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STRATEGIC DECISION MAKING IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
AN EXPLORATION OF ISSUES RELEVANT TO DECISION MAKING TO CONFER
COMMUNITY COLLEGE BACCALAUREATE DEGREES

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
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IN

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Charles W. Currier

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Dissertation Chair   Rebecca S. Lake, EdD

Dissertation Committee   Rebecca S. Lake, EdD

Dennis K. Haynes, PhD

Sunil Chand, PhD

Date of Final Approval Meeting March 30, 2012

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

Signature	Date
Rebecca S. Lake	March 30, 2012
Dennis K Haynes	March 30, 2012
Sunil Chand	March 30, 2012

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my extended family whose support has carried me through. The long hours and missed events together have been a sacrifice for us all.

To my parents and grandparents, you have grounded me and aroused in me an insatiable inquisitive nature. Thank you! To my children, Marisa, Emily and Andrew, who encourage and inspire me. You make me proud every day. Most importantly to my wife Mary, who has given me the most through this journey. I love you. Your belief in me, encouragement, and reality checks have kept me on track. Together we are capable of so much.

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This dissertation topic was inspired by the many people I encountered and shared perspectives with in my journeys before joining the community college ranks. It is apparent to me that the continued advancement of knowledge is the only economic sustainable advantage left. I believe there is no dodging the reality the vibrancy of the United States is at risk unless we build new and engaging structures to foster and sustain a highly knowledgeable and skilled populace.

A dissertation involves a host of people but only one places their name on the title page. I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the many contributions that were made on my behalf. First, thank you to the participants who gave generously of their time and perspectives. It is you and your colleges I set out to represent.

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study explores the process community college senior administrators employ when assessing the complex strategic decision to confer community college baccalaureate degrees. Strategic opportunities, such as conferring baccalaureate degrees, occur infrequently thus community college leaders must be prepared to act quickly and judiciously. There is limited information available regarding the method community colleges use in this or any complex decision regarding new strategic opportunities.

Five community colleges which undertook this complex decision were selected from around the country: three that are and two that are not conferring baccalaureate degrees. Purposeful sampling was employed for site selection utilizing maximum variation of geography and urban setting. Senior administrators at each site involved in the decision completed an initial survey providing demographic information followed by a face-to-face interview. All five participants completed a second survey, developed from the coding of interview data which ranked the relevance of decision factors.   The conceptual framework of this study consisted of John Levin's (2001) four domains of influence within the construct of globalization (political, cultural, economic and technology). Strategic planning offered a second lens through which the research was examined.

The findings reveal these emergent strategic opportunities are not included in the college's strategic plan. Community college leaders take on these complex strategic decisions without a formal plan or process.   As a result some things are missed, wasting time and causing problems later.   The president's approval was the key to engaging in a decision process which is

costly and time consuming using countless college resources. Trustees, communities and

program quality were perceived by the participants to highly influence the final decision.

The Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decision Making deconstructs the decision

process, provides action steps for a standardized process to assist with the unfamiliar territory.

The model's terminal gates permit the process to end expeditiously when evaluations dictate and

provide guidance on pre-determined exit strategies. The model is accompanied by a decision

checklist which ensures all the facets of the decision are covered.

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INTRODUCTION

Background and Study Context

History is littered with examples of organizational initiatives which ended in catastrophic failure as a result of an organization overlooking crucial decision elements. Community colleges are not immune to this phenomenon, yet community colleges must remain nimble and responsive to the needs of their stakeholders during these challenging times. Adoption of an analytical approach is essential for community college leaders to map likely consequences of decisions and to discover the importance of individual factors leading to a decisive course of action.

One such complex decision undertaken by leaders of a few community colleges is whether to confer community college baccalaureate degrees. These community colleges leaders, dispersed across the nation, have navigated through a decision process deciding whether to pursue the ground-breaking community college baccalaureate. Providing insights and an understanding of the critical elements considered by these college leaders as they embarked on this journey can assist others as they consider this difficult endeavor.

The consideration of community college baccalaureate degrees is being driven by internal and external influences. Externally, the global and knowledge based business environment is necessitating a better educated workforce. Public and governmental policy is reflective of the need to elevate the educational attainment of the populace to meet the demands of the knowledge economy. Internally, the community college is being driven by its core mission to serve the educational demands of the community through affordable and convenient educational

alternatives. As this is a current decision, all of these forces are situated within the context of the global, national and local economic recession which influences the outcome.

Two external inextricably linked components are the main drivers for many community colleges exploring the decision to confer baccalaureate degrees: business and industry demands and government policy. The United States workforce needs have become much more reflective of knowledge economy. Businesses in the twenty-first century demand a more educated and knowledgeable workforce able to critically think and adapt to situations as they arise. Therefore, the business climate and the economy continue to require ever greater levels of educational attainment for its workforce. By some accounts, the workforce must be educated today for jobs that are yet to be conceived. Outsourcing has taken many low skill level jobs to countries where cheap labor is available. The jobs that remain generally require higher level skill sets and cognitive abilities. The net effect is that displaced workers have returned to the community college in large numbers to seek educational retooling by enrolling in courses or programs to advance their changing careers.

National and state governmental policy ultimately enhances or limits the community college's ability to confer baccalaureate degrees. Governmental economic and educational policies at all levels are focusing concerted efforts on the training, re-training and the education of displaced workers as well as working individuals. President Obama (2009) has charged Americans to substantially increase the number of college graduates over the next ten years as a response to the United States graduate ranking falling behind other countries in the world. Implementation of new government policies commits resources toward this goal. President Obama committed billions of federal dollars to community colleges over the next ten years to

increase college degree attainment. This commitment results in most states and the federal government funding workforce development initiatives through a variety of workforce development grants and initiatives.

Community colleges are a place of opportunity with a wide range of educational programming designed to meet the needs of the local community stakeholders. With open access, affordability and community service at the heart of their mission, community colleges provide a myriad of educational opportunities for a diverse population of students. Since their inception in the early 1900s, community colleges consistently demonstrate their willingness to be nimble and responsive in creatively serving the educational demands of their communities. In the beginning, community colleges were intended to provide open access for high school graduates preparing those students for entrance into four-year colleges and universities. As the number of high school graduates grew and began to seek post-secondary education opportunities in the latter half of the twentieth century, a reciprocal growth in the number of community colleges occurred. Given the dramatic changes in technology, global economies, and population migrations, it is not surprising, that their universal mission continues to evolve in order to serve its stakeholders.

In the 1960's and 1970's community colleges expanded their career and technical programs to meet the growing need for an "educated, prepared, adaptable and competitive workforce" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2010, para. 3). In the 1980's, community colleges expanded their offerings of developmental education in response to the Bilingual Education Act and the growing need for English as a Second Language (ESL). Throughout the 1990's, community colleges began to collaborate with four-year institutions to

fashion a variety of creative pathways for students to matriculate to four-year institutions. At this time, community colleges also pursued dual enrollment and dual credit initiatives with high schools which provide "positive outcomes on such measures as high school graduation and college enrollment rates, college grade point averages and progress toward college completion" (Redden, 2007, para. 1).

The comprehensive community college delivers five primary educational offerings including: liberal arts transfer courses and degrees, career and technical certificates and degrees, developmental and remedial education, community service and continuing education courses and business and industry customized training. Today there are 1,173 community colleges in the United States which enroll over 60 percent of all college students (AACC website, 2010). In addition to the increased enrollment in community colleges, there has been a shift in student demographics. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), enrollment growth in community colleges can be attributed to attendance of older students, a rise in part-time attendance, high attendance of low-ability students, minorities and women. With more students 25 – 40 years of age enrolled at community colleges who are working, have family obligations, and are dealing with the effects of an economy in recession, it is no wonder convenience and affordability are key considerations in their desire to obtain a baccalaureate degree.

Mirroring the external elements motivating the decision of community colleges to confer baccalaureate degrees are two main internal drivers: evolvement of the community college mission and student demand for a convenient pathway leading to baccalaureate degree attainment. Community colleges are acknowledging their students requirement for local affordable pathways to the baccalaureate degree. Responding to this requirement, some

community college missions are evolving to fulfill this rising need through conferring

community college baccalaureate degrees. Seeking to fulfill the educational needs for their

stakeholders and communities, it is essential for leaders to allocate resources efficiently and to

make well informed decisions which can alter their institution's programs and services.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors

that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

Guiding Questions

The Guiding Questions arising from the purpose of the study are as follows:

1. What catalysts induce community colleges to revisit their mission priorities to investigate conferring baccalaureate degree(s)?

2. What issues are identified as crucial to the decision pursuant to offering a baccalaureate degree?

3. Does the prominence of specific factors influence the outcome of the decision to offer a baccalaureate degree?

4. How and in what ways is the decision process undertaken in community colleges considering conferring baccalaureate degrees?

Significance of the Study

Community colleges continually change their programs and services to be more

responsive to the needs of their students, stakeholders and the community. Each evolutionary

change requires a significant investment of time, energy and resources as leaders must diligently

attend to the requirements of state boards of higher education, regional accrediting agencies, the

Department of Education and their own governing boards.

Over the past decade, a few community colleges have evolved in an unexpected direction; conferring baccalaureate degrees. The conferring of baccalaureate degrees by community colleges is a complex undertaking with many factors to be considered and weighed. As more community colleges consider whether or not to pursue this new direction to their mission, administrators are pressed to make the "right decision."   Understanding the issues, pertinent data as well as tangible and non-tangible factors required to make such a difficult complex decision can facilitate the process undertaken by others contemplating a similar decision. Sharing of these factors and insights gleaned by those community colleges that have investigated conferring community college baccalaureate degrees can be of great benefit to others contemplating this decision.

The findings of this exploratory study will be valuable to those community college leaders charged with evaluating whether or not to offer the baccalaureate option. Understanding the elements considered by those community colleges that have already undertaken the process and reached a decision will reduce the risk of overlooking salient factors and/or provide insights which can aid in improving the decision process and outcome. This study will also be of interest to community college governing boards who will be asked to approve recommendations from the college regarding whether or not to confer baccalaureate degrees. Having the benefit of previous decision processes and the assessment of that process enables both administrators and trustees to more effectively consider the appropriateness of such a complex decision for their college.

