have ever seen or read about Florida community colleges prepares them for the grandeur, beauty, and artistry of the campus. Lavishly colored buildings, each in contrast to the one beside it, peak out from the breathtakingly pink horizon. Purple, magenta, pumpkin orange and lime green colors were chosen by the planning committee.

On my first trip back to the Keys to conduct interviews, I was startled by the vibrancy of this new campus. The original campus had been built with cement that was mixed with ocean water. Eventually it corroded and began to disintegrate to the horror of the college employees. A new campus was designed with the help of a diligent master plan committee comprised of college staff, faculty, students and members of the Board of Trustees. Once the legislature funded the capital project, a groundbreaking was planned. When bulldozers demolished remnants of the old campus, the grand new campus was built on a much larger scale. As I sat waiting for my interview, Dr. Seeker's executive assistant telephoned a Board member to see if she would make the afternoon meeting concerning

the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center. She buzzed Dr. Seeker on his intercom system, indicating that she had located the Board member. He took the call and in his typical, low-key style, he listened, speaking only when necessary. With state resources dwindling and performance based funding dictating increased accountability, the Center was under intense scrutiny and the meeting was extremely important and her presence was needed.

The Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center represents to Dr. Seeker his early years at FKCC. Dr. Seeker and Tennessee Williams enjoyed a long and enduring friendship until the author's death in 1983. In Dr. Seeker's office there are mementos and photographs from the early years. The Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center brought the community and the academic curriculum together and coalesced a broad range of constituents in artistic endeavors. Revisiting the practicality of the Center at this juncture has caused an element of tension between two diametrically opposed factions - those who want to preserve the center with its current form and functions and those who prefer concentrating financial resources solely on fee generating courses.

Emerging from his thoughts about the future of the Tennessee Williams Fine Arts Center, Doc motioned toward Florida's five flags - English, Spanish, French, Confederate and American, standing against the wall. "You see those flags against the wall? Each one is symbolic of hard won trials. Trials can be chastening, purifying, and exacting experiences. We should not be reluctant to face and profit from them."

Dr. Seeker's believes that troubles are meant to teach us something and that we do indeed profit from them. Donald Schön (1983) explains the developmental and reflexive way in which symbols depart profound meaning stating, "To see this site as that one is not to subsume the first under a familiar category or rule. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or an exemplar for the unfamiliar one" (p. 138).

Theme Two: Individual and Collective Identity

The identity of the president who leads this smallest island community college is so intertwined with the campus community that there were several junctures in which it became a challenge to discern the distinction. A vivid

example of the coalescing of the leader of the college and his internal constituents came to light subsequent to the terrorism attack on America. A group of staff members approached Dr. Seeker and requested that he lead the community in responding to the events with a show of force to pay respects and to improve morale. According to the local newspaper, The Key West Citizen,

In a show of patriotism and out of respect for the national tragedy, Florida Keys Community College has initiated a new weekly ceremony. On Monday mornings at 9:03 A.M., employees gather in front of the flagpole at the main campus in Key West to say the Pledge of Allegiance and to sing the Star Spangled Banner. Dr. William A. Seeker, who is a former captain of the U.S. Army's 22nd Battle Group, wears his original army fatigues.

Max dePree (1989) sheds insight on how this responsiveness to followers works by saying,

The only one who is able to hold the organization accountable is the leader. The leader may not delegate that role. That means providing the kind of visibility and personal engagement that cannot be

delegated. The leader has to set the tone for the quality of relationships. If he doesn't care about the quality of relationships, everybody catches on quickly. In organizations that work, hope is a very functional force. (p. 28)

A respondent noted this intersecting of identities, "It's really impossible however, to separate Doc [Dr. Seeker] from that larger culture." Dr. Seeker's sense of his world reveals a deep level of self-perception. A quote by Maurice Maeterlinck (as cited in Malone & Malone, 1992) gets to the core of self knowledge by saying, "It is far more important that one's life should be perceived than that it should be transformed; for no sooner has it been perceived, than it transforms itself of its own accord" (p.60).

A significant factor in the evolution of Dr. Seeker's highly individual approach to leadership was the trust he was able to develop over so many years at FKCC. Longevity allowed for the accumulation of layers of goodwill and trust within the academic community and the larger community.

Theme Three: Constancy of Vision

As noted in the literature review, in comparing the problem-solving individual in education with the images of the individual inscribed in social theory and the military one has to be moved by the similarities between the two. Analyzing the construct of a presidency through the lens of critical events of which occurred during his twenty-year tenure revealed at every juncture, without fail, the importance of procuring knowledge and gaining insight before embarking on a course of action.

Dr. Seeker believes in setting goals and building the necessary coalitions to create a vision. Observations of him "in action" at state level meetings, local civic functions, and one-on-one engagements with others revealed the centrality of securing a sturdy momentum of support for his agenda.

At a Rotary function in early summer of 2001, I observed as a seemingly casual interaction served to advance an important relationship. As Dr. Seeker and I joined a table where the chairman of the local school Board was seated, Dr. Seeker guided the conversation to the topic of the joint use facility between the School Board and the

College. As I listened, they conversed about issues facing them both and ways to merge resources. I observed how Dr. Seeker constructed connections that added to the conversation and moved it closer to his ever-present vision for the college.

On the way back to the campus, he wrote a note to himself to bring up several of the items he and the Chairman of the School Board had discussed for the next executive staff meeting. He wondered out loud if it might be wise to plan a joint executive staff meeting with the Chairman. He shared with me how critical he felt it was to include his executive staff in the decision making process.

A quote by Peter Senge (1999) sheds light on the need for sustaining change as a process. He put it like this, "All growth in nature arises out of an interplay between reinforcing growth processes and limiting processes. The seed contains the possibility for a tree, but it realizes that possibility through an emergent reinforcing growth process" (p. 8). Senge uncovered a subtle, yet integral component to leading change. Creating enthusiasm and excitement for the individuals who function within the

organization activates a powerful catalyst for forward movement.

A significant component of leadership dwells in the leader's capacity to create the social architecture that enlists intellectual capital (Bennis, 1989). The management of meaning requires a leader to construct reality and enlist others in supporting that version of reality (Beattie, 1997; Davis, Maher, & Noddings, 1991). The idea that organizational culture can be constructed, as opposed to existing as an objective, static reality gets to the heart of constructivism. Is this not a breakthrough in human thought? Tierney (1988) posited that organizational culture is much like a web in that every action and behavior affects the entire system. In response to the leader's constancy of vision and his ability to encourage individuals within the institution to actively construct roles, a culture with rules and structure evolves. It also possesses form and function.

Theme Four: Humane Generalship

Dr. Seeker collided with numerous challenges from the very first. He exhibits an amazing capacity to connect to

and maintain relationships of depth with an executive staff, a teaching staff from many locales, and a community comprised of well known artists, writers, musicians, and bright, often flamboyant, young students. This capacity was articulated by one staff member as a quality which Salovey and Sluyter (1997) attributed to emotional intelligence.

The respondent noted,

My feeling is that Doc would prefer not to have to wield power at all, that ideally everyone would do their jobs well and no conflicts would arise which would require the use of power. Therefore, he sometimes seems reluctant to use the power of his position. He does not like conflict, and sometimes shies away from using power, because to do so will create or escalate conflict.

Chapter Six

Lessons Learned and Future Implications

As is true of any edifying experience, I find it difficult to close this last chapter of my study. There are obviously many more "insights" to be gleaned. With the interviews completed and the data analyzed and triangulated with respondent review, dialogue with colleagues, and interview follow-through, I took some level of comfort in remembering that few qualitative researchers feel as though they have uncovered every stone (Merriam, 1988). Inherent in the process of qualitative inquiry is the level of uncertainty about what will emerge.

I spent more than a year acquiring data through observation, reviewing archival documents, conducting interviews with 16 informants, and creating subsequent opportunities for structural corroboration with informants. From that experience, I offer in this chapter a profile of one community college leader and the individuals, events and culture that influenced his presidency. Although the six critical events which were identified early on in the study by informants served as an organizing structure for

the research, not one of these events singularly altered the destiny of the College or the presidency.