Brief Literature Review

The literature review conducted is designed to situate the research by providing background on the environment in which community college leaders operate and to provide a

conceptual frame of reference. Assisting to situate the research are the three forces of global business and the economy, governmental policy, and the community college mission. The conceptual framework, or lens, through which the research will be viewed and the data gathered analyzed include the four domains of globalization as defined by Levin (2001) and the concept of strategic planning.

Global Business and Economy

Peter Drucker (1969) in his book *Age of Discontinuity* identified the shift in the U.S. economy from that of the industrial economy to the knowledge economy. The knowledge economy is also referred to as the information economy with these two terms used by some interchangeably. Each major shift in the U.S. economy has come with a concomitant shift in the requisite level of general education in the workforce. This resultant rise in education of the workforce provides businesses today's most valuable asset, intellectual capital.

Globalization has increased the economic pressure on the United States and accelerated the shift of jobs reflective of the knowledge economy. Intellectual capital, though an intangible company asset, is recognized as more important than physical capital (plant, equipment and raw materials) and financial capital. In order to maintain its economic leadership in the knowledge economy, businesses in the United States need access to college level educated workforce (National Center on Education and the Economy, 2007).

Saturation of information technology into the work activities is a leading dynamic creating need for greater levels of post-secondary education in the workforce. The ubiquity of technology in the workplace demands a level of computer and information literacy that was not

present in the predominance of jobs in the last century. According to Carnevale, Smith and Strohl (2010)

> In the 19th and 20th centuries, electricity and the internal combustion engine drove the rise of manufacturing and America's shift away from an agrarian economy. Today, computers and related inventions are driving the information revolution and transforming the U.S. economic landscape once again. And, just as the industrial revolution was critical to building a mass K–12 education system to feed workers into the manufacturing industries, the information revolution is spurring the development of a mass postsecondary system to fill the needs of sophisticated new industries (p. 15)

With job demand over the next decade concentrated in growth industries, post-secondary education is increasingly a condition of employment (Carnevale, 2008). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009) four of the five top growth industries in the decade will be in areas of (a) healthcare, (b) management, (c) scientific and technical consulting services and (d) computer systems and related services. The Bureau also indicates that eight of the ten industries expected to have the greatest wage increase require employees with a college education.

Community colleges are not immune to the changes in the business and economy. The local business environment influences the programs and educational offerings as community colleges adjust to the needs of those living in the community. This research will explore how community colleges incorporate external forces in their decision making process as they strive to meet their missions.

Government Policy

Public community colleges are a product of public policy and intentional legislative action (Baker, Dudziak & Tyler, 1994). Most public community colleges are formed as units of local and/or state government. As such they are, in a general manner, organized to meet the

policy objectives of the state and local communities. Levin (2001) identified five specific areas in which government policy influences and regulates community colleges: (a) goals and purpose, (b) values and norms, (c) programs, (d) budget and (d) resources.

Significant issues at the local, state and national level precipitate regulatory, legislative and/or administrative policies that are initiators of change in the community college. According to Levin (2001) community colleges are either facilitated or impeded by government policy objectives. A recent example in the national spot light is the United States decline in world ranking as a percentage of population with postsecondary degrees (The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, 2005). The tumble in ranking prompted President Obama to announce the Graduation Initiative.

> Now is the time to build a firmer, stronger foundation for growth that will not only withstand future economic storms, but one that helps us thrive and compete in a global economy. It's time to reform our community colleges so that they provide Americans of all ages a chance to learn the skills and knowledge necessary to compete for the jobs of the future (Obama, 2009, para. 6)

This national education and economic policy initiative, designed to accelerate college degree completion in the United States, commits federal resources to increase community college degree attainment by 5 million degrees by 2018. In turn, this emphasis on obtaining college degrees influences the activities of local community colleges.

For example, the growing shortage of qualified teachers in Florida triggered the state legislature to approve the formation of baccalaureate degree programs at the state community colleges. Some community colleges embraced the new found authority and quickly developed baccalaureate programs to meet the state mandate while others chose not to pursue the option.

Governmental policy will continue to be a driving force in the evolution of community college baccalaureate programs. While national policy holds the potential to reallocate financial resources, the states will continue to have the greater influence on the community colleges as most public community colleges are authorized and governed by administrative rules and regulations at the state and local level. Government objectives are implemented through policy and regulation that determines what community colleges can and cannot do. This study will investigate how and in what ways the decision to confer baccalaureate degrees was influenced by the current local, state and federal policies.

Mission

The universal mission of the contemporary community college generally includes three identifying elements of (a) open access, (b) affordability and (c) serving the needs of the community. In fulfilling this mission to the community, community colleges have become more comprehensive in their programs and services to match the unique needs of their constituents. According to Cohen and Brawer (2003) community colleges "were to serve the people with whatever the people wanted" (p. 29).

A central academic mission of the community college from its inception is providing the first two years leading to transfer to a university for the baccalaureate degree (Townsend & Bragg, 2006). Matriculation to the four-year institution was facilitated by a cooperative approach between the community college and the four-year institution that jointly developed articulation agreements to facilitate the student transfer to pursue baccalaureate degrees. Articulation policies and agreements attempt to assure acceptance of community college earned

credits by four-year institutions. In each of these agreements, the four-year institution confers the baccalaureate degree.

Some universities deliver their instruction on the community college campus. Sites on community college campuses where students take university courses may be dedicated or shared space and vary in size but are generally known as University-centers. But not every community college has university partners willing to deliver baccalaureate instruction on the community college campus. Other community colleges may have university partners who provide only a limited number of degree programs.

Over the last 10 years, critical workforce needs have driven some community colleges to pursue conferring baccalaureate degrees. Some of those colleges that considered the option have received authorization and have been accredited. In Florida, community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees were required by accrediting agencies to change their name to reflect the change in degree programs (Fanelli, 2007). Community colleges play a significant role in providing post-secondary education in the United States with over half of college students enrolled at community colleges (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). With student persistence to baccalaureate completion a current issue, it would follow that community colleges have a significant role to play in increasing baccalaureate attainment.

Community college students, like other consumers of goods and services, are often motivated by convenience. Busy schedules, work, and family obligations are often at the root of the motivation. The convenience of having baccalaureate degrees on the community college campus would encourage students to persist to completion of four-year degrees.

As they have for the last century, community colleges have and will continue to evolve their mission and their program offerings to meet the demands of the local community. To accomplish the transformation, leaders will need to navigate the decision process effectively. This study will provide insights and information on this process unique to this situation.

<div align="center">**Conceptual Framework of the Study**</div>

The research surrounding baccalaureate-awarding community colleges is limited. Because of the complexity of this research topic, appropriate complementary theories and concepts are needed in which to position the research and serve to analyze the data. A conceptual framework with the flexibility to address the interrelationship of internal and external forces identified as fundamental to community colleges decision to confer baccalaureate degrees was crafted. Therefore, the four domains of influence identified by John Levin (2001) in his book *Globalizing the Community College* and strategic planning were selected as elements of the conceptual framework for this study.

Levin's Four Domains of Decision Influence

Levin's (2001) four domains of global influence are (a) economic, (b) cultural, (c) information/technology and (d) political. They serve as a wide lens in which to situate the research as well as a construct of key considerations in decision making providing a structure for classifying and analyzing the factors evaluated in the decision to confer baccalaureate degrees. These considerations within the four domains can expose the nature and importance of decision factors. Each of Levin's domains encompass a key dimension to be considered in decision making.

In the economic domain, the effect of financial policy dictates the opportunities available to the community college. Levin (2001) identified several key institutional behaviors in the economic domain appropriate to this study including marketization, productivity, restructuring, and state intervention. The typical community college operates on five primary income sources: tuition, local tax revenues, state funding, federal funding and sales and services sources (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Overall funding is a significant topic in these economic times. Being responsive to the community market place (marketization) fosters important revenue growth to partially offset declining governmental funding. A second response to budget challenges by community colleges is to look at productivity improvements and restructuring as pathways to meeting demands. While states are abandoning their roles as a principal resource provider, the states are seen as increasing their control of community college operations (Levin, 2001).

As part of the cultural domain Levin (2001) identifies the shift in community college administration to a managerial or business style. Partially driven by economic realities, this shift is in contrast to traditional cultures of higher education. The role of culture in decision making lies with the agendas of the participants. If the core agenda of the involved parties is at odds, the successful implementation of a decision is at risk. Therefore, administrators need to anticipate the role culture plays in proposing dramatically different policy.

"The production, dissemination, and management of information are the essential behaviors" (Levin, 2001, p. 81) in the information domain. Effective policy decision making is highly reliant on the accumulation and assessment of information making the information

domain a critical element of the decision process. The active transmission of information to

stakeholders provides a necessary foundation on which to embrace the decision.

Technology is embedded in the information domain. In today's highly technical

environment, information management is inextricably intertwined in the physical technology.

Therefore, the role of information technology must be considered in tandem with the information

to be managed and communicated.

The political domain is characterized by collective decision making in the establishment

of policy. Alignment between federal, state, local and college goals has consequences in the

decision process. Politics influence behaviors both inside and outside the college organization

(Levin, 2001). Since the nature and severity of political alignment impacts the decision this

needs to be given adequate consideration.

Strategic Planning

First appearing under the nomenclature of long-term planning, strategic planning

originally appeared in the context of business as a methodology to help businesses maximize

value assuring a sustainable operation (Steiner, 1979). Conceptually, strategic planning is a

process undertaken by an organization to optimize the allocation of scarce resources to reach

desired objectives. A variety of planning models and techniques have been employed across

higher education many of which are based on an open systems thinking (Toma, 2010). Some of

the most well-known techniques consider internal capabilities (strengths and weaknesses) and

external influences (threats and opportunities) Martinez and Wolverton (2009).

Strategic plans provide a forward looking perspective designed to illuminate pathways to

reach desired objectives based on current environmental conditions and organizational

capability. Providing a logical systematic approach, community college leaders rely on strategic

plans to guide the development, operational, and financial plans for their colleges.

Taken together this multi-faceted conceptual framework offers a comprehensive lens for

reviewing the results of this research. It will assist in teasing out themes and patterns in the data

that will clarify the decision process, critical decision elements, and factors in the process.

Research Design

This section provides an overview of the research design and the methodology. The

research design provides a structured, logical and systematic approach to the research (Leedy &

Ormrod, 2010; Creswell, 2007). This structured plan is critical to define the course of action

through which research proceeds. It is important for the design to be clear and concise to

maintain the credibility of the research. The design is developed to meet the unique needs of the

research to be conducted (Polkinghorne, 1983).

Qualitative Inquiry

This study is a qualitative inquiry utilizing case study methodology situated in the

interpretive paradigm. This approach was selected as the community college baccalaureate is an

emergent topic and not much is known about the decision making process. Qualitative research

is appropriate for developing topics when seeking deep understanding of participant's

perspective through a wide lens. Qualitative research is naturalist approach, multi-method

focused, applying an interpretive paradigm to the subject matter (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

As a process, qualitative inquiry places the emphasis on examining the topic through an

established set of procedures set by the researcher. It attempts to identify principles that operate

in many systemic contexts. According to Merriam (2002) "the key to understanding qualitative

research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (p. 3). The researcher is concerned with the participant perspective and how people make sense of the experiences related to the research topic.

Site visits or fieldwork is a key component of interacting with the participants and experiences the natural setting. Gathering evidence in the natural setting provides the researcher a contextual and situational perspective (Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007). In a naturalistic inquiry, there is no manipulation of variables. The research centers on gathering of data which seeks to describe and reveal an understanding of the study topic.

Qualitative research collects data and information through interactions such as observations and interviews. Interviews and the information and insights garnered allow the study participants to share their perspectives, experiences, and beliefs. This is essential in order to provide a full sense of the meanings these participants give to the experience under study.

In the qualitative research, it is the researcher which is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Knowledge is filtered and constructed through social constructs such as language, consciousness and shared meaning (Klein & Myers, 1999). The researcher is a key instrument of the interpretive research paradigm. The views, experience and background held by the researcher creates a unique understanding and interpretation of the gathered data.

Case Study Methodology

This research is a bounded single case study. The study is bound by the purpose of the study, the sites, participants and geographic distribution. Case study was the best qualitative research method for this study given the research purpose, guiding questions, and the need for multiple data sources (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). According to Merriam (1988), "A case study

is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit"
(p. 21). Of particular application to this study, Merriam (1998) contends the case study design is
of specific use when studying educational innovations.

Site and participant selection.

The site and participant selections were done using a purposeful sampling strategy
selecting six United States community colleges. Study participants consist of six senior
administrators, one from each of the six community college sites, who were significantly
involved in the decision process. Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique
where participants are selected for their specific characteristics (Creswell, 2007; Johnson &
Christensen, 2008; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Employing purposeful sampling for this study
assures sufficient participation given the relatively small pool of community colleges that have
gone through the decision process but can provide rich, thick data regarding information
pertinent to the purpose of the study. Study participants from the respective sites to be
interviewed will be senior administrators involved in the decision process. To assist with the site
selection process, national experts in the field with knowledge of those community colleges that
went through the decision process to consider conferring the community college baccalaureate
degree recommended possible study participants.

The selection process employed a maximum variation protocol. The sites consisted of six
community colleges who had evaluated conferring community college baccalaureate degrees in
the last three years: three that decided to confer baccalaureate degrees and three that decided not
to confer baccalaureate degrees. Using the Carnegie Classification, colleges were selected so

that there was one each urban, suburban and rural college in the group that decided to, and one of each in the group of colleges that decided not to confer the baccalaureate degree.

Data collection methods.

Case studies rely on data collection from a variety of sources to provide the breadth necessary for a valid analysis. At least six sources of evidence exist in case studies; documents, archival records, interviews, direct observations (field notes), participant observations and physical artifacts (Stake, 2004; Yin, 2003). Data collection methods to be used in order to gather relevant data for this study include the following: (a) semi-structured interviews, (b) documents, (c) field notes and (d) surveys.

The aim of semi-structured interviews is to have the participants "open up" and let them express themselves in their own terms. According to Johnson and Christensen (2008), semi-structured interviews are conversational and allow follow-up or probing questions during the interview process.

Participants were asked to share pertinent documents. These documents included correspondence, planning documents, meeting materials, and other records relevant to their decision process.

Field notes were generated by the researcher throughout the research process. There are two components to field notes: observational and reflective. These notes are included in the data collection inventory. The observational component provides a description serving as a detailed reminder of the interview process. The reflective component entails notes and reflections engendered throughout the data collection and analysis process.

Two survey instruments were used in this study in a sequential fashion. Both surveys were administered to all selected participants using the online survey tool Survey Monkey. The first survey is the Research Participant survey. The Research Participant survey collected basic information about the participant and the community college (site) and was administered before the interview. The second survey, the Factors Relevance survey, was developed from data gathered from interviews, documents and field notes. The Factors Relevance survey collected data on the participants' perceptions of the relative importance of each decision factor based on a Likert ranking from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (critically important). It was administered to the participants after the analysis of the data collected was completed.

Data Analysis

The conceptual framework of Levin (2001) four domains of influence (political, economic, culture and technology) and strategic planning were used to analyze the data. Coding and categorizing of the information and data analysis lead to discovery of themes and patterns. In addition, descriptive statistics were used with the Factor Relevance survey to describe the basic features of the data obtained. Information gained will be simple summaries together with simple graphics analysis describing what is or what the data shows.

Definition of Terms

Terms can carry different meanings in different contexts or even in the same context where emerging concepts have yet to be ratified with a single meaning. To assure consistency and enhance understanding, terms crucial to the study are defined below.

Articulation Model – Formal articulation agreements between community college and four-year institution to facilitate credit transfer, university confers degrees (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005)

Community College Baccalaureate (CCB) - Community college confers baccalaureate degree. This may take any number of forms including AB (Applied Baccalaureate), CCB (*community college baccalaureate*). (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005)

Dual Credit – Dual credit courses enable high school students to take college-level courses, typically taught within the high school, earning them college credit before graduating from high school. Dual credit meaning students are taking college-level course work and securing credit at both the high school and college level simultaneously. Often dual credit courses are administered by community colleges in partnership with secondary schools (Bragg & Kim, 2010).

Dual Enrollment - Dual enrollment courses enable high school students to take college-level courses, earning them college credit before graduating from high school. Dual enrollment does not necessarily translate into credit (Brag & Kim, 2010).

Intellectual Capital - Knowledge and application of that knowledge to activities of value to an organization (Woods & Cortada, 2000).

Place-Bound Student – Student who has a perceived difficulty in leaving the immediate geographic area to attend school (Shields, 2004).

University Center - There is no single definition of University Center but the most common usage is defined as concurrent use campuses, university confers degrees (Floyd, Skolnik & Walker, 2005).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the background and contextual setting for the research problem. Flowing from the background is the research purpose and guiding questions which channel the study. A brief literature review serves to expose the relevant theories and concepts which operate to provide a contextual framework through which the study will be viewed. Lastly, Chapter 1 presents a list of applicable terms and their definitions which should provide greater clarity to the research.

Chapter 2 furnishes a review of the relevant literature which serves as the framework to situate the study and analyze the findings. The literature review includes: (a) historical perspective of the community college, (b) the global knowledge economy, (c) emerging pathways to baccalaureate degrees for community college students and (d) strategic planning. The conceptual themes that provide the framework for this study were the *a priori* themes of Levin's (2001) four domains of globalization and strategic planning.

Chapter 3 details the rationale for the research design, which is a qualitative case study situated in the interpretive paradigm. The methodology is presented as a sequential multi-method research using maximum variation techniques for selection of study sites. Participants from the six sites are senior administrators who participated in the community college baccalaureate decision for their college. Trustworthiness of the study is examined and detailed including the concepts of confirmability, credibility, transferability and dependability. Two limitations to the study are noted as well as how they are addressed. A detailed overview of the ethical considerations pertinent to the study is included. Finally, specifics are offered on the researcher as an instrument which highlights the relevant experiences the researcher brings to the study.

Chapter 4 describes the study's six data collection components which comprise the multi-method approach. The six data collection components are: (1) site and participant selection protocol; (2) participant demographic and data survey findings; (3) national travel for face-to-face participant interviews; (4) review of relevant information gathered from participant college archival documents; (5) results from Factors Relevance Survey; and (6) field notes. Each component is detailed as to the data gathered and the process. Together they comprise a

research system that affords transparency and provides a breadth of resources which allows the study to triangulate information adding to the reliability of the findings.

Chapter 5 presents the findings data collected through the interviews and Factor Relevance Survey data analyzed utilizing the *a priori* themes. The findings are represented through the voice of the participants by way of participants' quotes collected through the interviews. Demographic data from the initial survey, ranking data from the Factors Relevance Survey and textual information from documents are correlated with the participants' thoughtful perspective shared in the interviews.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion and offers inferences drawn from the research findings which fulfill the purpose of the study and satisfy the guiding questions. Implications of the findings for community college leaders are detailed offering insight into how the study outcomes can be leveraged. The Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions is presented to assist community college leaders to make complex institutional decisions. Recommendations for future research are presented for consideration offering suggestion for future research topics building on the findings of this research and other research related and relevant to this topic.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Whether to offer community college baccalaureates is an emerging strategic decision some community colleges are facing. Exploring how colleges that have been through the analytical process to reach a decision of this magnitude can be valuable to community college leaders as they investigate if this opportunity is right for their institutions. These critical decisions can propel institutions forward or can set them back for many years; therefore, understanding what factors are involved in making such a decision is crucial.