The events designated as critical instead seemed to serve as challenges that guided the college. Tensions were inevitable in moving a distressed organization to a thriving academic campus. And yet the manner in which the tension, dissent and compromise were handled tells volumes about the president, faculty, staff, and students as well as the local community and the larger political community.

By way of describing the unfolding of this study, it must be emphasized that I offer a description of my findings rather than a prescription for duplication. Richardson (1990) explained how sorting through elements of the research enables important moments to emerge, "The collective story displays an individual's story by narrating the experiences of the social category to which the individual belongs, rather than by telling the particular individual's story" (p. 25).

According to Lawrence-Lightfoot (Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis, 1997), the researcher gets to a point where the guiding questions form an intellectual framework. She further noted the researcher's interwoven role in

determining conclusions regarding the inquiry. "It [the research] also resonates with echoes of the researcher's autobiographical journey - those aspects of her own familial, cultural, developmental, and educational background that she can relate (either consciously or unconsciously) to the intellectual themes of the work" (p. 185).

Taking this into account, I recalled an experience from a number of years ago, when a student in the field of public relations from the University of Florida asked if she might intern in my office at FKCC. Enthusiastic to be exposed to new ideas and to offer expertise in my field, I jumped at the opportunity. I quickly learned as I struggled to coherently express the reasons behind each maneuver, every choice, and myriad strategies and interactions, that most of my professional decisions surfaced unobtrusively. It took a great deal of conscious effort to explain what had become for me a very intuitive process. I offer this as an example of the complex nature of "learning" and how it relates to the larger issue of leadership.

As I poured over the descriptions of the president in my study, as well as the revelations of how his decisions

and leadership style influenced individuals at FKCC and the entire community, I came to realize that new meanings surfaced about the organization and the leader with each stage of the research process. Each strand of information, when melded together, took on additional form and shape. The presidency materialized in detail after detail, which when pieced together offered amazing insight into the role. Lawrence-Lightfoot Lawrence Lightfoot & Davis (1997) referred to this amazing phenomenon by saying, "Very few social science researchers have tried to seriously describe the process of creating the gestalt. Nor have they offered clear strategies for constructing the "aesthetic whole" (p.244).

Discovering the fluid nature of qualitative inquiry segues quite naturally into discussions about how the process of research is developmental in nature. The many developmental steps I had taken to prepare for the unexpected and emerging ideas, philosophies, and changing reality still left me unprepared for the uncertainty of interpretation. I realized in a deeply experiential way that getting to the buried insights of the respondents was a very circular process. The interviews yielded data that

was amplified with each generation of questions and follow-through questions. A definition of postmodern public administration helped to put this in perspective, "The answer is not found or discovered, but is arrived at through a discourse [that] is democratic to the extent that participation is not capriciously shut off to anyone willing to ante up with intention and attention" (Miller, 1993, p. 111).

While I can't presume to offer a treatise on the intricacies of constructing the gestalt, I believe I was able to glean a 'profile' of the nature of the individuals who work at FKCC, the institution and the president in this study. It was my hope to, as Eisner (1998) puts it, "Enable others to see the qualities that a work of art possesses" (p.6).

Those aspiring to become community college leaders can certainly benefit directly from the experience accumulated by Dr. Seeker, the president of Florida Keys Community College for 23 years. A profile of the guiding force of this president's leadership ability is offered as a resource for academicians, practitioners, and students of leadership.

Profile

Leader as Learner

References were made in my literature review to the manner in which leaders are viewed as the almost magical force behind successful institutions and organizations. Leaders have long accepted the function of that role which places the sole responsibility of success or failure in their hands. Historically, charismatic leaders have personified the forces of change and entrepreneurial spirit, while leaders from the traditional mold seem to prefer administrative responsibilities rather than to truly lead (Bass, 1990).

Discussions about leadership in an educational setting suggest that approaches to leadership and education in the 21st century have not simply changed, they have undergone a complete metamorphosis (Jonassen, 1991). The literature on the community college presidency asserts that it is a most difficult leadership role and as such requires an extraordinary person and appropriate conditions to conduct the office effectively. The president of a community college is ultimately responsible for teaching and learning and to a large degree determines the climate and culture of

the college (Neumann, 1995).