The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the factors that influence a community college's decision surrounding the offering of baccalaureate degrees. No research in the literature was found regarding how and in what manner community college leaders make these types of critical decisions. Thus, a noteworthy gap in the literature exists which this study could start to address. The literature review provides a context for the research study through a historical perspective and explores a wide range of relevant literature associated with the purpose. Theories and concepts serving as the conceptual framework for this research are found in the disciplines of business, social science, economics, and education.

The community college baccalaureate decision process is situated in a complex web of social interactions and constructs. While some are overt, others are more subtle and nuanced. Strategic decision process can be conceptualized as having streams that traverse the open systems environment of the community college. Viewing the community college baccalaureate decision through the lens of open system theory and strategic decision process is appropriate to

this study and provides a rich context which encompasses the fullness of the complex decision environment. The interplay between internal and external streams creates a dynamic environment in which the decision process culminates.

In addition, the influences of globalization can be seen on community college campuses as programs and services are tailored to meet the realities of an evolving business environment and the needs of an ever more diverse community population. John Levin's (2001) domains of globalization define areas of emphasis in which community college baccalaureate decision factors can be positioned. The four domains also provide perspective with which to situate the study and analyze the findings.

This chapter will present (a) a historical perspective on the evolution of the community college educational mission, (b) the changing global markets and their impact on the community college, (c) the conceptual framework of Levin's four domains, (d) the current state of community college baccalaureate degrees, and (e) strategic planning process. These five themes will provide context and serve to illuminate the search for understanding the process surrounding very difficult and complex decisions undertaken by community college leaders and in particular, the baccalaureate decision in community colleges.

Community College Historical Perspective

The contemporary community college, the result of an evolving mission, is an open access, affordable two-year college with programs that include academic transfer, career and technical, developmental and continuing education. Though two year colleges had their beginnings in the early 1900s, two events were instrumental in the tremendous growth and development of community colleges in the mid-twentieth century.

Congress enacted the Servicemen's Readjustment Act – better known as the G.I. Bill of Rights near the end of WWII.   Passed in 1944, the legislation had a social bent setting the tone for open accessibility to post-secondary education for all Americans. The legislation offered four key provisions addressing education and training, home loan guaranties, loans for businesses and unemployment pay. The benefits were open to anyone who had served in the military and who had been honorably discharged.   The effect was a democratization of higher education. For the first time access was opened to all who wished access regardless of color, gender or economic status. The legislation was "a truly revolutionary proposal in an era in which colleges were considered inappropriate for the common man" (Humes, 2006, pp. 31-32).

The educational benefits were generous sparking a participation that surprised most people. Veterans accounted for 49 percent of students enrolled in American colleges and universities by 1947 (United States, 2008). The G.I. Bill created a socio-economic uplift for the American working-class. The benefits extended intergenerationally which contributed to a continued expansion in college enrollments, surpassing population growth, through the 1970's (Reed, 2001).

The second catalyst was the 1947 Truman Commission on Higher Education which called for a major expansion of educational services. Truman charged the commission with finding "ways and means of expanding educational opportunities for all able young people." The Commission's report acknowledged that the existing institutions would not adequately scale to meet the educational needs of the nation; leading to the call for creation of a large number of two-year colleges.   It was this report which recognized two-year higher education institutions primarily serve the educational needs of the local community so thus advocated the

nomenclature change from junior college to community college. The report held that open-door

access and responsiveness to community needs are the primary values of these community

colleges (Walker, 2005).

The Commission's work was broader than simply providing a call for development of

capacity in higher education.   Interestingly as early as 1947, one of the Commission's goals was

seen as enabling a diverse, multicultural society which was more internationally focused. The

Commission paid special attention to populations which are defined today as under-represented.

To that end the report called for tuition-free education in public institutions through the

fourteenth (14) grade. This may account for the variety of funding models found throughout the

country which rely on multiple sources of funding to subsidize the operations of these colleges

and which serve to minimize tuition rates. It is from these beginnings that the community

college generic mission was formed; affordable, accessible and serving the citizen in the

community in which is resides.

Together, the G.I. Bill and the Truman Commission served to foster a new US social

agenda; one in which higher education became available to a much broader population helping to

fuel the growth in the number of two-year colleges. In 1949, only 500 two-year colleges were in

existence but by 1974 that number had grown to over 1,000 colleges. According to the

American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2011) there are now 1,167 two-year

colleges in the United States. These colleges include community, technical, tribal and associate

colleges. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2009) expands that number to be

in excess of 1,600 when branch campuses are considered. A comparison of the number and type

of community colleges by the AACC is shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Number and Type of Community Colleges Designated by American Association of Community Colleges

Community college Type	Quantity
Total	1,167
Public	993
Independent	143
Tribal	31

(AACC, Fastfacts, 2011)

Since their inception, the growth of two-year institutions has been complex, characterized by periods of rapid growth and retrenchment. Dougherty (2006) points out that the impetus for growth in community colleges is multi-faceted and no one driver accounts for the entire evolution of the two-year institution. Political agendas to increase open access, and the "vocationalization" of the community college account for significant growth and changing trajectories. Flexibility is a hallmark trait of community colleges which are acknowledged for the ability to readily adapt to community by providing programs that are needed. In 1973, author and future community college president Robert Palinchak (1973) noted "those that have studied the history of the two-year college agree that this institution is still in a high state of evolution" (p. 5). Forty years later, two-year colleges continue to be lauded for their ability to quickly adapt to community educational needs. Despite the ceaseless debate over mission, community colleges will continue to adjust and transform their diffuse institutional purpose in response to economic, social and political environments (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994). Dougherty (2006) asserts that the community college will keep changing by adding new missions and revising the old as is demanded by community residents.

It is apparent community colleges are uniquely identified as serving a social mission for over 60 years. According to McGrath and Spear (1991) community colleges are "powerful

instruments for social equality and mobility" (p. 7). This democratizing charge started with the GI Bill, was reinforced through the Truman Commission and continues through today. Thus the contemporary community college is universally understood to have a generic mission founded on being comprehensive, affordable, open access institutions. This basic mission is typically tailored to local needs through adapting programs and educational credentials.

The Global Knowledge Age

The world is in a period of rapid global economic, political and social transformation driven by the swift dissemination of information, the synergy of intellectual capital and knowledge and the expansion of technological innovation. All countries, states and provinces throughout the world are situated in the current global milieu. How and in what ways peoples, organizations and governments respond to these transformations and radical changes influences their economies, politics and culture.

In a classic economy industrial economic system, value is achieved from combining natural resources, labor and capital. Predominate outcomes of an industrial economy are tangible goods and services. In a knowledge economy, value is achieved through the generation, control, use, and communication of information and knowledge.

There is no doubt, local communities and businesses large and small are affected by global influences and the rise of the knowledge age. Knowledge has become the engine of progress. In the late 1960's Peter Drucker (1969) in his book *Age of Discontinuity* highlighted the accession of knowledge and information management as driving forces in business performance and global competition. This new global economic setting demands changes in

workforce education and community colleges as primary players must consider the alignment of their mission.

Knowledge Economy

The explosive growth of technology and transition of the knowledge age into the global knowledge economy has served to shrink the world. Information can travel around the world in the blink of an eye. The movement of information and knowledge quickly across time and space has served to extend the reach of markets, labor and culture across the globe. The new communication paradigm provides opportunities for businesses to leverage wage economies and capital markets with little concern for where the work is physically located.   Higher education will need to adapt in order to prepare the skilled workforce for a competitive global knowledge economy.

In the knowledge economy, knowledge, information and creativity have become products with economic value to be traded or bartered (Allee, 2003; Morley & Crouch 2008). Community colleges prepare students to participate in this economy by imparting basic knowledge and assisting them to develop constructs that can be used to build knowledge.   Basic knowledge is applied knowledge students/workers acquire in the use of instrumentation appropriate to their discipline.   In simple terms, for nurses this might be how to use a stethoscope or familiarity with computers. Basic knowledge permits the student to carryout principal function applicable to a specific discipline.

Merriam Webster dictionary defines knowledge as "the circumstance or condition of apprehending truth or fact through reasoning" (Merriam Webster, 2011). Educators, recognizing the need for knowledgeable workers have in addition to teaching basic knowledge focused on

student's development of critical *thinking* skills. Critical thinking, or reasoning as in Merriam

Webster's definition, is a necessary component in the development of an individual's ability to

construct knowledge from experiences and information.   Critical thinking skills applied to

information creates a situation where creativity can construct new products and services thus

propelling the creation of value.

The tasks that are not repetitive are where the value is in every job now and the skills

required to perform non-repetitive tasks—solve problems, interact with others in an increasingly

service-based economy, and so on — tend to require some kind of postsecondary education,

(Carnevale cited in Jones, 2010, para. 4).Knowledge in this form is an intangible asset that is

transportable with the individual and which cannot be taken away.

The explosive growth in the capabilities of information technology over the last 25 years

provides an essential enabling role in the knowledge economy. If information, knowledge,

reasoning, and creativity are the value components of the knowledge age, then technology is the

facilitator which stimulates the collection, storage, movement and retrieval of information.

Technology facilitates bringing the knowledge builder and information together in way that

accelerates the construction of new knowledge. Carnevale, Smith and Strohl (2009) of

Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, place the demand for a better-

educated work force on the increased use of technology across all industries.

Thus, it is apparent that economic strength in a global knowledge economy will demand a

highly educated populace. Allee (2003), noted author on value networks, affirms the need for an

educated workforce and places the importance of technology into context when she asserts

"human thought and creativity are required for more complex tasks" (p. 85). Today's knowledge

economy requires a more educated workforce with strong critical thinking, information processing, communication and presentation skills (D'Ambrosio & Ehrenberg, 2007; Morley & Crouch, 2008: Asimakou, 2009). Development of a global ready workforce not only provides for individual and national economic vigor but also it fosters and facilitates social welfare. Thus, "educated people, the knowledge they produce, and the innovation and entrepreneurial skills they possess have become the keys to economic prosperity, public health, national security, and social well-being" (Duderstadt, 2011, p. 3). To achieve prosperity and security in this hypercompetitive global knowledge-driven environment, higher education must diligently reinvent itself to prepare a workforce ready for the challenges of pervasive global influences.

Globalization and the U.S. Workforce

The phenomenon of globalization influences a wide range of political, economic and cultural trends. As such, globalization can be seen as a process and not as an end state. The definition of globalization is complex. Often its definition refers to concepts of world economy, the rising dominance of western economy and culture, proliferation of time spanning technologies, or the unifying influence of global integration (Scheuerman, 2010; Levin, 2001).

Characteristics of globalization today are not new. Suarez-Orozco and Qin-Hillard (2004) note large-scale immigration and international capital flows are not unprecedented. According to noted Harvard historian John Coatsworth (2004), the current cycle of globalization is quite weak compared to previous globalization cycles with regard to demographic and economic processes. Irrespective of the magnitude, globalization processes have the potential to affect the prosperity and wellbeing of those impacted by its sometimes disruptive character. Coatsworth's (2004) evaluation indicates globalization tends to exact short-term damages in

health and well-being and increasing inequality while generating long-term boost in economic productivity. These disruptions are apparent in the U.S. economy and are reflected in the political and policy agendas of the nation, states, and local governments.

In the simplest definition, labor is "the work" an individual does. This labor produces an exponential variety of materials (goods, services, art, knowledge, information, etc). In the United States, labor is acknowledged as generically consisting of two primary groups: (a) blue collar (manual-type work), and (b) white collar (professional and semi-professional work). Blue- and white-collar middle-class jobs that do not require some type of post-secondary certificate or degree are disappearing rapidly even as high- and low-skill service jobs have proliferated. According to Dougherty (2006) "as our economy further globalizes, the occupational composition, class distribution and employment stability of the U.S. population are being transformed. Semi-skilled jobs in factories and offices are being killed or moved abroad and class inequality has been increasing" (p.80).

Approximately 59 percent of U.S. jobs require some form of post-secondary education, particularly those that pay well enough to support a family (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009; Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2010). Nationally, only 36 percent of the working age population has an associate's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). This disparity in supply and demand has prompted President Obama to offer the *Graduation Initiative* (Obama, 2009).

> [We] also know that in the coming years, jobs requiring at least an associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as jobs requiring no college experience. We will not fill those jobs - or keep those jobs on our shores – without the training offered by community colleges (Obama, 2009, Para. 5)

The Graduation Initiative seeks to close the gap between supply and demand by encouraging an 8 million increase in college graduations by 2020.   Furthermore, it recognizes the community college as the vehicle for achieving this goal. With over 50 percent of college students enrolled at community colleges, these two year institutions are pivotal in the work force uplift required to meet the challenges of the new economy (Obama, 2009).

Globalization and the Changing Community College

Discourse in the community college field has promoted the inclusion of globalization across the curricula in recognition of the deepening economic linkages, information flows, population shifts and compression of technology, capital and popular culture (Raby, 2000). Community colleges are fostering an awareness of global matters and broaden perspectives of students to the widening effects of pervasive globalization. Because community colleges are flexible responding to the needs and demands of their stakeholders, they will continue to evolve in response to pressures of globalization. What is retained and what is altered in each community college will be defining attributes of these institutions signaling their mission and function in the twenty-first century.

In his book *Globalizing the Community College,* Levin (2001) defined four domains that frame the discussion on globalization of the community college. These four domains economic, social/cultural, information and politics represent distinctive forces of globalization shaping the evolution of community colleges.

Levin's framework, illustrated in Figure 1 - Levin's Four Domains Influencing Globalization of Community Colleges, emanate from his research, *Mission and Structure: The Community College in a Global Context*, (1999) in which he examined global forces acting upon

community colleges.   Undertaken during the late 1990's he studied seven community colleges; three U.S. and four Canadian.   The following sections will illustrate each of these domains and their influence on the activities of community colleges.
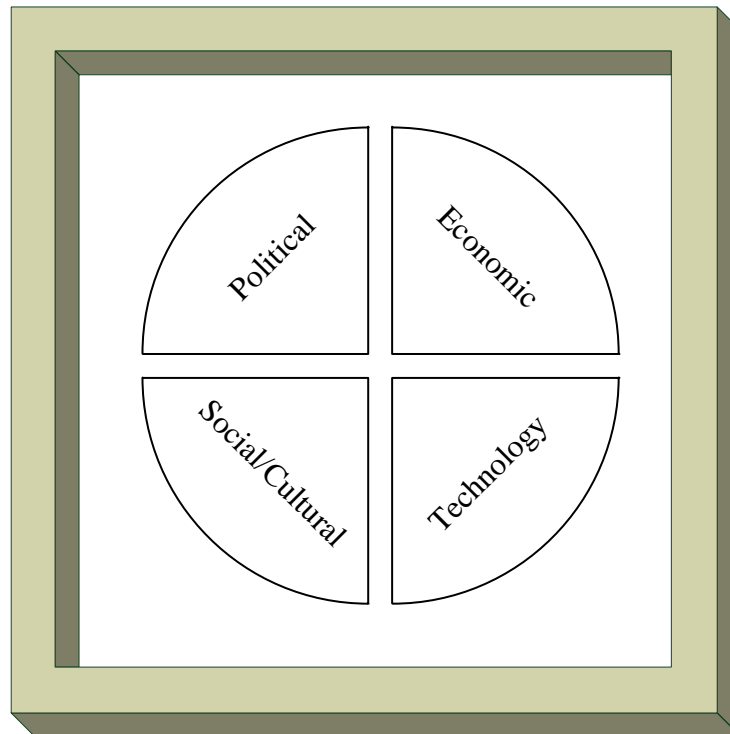
Figure 1 - Levin's Four Domains Influencing Globalization of Community Colleges

Economic domain.

Community colleges, dispersed throughout each state, are affected by the vagaries of national and global economies and the needs of the local businesses and populace. According to Levin (2001) the economic domain can be viewed through the symptomatic affects that the global economy has on national and state revenues. This in turn results in national and state intervention in the community college through public policy initiatives and funding adaptations.

Raby and Valeau (2009) suggest a "global paradox" between the local and the global focus exhibited as a constant struggle between mission and curricula. Raby and Valeau (2009) point to the preparation of students for local employment whose context is defined by a global economy. In this manner, the product of community college (curriculum leading to specific student learning outcomes) is impelled and influenced by characteristics and factors of the broader national and global economies.

Some community colleges have adopted new strategies as a result of a transforming economic domain. Levin (2001) identified *marketization* and *commodification* as two approaches employed by community colleges in direct response to the shifting commercial arena. Commodification is a process of packaging standardized education programs as a service. These standardized packages are an efficient method for delivering common employment skills across employers. In contrast, marketization involves the development of specialized education packages customized to specific employer needs. Some community colleges have adopted these approaches of providing employable skills directly to employers as a method to continue growth, or at least replacing shrinking government revenues (Levin, 2001).

Shrinking state support and constrained local taxing authority have precipitated dramatic increases in tuition at many community colleges. It is no surprise that economically constrained college boards and presidents are seeking new sources of revenue and pursuing efficiency opportunities. These dwindling fiscal resources are fostering a new economic paradigm in the community college and leading to potential risk to the democratizing hallmark of the common community college mission; affordability.

Political domain.

From their inception, community colleges were formed by and have operated within a political arena. In part to address post-WWII social issues, community college expansion was fostered by the growing political and social agendas of the 1950's and 1960's. While generally organized through state legislatures and administered through state governing boards, local, state and federal governments continue legislative activity on the behalf of and to influence direction of community colleges (Levin, 2001; Cohen & Brawer, 2008). In the past 30 years, government policy has been influenced through a continuing debate on social, immigration and economic issues within the ubiquitous context of globalization. As business and industry strive to flourish in the global environment, community colleges have become channels for implementing public policy designed to foster global competitiveness.

Federal and local governmental bodies influence community college mission and strategic planning through such avenues as the control of subsidies, grants, student financial aid, funding formulas. Governmental bodies also influence the operations of the college through accountability and requirements to adhere to legislative mandates. According to Levin (2001) policy and legislation are the methods by which government seeks to control decisions and actions of the community colleges in keeping with the desired objectives of government. As a result, not only are community colleges pushed and pulled into compliance with the policies and initiatives of local, state and federal governing bodies and agencies, but also the needs and demands of their students.

Social/cultural domain.

To understand the social/cultural dimension of globalization it is necessary to develop a context of globalization that provides a lens through which to view the social and cultural constructs. Globalization is a process which entails social and cultural aspects some of which have been categorized as *internationalization, liberalization, westernization,* and *universalization* (Scholte, 2009).

Internationalization reflects on social and cultural impact of growing international exchange and interdependencies of countries. Liberalization embodies the lowering of governmental barriers and government imposed restrictions; in effect *fair trade* or *trade barriers.* To many, westernization symbolizes the distortion of other cultures with an "Americanized" form with an emphasis on consumption. The creation of a singular synthesized culture is at the heart of a globalization known as universalization. The four conceptualizations convey facets of globalization and are often used as critiques of globalization's affect highlighting the perceived desirable as well as the undesirable influences.

These conceptualizations of world change as a strictly resulting phenomenon misses the duality of culture as a force of change and a consequence of globalization (Mobley & Weldon, 2006). The movement and cooptation of cultural components can be seen across the globe seemingly leading to the universalization of society. These interjections of cultural representations impact and influence the formation of new cultural constructs.

Levin (2001) describes the emergence of corporatism or neoliberalism in management behaviors of community college leaders as a dominate ideology globalization. This pattern of management follows the emergence of these behaviors in inter-locked trans-global economies

(Bailey & Gayle, 2003; Levin, 2001).   Institutions of higher education have long held themselves out as being separate from the mechanisms of corporatism. Recent emphasis on productivity and outcomes has changed the internal culture and climate of the community college giving rise to the managerial behaviors so prevalent in industry.

Technology.