The institution and president in this study function in a less hierarchical manner than is traditionally encountered. Interestingly, the leader of FKCC emerged as the head learner. The learning environment at FKCC involves a president who models a willingness to expose vulnerabilities as well as triumphs and successes. The remarkably high level of self-awareness that drives the president and subsequently empowers his followers is key to the ability of the institution to learn and remain highly reactive to community needs. This unique ability to understand the emotional dynamics of others resulted in a high level of trust. The ability of the leader to defer self-aggrandizement resulted in an atmosphere where problem solving is encouraged and mistakes forgiven.

The president in this study appeared to submit to the demands of an enormously complex role and have it appear natural and fluid as a result of more than 23 years of flexing intellectual, academic, and emotional leadership muscles. Dr. Seeker is not a pretentious academician. He believes that students who come to the college are remarkable in their commitment and, thus, deserve the

finest education. I believe this drives his insistence upon an informal culture. Beyond informality, there is a belief at the college that in order for students to thrive, the culture must be imbued with learning as a priority.

Warmoth, Thomas, and Robinson, put it like this,

If school education becomes really good, it can penetrate to the student's and teacher's heart and can penetrate the culture. The deeper people get into their academic selves, the more they can understand, experience, balance, and grow. The more people can understand, experience, balance, and grow, the more chance we humans and the other 5 (to 50) million species on earth have to survive and thrive on the long, complex, and breathtaking road ahead. (1984, p.85)

Edward O. Wilson (1998) addressed how this highly intuitive process works and although he didn't use the term emotional intelligence, the implicit connection can be made,

By intuition alone, and a sensibility that does not submit easily to formulas, artists and writers know how to evoke emotional and aesthetic response.

Adding one artifice to another, obedient to the dictum *ars est celare artum*, it is art to conceal art, they steer us away from explanations of their productions. (p. 222)

Not only does the culture of the college in this study include open dialogue about the role failure plays in the functioning of the college, there are also discussions about learning from failure. Dr. Seeker's willingness to expose his capacity to learn sends a powerful message to individuals. Inherent in the process that respects open discussions is a high level of trust.

The process at FKCC is one of collaborative leadership. A salient lesson I learned from the research was that the subtle and graceful dance between the president, the college, and the community that I was privileged to witness was real. It was not an exception to the rule, but rather the way in which everyone expected business to be conducted. The president of FKCC identifies with the staff, faculty and students. The manner in which he considers himself to be one of them seems to penetrate the shield between any expected disparities in status. The close affiliation that is engendered by Dr. Seeker with his

college community sets in motion an environment where trust is not only the order of the day but is so much a part of the culture that it pervades every decision.

Leader as Constructivist

In an effort to understand how the culture of FKCC was constructed, an interesting philosophical question arose. Which factors influenced the steady and upward evolution of this small island community college? Did the events impact the leader or did the leader influence how the events were handled?

Bill Seeker expanded the role of the president at FKCC by giving priority to the construction of a positive and productive culture. Dr. Seeker understood from the beginning that the college possessed layers of valuable resources, tangible and intangible. Although a keen eye was riveted toward the physical growth of the campuses, equal attention was paid to the individuals at FKCC. Dr. Seeker seemed to understand that the driving force behind the institution was the building of human capital.

As noted in the literature review, the symbolic frame of leadership focuses on the attachment of meaning by leaders, as they examine values and beliefs (Bolman & Deal,

1984). In that leaders must create their version of exemplary leadership in order to distill and communicate the benchmarks entailed in meeting this goal, leaders who are comfortable with reality construction are ideally suited to serve as role models for future leaders. By examining the symbolic meanings of the complex variables within a college setting, the leader establishes a foundation from which to relate, assist, and ultimately leave a lasting influence (Clark, 1970).