The "information revolution" appeared in the later stage of the twentieth century advanced by the introduction of micro-electronics and the Internet.   This essential computing foundation has realized exponential growth in capability while simultaneously declining in cost prompting a new class of low cost electronic technologies. This evolution has in turn made possible the capture, processing, storage and movement of information with little concern for constraints of time and geography.

There have been two primary manifestations of the 'information revolution'; ubiquitous and inexpensive telecommunications facilities and smaller, lighter, more powerful computing devices. Today, the Internet, a single public manifestation of universal telecommunications connectivity, offers a very low cost, global access where communications, data and services are offered and exchanged. The world-wide-web, email, institutional computer applications, and cloud computing epitomize the ways technology pervades our daily lives.

Mobile computing is a recent phenomenon anchored in the advancement of telecommunications from land-based fixed point communications, to untethered pervasive connectivity and the continued miniaturization and exponential power of small computing devices based on a variety of wireless technologies.   Mobile computing advancements facilitate

communication and processing of data from a vast array of sources without restrictions associated to traditional fixed communications access points.

The interconnectivity of technology and its global reach have served to compress time and space making possible the rapid diffusion of economic, cultural, and political influences (Levin, 2001). At the same time this diffusion brings with it a mandate for educational systems to adapt by merging global facets into the fabric of the institution. Within the community college there are two broad categories of application of information technology. The first application is curricular instruction. Incorporating technology into the learning process has three potential benefits; (a) improve student learning and outcomes, (b) extend the reach of education to a greater audience, and (c) build student awareness and familiarity with the use of technology (Schacter & Miliken, 1999; Levin, 2001).

The second application of technology in the community college is the administrative operations and management controls. Applying technology to the administrative function of the college can increase efficiency and effectiveness of administrative operations leading to better utilization of limited funding. Whether facilitating the flow of global factors, enlightening teaching and learning or improving administrative activities, technology has forever altered the activities of the community college. Technologies ability to time and place shift and its accelerating drive to pervasive applications hold the promise that it will continue to influence culture, politics and economies thus improving community colleges.

Community College Baccalaureates

The traditional formal boundaries in higher education are becoming more porous and permeable. In some states such as Arkansas, Hawaii and Wisconsin higher education systems

include two-year post-secondary institutions as part of the university system. Four-year

institutions are delving into programs traditionally the purview of community colleges. Two-

year colleges at the same time are navigating into educational arenas traditionally served by four-

year institutions. Covering the spectrum from simply providing universities room availability on

their campuses, to in some cases, the awarding of the baccalaureate degree, community colleges'

are striving to deliver on their hallmark of local access. These forays by higher education

institutions into educational realms not traditionally supplied are serving to blur the definitions of

post-secondary institutions.

Community College Defined

Merriam-Webster (2011) defines community college as "a 2-year government-supported

college that offers an associate degree." The Carnegie Foundation recognized for its authority in

classifying colleges at all levels, does not use the term community college. Instead the Carnegie

Classification system uses "highest degree awarded" to classify colleges and universities. Since

2005, the Carnegie Classification of Institution of Higher Education has dropped the aggregation

of all two-year colleges under a singular classification.   Reflecting the changing landscape that

is community college, Carnegie Foundation now uses the term *Associate's* which includes

colleges "where highest degrees are at the associate's level" or *Associate's Dominate* where

bachelor's degrees account for less than 10 percent of all under graduate degrees" (Carnegie,

2011, para. 3). The number of colleges in each category is often in dispute as the self-reporting

of data is a limitation of the Carnegie classification system reflecting variation in methodology of

data collection and reporting between colleges.

In 1973, the Carnegie (2001) classification for community colleges was *Two-Year Colleges and Institutions*. In 1994 the designation changed to *Associate of Arts Colleges*, and *Tribal Colleges and Universities* were separated into their own category. Since 2005, the classification options have expanded significantly in recognition of the differentiation between types of two-year institutions. Today, under the label of Associate's Colleges, the Carnegie Basic Classification lists fourteen distinct combinations of characteristics under which 2-year colleges are organized (Carnegie, 2011). The primary categorizing dimension is public versus private. Within the public sector colleges, are classified rural (small, medium, and large), suburban (single and multicampus), urban (single and multicampus), special use, two-year under university and four-year primarily associate's. Private sector colleges are divided among two additional characteristics of not-for-profit/for-profit and 2-year/4-year primarily associate's. Technical schools are included throughout the associate's categories and are not separated out from other associate's colleges. Tribal colleges continue to be aggregated under their own designation.

For the purpose of this research, only those colleges designated as Public Associate's and Public 4-year Primarily Associate's were considered for case selection. All private, special use, and university affiliated colleges are excluded. Throughout this document and for purposes of this research these colleges will be referred to as community colleges. Table 2 - Types and Number of Two-year Colleges Defined by Carnegie Classification presents a summary of four high level types of associate's institutions as designated by the Carnegie Classification of Institution of Higher Education System.

Table 2 - Types and Number of Two-year Colleges Defined by Carnegie Classification

College Classification	Description	Quantity of colleges in classification
Associate's Colleges - Public	Includes institutions where all degrees are at the associate's level, or where bachelor's degrees account for less than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees. Control of these institutions is public. This classification sub-defines institutions by location and size. Excludes institutions eligible for classification as Tribal Colleges or Special Focus Institutions	991
Associate's College - Public Special Use	Includes institutions where all degrees are at the associate's level, or where bachelor's degrees account for less than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees. Control of these institutions is public. Inclusive of only special use institutions defined by a narrow or singular curriculum	11
Associate's College - Private	Includes institutions where all degrees are at the associate's level, or where bachelor's degrees account for less than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees. Control of these institutions is private and can be for-profit or not-for-profit.	707
Associate's—Public 2-year Colleges under Universities	Includes institutions where all degrees are at the associate's level, or where bachelor's degrees account for less than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees. Control of these institutions is under a state university system.	48

(Carnegie, 2011)

Four Pathways to Baccalaureate Degree

It is the foundation of the generic community college mission to provide educational opportunities in response to the needs of its stakeholders. In order to respond to workforce needs and demands of their communities, some community colleges are exploring crafting local

pathways to baccalaureate degrees and in the process prompting some colleges to reexamine

their mission as a generic two-year college (Floyd, Hrabak & Falconetti, 2009). According to

Floyd (2006), there are four models that represent the pathways to a baccalaureate degree for

community college students. These pathway models are: (a) articulation model,

(b) extension model, (c) university center model, and (d) community college baccalaureate

model. There is no agreed upon single definition for each of these models. However, each of

these baccalaureate pathways has specific characteristics which set them apart.

The Articulation Model describes a common educational route for the community college

student to efficiently and easily matriculate from a community college to a four-year institution.

The route is defined through specific course selections which match the community college and

four-year institution educational requirements thus assuring the student receives credit for

courses taken at the community college as they matriculate. Many states, such as Illinois and

North Carolina, have defined articulation agreements between their community colleges and

universities providing students ease of course and associate degree transferability. However,

other states such as Pennsylvania and West Virginia have no state-wide agreements only

articulation agreements between specific institutions. More advanced forms of this model such as

the two-plus-two and the three-plus-one, align course sequences between two institutions usually

with specific programs. As the names of these articulation models suggest, two-plus-two and

three-plus-one signify the years of education provided by the community college and the four-

year institution respectively.

The Extension Model is defined by availability of upper level courses provided by a

four-year college or university at an extension campus of the four-year institution within the

district of the community college. These extension campuses make upper level courses available to the community college student in relative close proximity to their community and therefore, their community college. In some cases students are still required to complete some of their coursework at the main campus of the four-year college or university in order to meet all the requirements for the bachelor's degree.

The University Center Model is characterized by availability of courses taught by four-year institution's faculty on the campus of the community college. In more advanced implementations of this articulation model, the community college has designated specific space where multiple universities and four-year colleges hold classes.   In less sophisticated implementations, four-year institutions use available classrooms located anywhere throughout the community college campus.

The Community College Baccalaureate Model is distinguished as the only model which results in the community college conferring the baccalaureate degree.   The articulation, university center, and extension models, which represent various levels of institutional partnerships, each culminate in a baccalaureate degree conferred by the four-year institution. The community college baccalaureate and the university center models are the only models providing the student with the ability to complete their baccalaureate studies on the community college campus.

Community College Baccalaureate Evolvement

Early discussions regarding the possibility of two-year post-secondary institutions awarding a baccalaureate degree began in the late 1960s and 1970s. According to Floyd (2006), the first institution to do this was in 1970 when New York's Fashion Institute of Technology was

approved to offer the baccalaureate. Obtaining a precise count of the current community

colleges conferring baccalaureate degrees is difficult. Beyond the complication arising from a

common practice of including all two-year institutions into the category of community college,

some experts in the field disagree as to whether the resulting changes require re-classifying these

institutions as specialty or four-year colleges (Flieger, 2006; Floyd, 2006; Campbell, 2005;

Glennon, 2005). Further confounding the definition is the action by accrediting agencies and

state legislatures prompting renaming colleges offering baccalaureate degrees to drop

"community" from their name. This leaves open for interpretation what is the primary driver for

defining a community college. For this reason, the definition of community colleges used in this

research is based on the Carnegie Foundation classification of Associate's Colleges and

Associate's Dominate Colleges.

Carnegie uses either the undergraduate designation of Associates Dominate or the basic

designation of Associates—Public 4-year Primarily Associate's to denote community colleges

which offer baccalaureate degrees. The two designations are inconsistent making it difficult to

consistently identifying baccalaureate conferring community colleges. There are forty-two (42)

public colleges listed under the basic designation Associates—Public 4-year Primarily

Associate's. However, only twenty-four (24) of those also include the undergraduate designation

of Associates Dominate. The remaining eighteen (18) are designated either Associates or Not

Classified. Some of the colleges in the resulting Carnegie list are clearly under the auspices of

universities while others are excluded from the list carrying the designation of Associate's-Public

2-year colleges under 4-year universities but still included in the Associates Dominate.

Some community colleges, faced with changing stakeholder needs and expectations, have begun to explore the possibility of conferring baccalaureate degrees. As a result of the growing recognition of the need to share information between likeminded college administrators, innovators in the community college ranks recently founded the Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA).

Community College Baccalaureate Association

The Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA) was founded in 1999 "to promote better access to the baccalaureate degree on community college campuses, and to serve as a resource for information on various models for accomplishing this purpose" (CCBA, 2011; Russell & American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 2010). The Community College Baccalaureate Association mission supports its purpose through: a) encouraging research, fostering dialogue, and sharing research data, publications, best practices, state legislation and policies, b) encouraging development of baccalaureate degrees conferred by community colleges, c) encouraging development of university centers on community college campuses, d) encouraging joint degree programs with universities on community college campuses, and e) being a catalyst for democratizing access to the baccalaureate degree (CCBA, 2011).

The Community College Baccalaureate Association identifies 39 baccalaureate conferring community colleges and two baccalaureate conferring technical colleges listed in Table 3 - Baccalaureate Conferring Community Colleges Identified by Community College Baccalaureate Association.

Interesting to note, some community colleges in the CCBA list contain a university designation in their names.   While this would seem to imply these are four-year institutions, the Carnegie Foundation does acknowledge these as Associate Colleges awarding predominately two-year degrees but within the control of a state university system.

 Four of the colleges included in the Carnegie listing Associates—Public 4-year Primarily Associate's and Associates Dominate are not represented in the CCBA list.   The CCBA list includes twelve community colleges which carry neither the Associates—Public 4-year Primarily Associate's nor the Associates Dominate designations in the Carnegie classifications. All of these inconsistencies add to the complexity of accurately identifying the pool of public community colleges which are conferring baccalaureate degrees.

Table 3 - Baccalaureate Conferring Community Colleges Identified by Community College Baccalaureate Association.

State	College	
Colorado	Colorado Mountain College	
Florida	Broward College Chipola College Central Florida College[*] Daytona State College Edison State College Florida State College at Jacksonville Gulf Coast Community College Indian River State College Miami-Dade College Northwest Florida State College	Palm Beach State College Pensacola State College Polk State College Santa Fe College St. Johns River Community College St. Petersburg College Seminole State College State College of Florida, Mantee-Sarasota
Georgia	Middle Georgia College	
Hawaii	Maui Community College	
Indiana	Vincennes University	
Nevada	Community College of Southern Nevada	Great Basin College
New Mexico	Northern New Mexico Community College	
New York	Fashion Institute of Technology	Morrisville State College
North Dakota	Bismark State College	
Oklahoma	Oklahoma State University – Okmulgee	Oklahoma State University – Oklahoma City
Texas	Brazosport College Midland College	South Texas College
Vermont	Vermont Technical College	
Washington	Bellevue Community College Olympic College Peninsula College Lake Washington	South Central Community College South Seattle Community College
West Virginia	Mountain State College[*]	
Wisconsin	University of Wisconsin two-year colleges	

[*]*This table was modified to reflect college name changes not represented in the CCBA listing* (CCBA, 2011)

Historically, community colleges have always provided students pathways to baccalaureate degrees. Now, community colleges have found a niche opportunity fulfilling the increasing demands for baccalaureate degrees in applied and technical fields. These degrees tend to be concentrated in career and technical programs in demand by students who are time- and place-bound (Russell, 2010).   The nine types of baccalaureate degrees offered by community colleges as documented by CCBA are listed in Table 4.

Table 4 - Baccalaureate Degrees offered by Community Colleges as Designated by Community College Baccalaureate Association

Abbreviation	Description
BS	Bachelor of Science
BA	Bachelor of Arts
BAS	Bachelor of Applied Science
BAT	Bachelor of Applied Technology
BT	Bachelor of Technology
B of Eng	Bachelor of Engineering
BABS	Bachelor of Arts and Sciences
BSW	Bachelor of Social Work
BBA	Bachelor of Business Administration

(CCBA, 2011)

Since 1970, the progression of community colleges toward awarding baccalaureate degrees has been defined by uneven progress.   The uneven progress can be attributed to a number of factors including the identification of specific local need, building support for the community college as the vehicle for delivering the new degree and resistance to the community college baccalaureate model by a variety of constituents (Floyd, 2006; Testa, 2009; Meyer, 2006). But the persistent question is how does any community college navigate through this very complex decision process? This study will explore the decision process and factors

contributing to the growth in community college baccalaureate degrees. The findings can be used to inform community college leaders considering offering baccalaureate degrees and also apply to planning for and undertaking other critical decisions.

Strategic Planning Process

The concept of strategic planning arose from the business context as a methodology developed to assist companies in defining pathways forward to assure organizational sustainability and success. Strategic planning appears to have emerged as a distinct methodology sometime between the mid-1950's and the 1970's. It first appeared under the term of long-term planning with essential characteristics of what later became known as strategic planning (Steiner, 1979). Mintzberg (1994) wrote that it arrived on the scene in the mid-1960s as the one best ways for companies to devise strategies to enhance their competitiveness.

In general, strategic planning is a process undertaken by an entity such as an organization, business, or an association for optimizing the allocation of a variety of resources to reach the desired objectives. According to Martinez and Wolverton (2009) "Strategy involves the planning and analysis that allow an organization to fulfill its purpose and reach its goals" (p. xi). The process firmly set in a futuristic timeframe often foregoes short-term benefit for long-term goal attainment. Initiatives defined to assist in goal accomplishment under strategic planning often require capital, personnel, and technological infusion as well as the construct of risk. In order for the strategic plan to offer authoritative guidance for leaders to apply scarce resources, plans must account for anticipated risk.

About the same time-frame strategic planning methods were broadly adopted, experts began to recognize that internally focused planning methods of the past were no longer adequate

to describe organizational performance (Malonis, 2000). Traditional closed system theories of organizations were being challenge. It was apparent that a broader perspective was required; a perspective recognizing influences exerted by the external environment need to be taken into account in the planning process. This more encompassing view led to a new paradigm of "open systems" thinking to take into account the interconnectivity between ideas, actions and outcomes. Open systems theory has been applied to planning to varying degrees. For complex organizations, Toma (2010) identified system thinking as a view that the components (internal and external in nature) are interrelated and must be considered simultaneously. New planning models and techniques sprang from considering this more holistic and inclusive perspective.

Toma (2010) however, questions if there is enough information being generated and disseminated within the institution to clarify the decision making needed to advance it toward its aspirations and goals? Martinez and Wolverton (2009) answer this by advising the deliberate incorporation of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and Political, Economic, Social, and Technological (PEST) analytical techniques when developing strategic plans. They feel that the integration of these tools with open-systems perspective significantly advances the quality of an institution's decisions.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) methodology is widely used in strategic planning in higher education (Kretovics, 2011; Ewy, 2009). A SWOT analysis examines the internal organizational strengths and weaknesses and the external realities which reveal opportunities and threats. Through scrutiny of internal factors and how the organization relates to its external environment, leaders contemplate the organization's aspirations and goals through a methodology which makes explicit the open-systems that are the community college.

PEST is a methodology and analytical tool which considers specific facets of the holistic environment (internal and external) in the context of specific domains of influence represented in the acronym; Political, Economic, Social and Technology. These four factors have a striking resemblance to Levin's four domains of global influence. With PEST the heart of the analysis is the implicit importance of these four aspects and their significance in the ability of an organization to realize its goals and ambitions. Use of both the SWOT and PEST provide a comprehensive framework for community college administrators to make explicit internal competencies and capabilities and recognize the external influences that serve to encourage or discourage courses of action.

Despite many academicians discomfort in framing academic activities in the business parlance of risk, reward, investment and yield, strategic planning has become a common process across institutions of higher education (D'Ambrosio & Ehrenberg, 2007; Martinez & Wolverton, 2009). Ehrenberg (2003) studies econometrics in higher education researched the relationship between graduation and expenditures in 416 institutions. Martinez did an in-depth case study of the South Dakota "policy-driven change" in cooperation with the The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. While the terminology of investment, risk and yield is distasteful to some, the concepts remain essentially the same for any organization.   College leaders make decisions to apply scarce resources such as funds, time and effort to initiatives they deem to be worthwhile and which have an expected benefit to the college community.

Strategic planning provides a logical and systematic process for gathering information and data, deciding the goals and assigning assessment approaches for making these difficult decisions. Societal, economic, political and technological demands reveal themselves in forces

that affect strategies developed to maintain a vibrant college. D'Ambrose and Ehrenberg (2007) note there is an inherent dilemma between the pursuit of institutional success, such as those associated with institutions of higher education, and challenges of meeting increased demands for addressing societal issues. The increasing load of unfunded mandates is symptomatic of the competition for resources between initiatives which address societal good and those focused on the success of the institution.   For community colleges, this translates into meeting the generic mission mandate of comprehensive, affordable and accessible education for all students.

According to Bryson (2004) leaders of public organizations must be effective strategists if these organizations are to fulfill their missions, meet their mandates, satisfy their constituents, and create enduring public value. It is a complex task aligning institutional vision with policymaker's and public's interests (D'Ambrose & Ehrenberg, 2007). Given this understanding of these difficult decisions in the current severely challenging times, organizations must go about strategic planning to effectively balance the needs of the college while simultaneously meeting the demands of the community within the context of the institution's environment and internal capabilities.

Development of strategic plans relies on cultivating accurate assessments based on relevant, accurate, and timely data. The world markets, economies and population shifts are moving at ever greater speeds. To remain germane,   institutions of higher education need to adapt their data gathering sources and processes to reflect the new world realities.

Conversely, some researcher's feel that strategic planning just does not work. Interestingly, Mintzberg (1994), well-known researcher on business and management, notes "strategic planning often spoils strategic thinking" (p. 107).   Mintzberg , whose research

focused on executives manage, holds that strategic planning strives to maximize resources against established options. In contrast, strategic thinking seeks to innovate and to find undisclosed opportunity. In keeping with the premise of Mintzberg, McFarland (2008) in his research of nine breakthrough companies, asserts that traditional strategic planning is dead as it fails to account for and adapt to rapid change. "Whatever the case, effective strategists find, pursue, and capitalize on opportunities. Taking advantage of opportunities left fallow by others is a cornerstone of innovative strategy making and requires consistent guidance from competent leaders." (Martinez & Wolverton, 2009, p. 140). Making sense of the changing milieu that is the nature of the contemporary community college is essential as leaders are challenged to make timely strategic choices as these decisions will affect the vitality of their institution well into the future.