Whether Dr. Seeker is focused on fundraising in Tallahassee or developing relationships with his local Board of Trustees, it is not a passive act and certainly not an accident. The paradoxical interpretation of Dr. Seeker as both a caring individual and an astute politician point to his ability to focus on constructing relationships. A leader who is constructing meaning also enlists others in supporting that version of reality. To wear power in an obtrusive manner would preclude and prevent the process of engagement. This gets to the heart of constructivism.

Warren Bennis (1989) terms the leadership ability depicted by Dr. Seeker, congruity or authenticity-the sense

of being comfortable with oneself. Some might go so far as to suggest that this is a component of character. It includes being consistent, presenting the same demeanor at work as one does at home. Ken Wilbur (1995) explains this phenomenon another way by suggested that there is an invisible world of emotions and symbols that paves the way for an understanding of the world. The uncanny ability to see, interpret, and connect a dilemma to a larger arena of symbolism enables Doc to visualize a negotiable hope for a positive resolution.

A Full Range Leader

In all of the years I've been in the company of Dr. Seeker, I've never heard him use the term transformational. He would, I presume, find it ostentatious. Accounts from respondents never referred directly to the process or leadership approach at FKCC as transformational leadership. Respondents, by and large, in reading the final draft as part of the triangulation process revealed that the president and his leadership function was such that it managed to harness an incredible force for good among employees at FKCC and the larger community. Bennis and Nanus described this ability accordingly, "In short, an

essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization" (1985, p. 39).

One definition of transformational leadership entails taking into account the followers' personal and human needs (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Leaders engaged in transformational leadership are able to manage attention as they convince others of the merit and value of the commitment they hold (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996).

Dr. Seeker leads in such a way that he asks for superior judgment from his employees and doesn't feel awkward about extending that request to include sacrifices when appropriate. This very process of joint ownership instills notable effort from followers as manifested in their core values and behavior toward their work. This leader taps into a deep reserve of energy to inculcate ownership, and he operated within this frame comfortably. The process of leadership for Dr. Seeker involved a focused action, which included continued skill development, a high degree of delegation, and encouraging followers to be leaders.

Respondents recounted stories and events to illustrate

the college environment as supportive and highly effective. Recollections of voluntary pay reductions in order to decrease the likelihood of employee layoffs, not once but twice, tales of collectively overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds (early years) and a yearning by respondents to celebrate his tenure suggest a step beyond transactional leadership. Ashkanasy, Hartel, and Zerbe (2000) suggest that when followers describe their leaders with dramatic and positive descriptors, they obviously feel an attachment to them.

When it was discovered that FKCC's main campus was rapidly deteriorating due to structural damage, there was an accompanying heightened concern for safety. This juncture in the history of FKCC again demonstrated the high level of trust constituents had in their president. Dr. Seeker assembled the necessary structural assessments that revealed a need for demolishing the old campus and rebuilding the campus. The political clout necessary to rebuild FKCC took years of relationship building. The president and college constituency committed to being highly visible in the state capitol with fellow colleagues and legislators. Similarly the college's lobbying efforts

had increased in strength and focus as employees seized opportunities to align themselves with the association formed to provide advocacy for community colleges statewide, the Florida Association for Community Colleges. The legislature could not refuse to fund the rebuilding of FKCC.

The recursive and dynamic nature of qualitative inquiry emerged as I found myself revisiting the literature review in order to refine the leadership essence of this presidency. Drawn back to the literature on transformational leadership, I discovered a model created by Bass and Avolio (1994) that includes dimensions of transformational leadership, transactional leadership and constructive transaction. Bass and Avolio refer to this model as *full range of leadership*. It encompasses the four components inherent in transformational leadership (idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration). The full range of leadership model also includes the constructive transaction of the leader, active management by exception (providing continual and immediate feedback and criticism), and passive management by

exception (intervening after a problem has surfaced). The full range of leadership model depicts the added value of the constructive nature of leadership and the practical significance of transactional leadership in the equation. Dr. Seeker's presidency provides an example of this leadership model.

Researcher's Journey

The introduction to my study begins with the idealistic proposition that, an inherent characteristic of America's democracy is the belief that individuals who truly want to achieve success can find a venue to do just that. An underlying assumption, which reinforced this belief, was the transformational effect the community college had upon my life. Unwittingly, I had generalized this experience into the belief that every student would have a similar experience at a community college.

What I came to see over the course of the research process was that the small size of Florida Keys Community College distinguished it from other community colleges in ways that both impacted my learning experience as a student, and impacted the leadership dynamics of the

presidency as well. Key informants repeatedly reinforced my discovery that the small size of the community college had more to do with the nature of the learning process I had encountered and the leadership style I was attempting to understand. The metaphor of family existed not simply as an abstract, theoretical construct but is a workable model for this small and intimate environment.

At the end of each interview, I asked one final question: "Is there a question you would have liked me to ask?" Responses echoed such similar sentiments that I once again revisited what the research process meant to them and subsequently to me. A response that a long time resident of the community shared that I will never forget was, "I never quite thought about leadership in such depth." I believe this sentiment reveals a great deal about the experience and the value derived from weaving individual interpretations on matters of significant interest into a connected narrative.

The interview process served as a platform for analyzing constructs and daily nuances in a powerful way. As each juncture brought me closer to finding a way to frame the presidency, I began to see the circular nature of

this thing called inquiry. With each finished interview and with each follow-up session, more questions emerged than were answered. An example of this occurred as one respondent phoned after a particularly lengthy session (3 hours) with a list of questions he considered valuable in the college's approaching presidential search process.

Although the study detailed intimate accounts of the college, the presidency and the many details surrounding the day to day operations, I began to view the study as a vehicle that offered windows in time to dive below the surface and get to what Eisner called, "that most enigmatic aspect of the human condition: the construction of meaning" (p. 39). What was once relegated to private conversations about Dr. Seeker's presidency and what we might learn from it, became a legitimate forum for study. Denzin and Lincoln phrase it aptly,

We care less about our objectivity as scientists than we do about providing our readers with some propositional, tacit, intuitive, emotional, historical, poetic and empathetic experience of the other via the texts we write. (1998, p.582)

Implications for Future Research

A recommendation is that future studies be conducted on leaders of community colleges to build the knowledge base on this illusive and treasured aspect of higher education leadership in the 21st Century. Understandably, researchers tend to target specific leaders in order to learn about the many dimensions of leadership. A strand of sentiment that emerged from this study was that the leader's actions were so interwoven with the many constituencies of the college that the study essentially was as much about them as the president.

Perhaps this strand speaks to the fluid nature of a democratically governed institution more than the subject of the research. Although my focus was on the presidency, a larger focus would have looked at the whole community college community rather than focusing primarily on the presidency. Ironically, I would encourage researchers to target leadership as the topic and not confine the examination exclusively to leaders.

Although the focus of my study was the presidency as viewed through the eyes of policy makers, both internal and external, a focus involving the perceptions of the student

would have proven insightful. In that qualitative inquiry gives voice to those who have not previously been heard, the student perspective deserves further study.

Another recommendation is that policy makers of community colleges build in a process of formal reflection before searching for a new president. Such a process would necessarily include examining history and determining the vision for the college in order to initiate discussions about the characteristics, strengths, and values important in a new president.

Conclusions

The American economy relies heavily upon the productivity edge afforded by the ability to create vital and innovative industries. Drucker (1985) points to how dramatically community colleges influence society and industry by suggesting that the American economy can as a result of community colleges, create new career programs as industry needs change. Community colleges are ideally suited to responsively adapt to the rapid changes of the information age, while creating opportunities for personal,

professional, and career enhancement for future generations.

The realization of this mission and the success of the public community college itself, as with any other organization, hinges largely upon the president. A community college presidency impacts many constituencies. This study examined the leadership of one public community college president who has weathered the challenges of a dynamic and growing institution for 23 years. The research uncovered insights into the man and his presidency from the perspectives of those who worked with him in leading. In contributing to a better understanding of the role of the community college president, this work has achieved its purpose.

Appendix A: Letter of Explanation

March 18, 2001

April 6, 2001 (Revision Date)

Dear Participant/Key Informer:

I am conducting a qualitative case study in order to gain an understanding of the complexities of leadership within a community college setting as set against a series of critical events that have influenced a twenty year veteran community college president in making and sustaining leadership decisions. The six critical events are:

1. Dr. Seeker's tenure begins under cloud of previous presidential scandal.
2. New beginnings: Settling the turbulent waters.
3. Re-establishing the credibility of Florida Keys Community College.
4. Building partnerships/campuses.
5. Rebuilding the Campus: The William A. Seeker Campus
6. Hurricane George: A Campus Community Pulls Together

In that there is considerable agreement concerning the importance of learning how leadership emerges in colleges, the dimensions of one community college president will be examined in this study. Interviews will be conducted with key informants/participants and the primary subject, Dr. Seeker.

May I ask for your cooperation/participation by allowing face-to-face interviews and observations in work related interactions and activities?

Thank you for your willingness to participate and for your assistance in filling this form out. Your participation will be very beneficial to this study.

Sincerely,

Annabel Brooks

For Further Information regarding this study, you may contact the following:

Annabel Brooks, home (904) 810-5633, work (904) 620-2528; 127 Ferdinand Ave. St. Augustine, FL 32080; or
Dr. Joyce Jones (904) 620-2990, University of North Florida, 4567 St. Johns Bluff Road, South; Jacksonville, FL 32224



**DR. WILLIAM A. SEEKER
PRESIDENT**

February 22, 2001

Ms. Annabel Brooks
127 Ferdinand Avenue
St. Augustine, FL 32080

Dear Annabel:

I have reviewed the proposal abstract that you sent and am pleased to invite you to conduct a qualitative case study on the presidency and Florida Keys Community College. I will make every attempt to include you in informal and formal discussions, presentations, meetings and any event that may assist you in gaining the information you require.

I agree to sign a consent form reiterating the parameters of the study. Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate your research.

Please make an effort to allow for data gathering during the legislative session in Tallahassee. The political process has a significant bearing on budgetary matters at Florida Keys Community College and I believe it would be helpful for you to be present.

I look forward to helping you toward the worthy endeavor of earning a doctorate.

Sincerely,

Signature Deleted

William A. Seeker, President

KEY WEST



WILLIAM A. SEEKER CAMPUS
5901 COLLEGE ROAD - KEY WEST, FL 33040
305-296-9081

MIDDLE KEYS CENTER



P.O. BOX 501178 - 900 SOMBRERO BEACH ROAD
MARATHON, FL 33050
305-743-2133

UPPER KEYS CENTER



P.O. DRAWER 600 - 89951 U.S. HIGHWAY 1
TAVERNIER, FL 33070
305-852-8007

REQUEST FOR REVIEW BY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

2002 MAR 27 PM 4: 23
STUDENT RESEARCH

Principal Investigator: Annabel Brooks

Faculty Advisor (if student project): Dr. Joyce Thomas Jones

College/Dept.: College of Education & Human Services, Div. Of Ed. Servs.& Research

Campus Address & Phone: Building 9/1325 – 620-2990

Project Title: Constructing a presidency: The complexities of leading a public community college

Project Type: Non-funded (or student research) Externally Funded Research

Supporting Agency (if any) Submission Deadline: not applicable

Dated Submitted to DSR for Review: March 23, 2001 Project Termination Date: August, 2001

Type Review Requested: Exempt/Category # X Expedited/Category # Full IRB

IRB USE:

Type of Review: Same as Requested Other than Requested (Type)

Subjects at Risk: Yes No Minimal

If yes, potential benefits justify proceedings Yes No

Informed Consent Required: Yes No If yes, forms approved: Yes No

Modifications Required See attached with modification

Second Review Needed: Yes No

1st Review By: Signature Deleted 3/28/01 (signature and date)

Approved Conditionally Approved, Pending Modifications Referred to Full IRB

2nd Review By: _____ (signature and date)

Approved Conditionally Approved, Pending Modifications Referred to Full IRB

Right to Appeal: Make appointment with Vice President for Academic Affairs

DSRT USE:

Notices Sent:

Informed Consent Forms Received: _____ File Close:

Request Form (continued)

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