Significant shifts in strategy are driven by the coalescence of opportunity identification and willingness of senior leaders to be a part of defining the future. According to Martinez and Wolverton (2009) "innovation is not a prescribed, step-by-step process. Opportunity takes different forms, and the strategies that best position an organization to capitalize on it are almost always customized to fit the situation" (p. 8). Thus it is likely a well-informed "strategic process" is more important in making these difficult judgments then is the "strategic plan". This study seeks to identify how and in what ways leaders of community colleges make strategic decisions to meet the challenges of today while positioning the institution to reap benefits of long-term advancement.

Summary

This chapter looked at the a historical perspective and evolution of the community college educational mission, the current state of community college baccalaureate degrees, the changing global markets and their impact on the community college, the conceptual framework of Levin's four domains, strategic planning process streams and finally the concept of strategy making. These themes serve as a context to illuminate the research on the process used to decide whether or not to confer a community college baccalaureate degree.

The educational mission of the contemporary community college has evolved to an open access and affordable-learning devised to meet the educational needs of the local community through two-year and now some four-year college programs. This evolution is most recently driven by the globalization of our nation's economy and the progression toward a knowledge economy.

The four domains identified by Levin (2001) provide a lens through which to assess strategic decisions in this rapidly evolving environment driven by globalization. These same four domains are beginning to be accepted in the strategic planning process as categories of environmental factors to be considered in the strategy making process.

Strategic planning originated in a business context and made its way into higher education over time. Originally internally focused, the paradigm shifted to an open systems perspective which considered the external influences on the organization. Strategic planning and strategic decision making can be differentiated as the former being an evaluation process which conceptualizes future direction for an organization as contrasted with the later which can be

characterized as the leadership decision process for directing organizations to new ways of fulfilling their mission.

The concepts of the contemporary community college and its commonly accepted mission placed in the context of the pressures brought by globalization serve as the setting for this research. Levin's four domains of globalization in tandem with the strategic decision-making serve as a lens through which the community college baccalaureate decision will be examined.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter details the design and criteria that guided the research providing a source of accountability and a framework for establishing the soundness of the research. In order to establish such transparency and credibility within the research process, it is important to articulate in a logical and systematic manner the research methodology and process utilized. The research questions lent themselves to the richly descriptive nature of qualitative method. The remainder of Chapter 3 describes and presents rationale for: (a) the selection of the qualitative paradigm and case study methodology; (b) site and participant selection protocol; (c) the data collection process and protocols; (d) data analysis procedures; (e) ethical considerations; (f) trustworthiness and credibility related to this research; (g) the limitations of this study; and (h) researcher as the instrument.

The Qualitative Paradigm

A paradigm is a worldview or a framework which is bounded by our beliefs and outlook on the world (Patton, 2002; Guba, 1990). The interpretive paradigm assumes the nature of reality as being personally constructed (Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Qualitative inquiry resides within the interpretive paradigm and relies on the multiple perspectives of the participants and the researcher. Merriam (1998) succinctly makes the case that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 6).

Quantitative research which is inferential seeks to be predictive and to explain the world from a positivist point of view while qualitative research is interpretive and seeks to enlighten through multiple personally constructed perspectives. Qualitative research is broadly defined as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17).

Qualitative research aims to explore a particular phenomenon that is worth studying (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). Qualitative research seeks to illuminate, understand, explore, explain and extrapolate findings to similar situations.

The highly complex characteristics of the community college baccalaureate decision required a holistic design that reflected the exploratory nature of the research purpose. Not much is known about the community college baccalaureate decision process and very little is found in the literature. This exploration of such an unknown phenomena places the research most appropriately in the qualitative methods and interpretive paradigm (Merriam, 1998).

The qualitative paradigm uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. It is therefore non-interventional. That is, unlike experimental research, the research takes place in the natural setting without attempt to control the environment. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) it is a "spectator sport". Qualitative research is used to uncover the how and why of the phenomenon being studied. To achieve this researcher collects rich thick data from the natural setting and uses this in conjunction with their own perspective to create a holistic picture of the event or events.

Qualitative researchers develop a pattern of meaning from the inquiry findings through an inductive process. According to Creswell (2003):

> A qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern). The researcher collects open-ended, emerging data with the primary intent of developing themes from the data (p. 18).

The researcher constructs the reality he/she sees as shared from the personal perspectives of each of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The following factors as applied to the community college baccalaureate decision process confirm the choice of a qualitative paradigm (Creswell, 2007).

- facilitates the exploration of meaning and the constructs of the decision making process
- allows for the complex and detailed understanding of perceptions and attitudes of the decision participants
- Provides an essential understanding of environmental context for the decision process

This research is intended to explain behaviors and describe experiences (Gall, Borg & Gall, 2003).

Case Study

Within the qualitative interpretive research paradigm there are a variety of research approaches including case study, grounded theory, phenomenology, ethnography, and historical. A case study approach was used in this research endeavor. Case studies are used to inform practice, to build theory, or to propose generalizations applicable to similar situations. A case study is an in-depth and holistic empirical inquiry and analysis of a contemporary phenomenon, individual, social unit, program or event for a defined period of time (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010; Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Merriam, 1988). The "case study" is the method encompassing the entire research effort from logical design through analysis and defines the techniques and process used throughout (Yin, 2009). More succinctly Merriam (1988) defines a case study as an "examination of a specific phenomenon" (p. 9).

The case study method is a flexible approach to research. The elasticity of the case study framework provides latitude for the researcher to design study elements to meet the requirements of the research purpose and to answer the driving questions. Characteristics of the case study include (a) focuses on a single case (particularistic, bounded), (b) relies on multiple sources of data (data triangulation), (c) reveals coding to uncover commonalities or themes (inductive), and (d) enlightens the reader through discovery of new knowledge (heuristic) (Merriam, 1988; Creswell, 2007).

A defining characteristic of the case study approach is the delimiting of the object of study. The delimitations are the boundaries of the research which defines what is to be studied (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 2004; Swanson & Holton, 2005). Cases are situated or embedded in a larger system and are therefore microcosms to be studied (Swanson & Holton, 2005). The boundaries are the identifying attributes of the "case". According to Swanson and Holton (2005) cases are bounded by the research purpose, subsequently by the driving questions which shape the appropriate settings and sampling. According to Merriam (1998) bounding is the most important defining characteristic of case research.

Data is gathered through a variety of instruments in case research commonly including surveys, interviews, observations and documents. Case study research can only be effectual when it relies on these multiple sources of data and explores multiple variables. Yin (2009) substantiates the strength of case research to cope with contexts with a plethora of variables and few data points and the need for data triangulation between multiple sources.

Data captured through the various instruments employed in the inquiry are coded to expose commonalties and themes. It is critical that the researcher also consider and account for

that data which is contradictory. From these themes the researcher builds knowledge within

predefined conceptual and/or theoretical frameworks. This process is essentially an inductive

process of building knowledge.

In-depth descriptions, verbatim accounts and quotes are essential to capturing the

participant perspective which is vital to case studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998;

Creswell, 2007). Commonly referred to as thick, rich descriptive narrative, this defining

attribute of case study inquiry provides a depth and breadth which enlightens the reader and

provides critical opportunity to judge the contextual environment represented by the research.

Stake (1995) identifies three types of case studies; intrinsic, instrumental, and collective.

The intrinsic case study is interested only in the specific case and is not concerned with

providing guidance or knowledge applicable beyond the specific case studied. The instrumental

case provides a broader intention as the learning is intended for application beyond the individual

case (Creswell, 2007). Finally, the collective case study provides expanded understanding into

the phenomenon or a foundation for theorizing.

The case study allows for a greater understanding or to make meaning of the insights,

information and perceptions shared by others. It provides for the exploration of a real-life

problem that is multi-faceted (Yin, 2009). It provides the opportunity to explain the casual

connection in situations that are too complex for an experimental approach and is particularly

well suited to phenomenon that is poorly understood or for which there is little known (Leedy &

Ormrod, 2010).

According to Yin (2009) the case study method investigates a "contemporary

phenomenon within the real-life context, especially when boundaries between phenomenon and

context are not clearly evident" (p. 18). Merriam (1998) concludes the case study is "employed

to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved" (p. 19). The

focus of the case study is process, context and discovery. Marshall and Rossman (1999)

confirm the notion of the case study focus as delving into "complexities and processes" (p. 57) in

the absence of specific identified variables. Furthermore, Marshall and Rossman (2006) make

the distinction that the case study is seeking the "real" context over the stated context.

> We conduct qualitative research because we need a complex, detailed understanding of
> the issue. This detail can only be established by talking directly with people, going to
> their places of work, and allowing them to tell the stories unencumbered by what we
> expect to find or what we have read in the literature. We conduct qualitative research
> when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and
> minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the
> participants in a study. (Creswell, 2007, p. 40)

The case is bound by community colleges that have gone through the process of deciding

whether to confer the baccalaureate degrees. Considerable debate in the literature on the

benefits and detriments of authorizing the community college baccalaureate makes this a topic of

contemporary debate. There is no doubt that the contextual conditions of the community college

baccalaureate decision are highly pertinent to the final outcome for each institution that has

navigated the decision process. Yin (2009) states, that "you would use the case study method

because you wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth (p. 18). Swanson and Holton

(2005) confirm this view of the case study being "appropriate when the researcher is interested in

the process or seeks an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon because of its uniqueness" (p.

330).

The inquiry strategy for this research employed a case study approach in the qualitative

interpretive paradigm. The research purpose demanded a holistic in-depth and reflective

methodology. The community college baccalaureate decision research problem corresponded

well with the characteristics and strengths of the qualitative interpretive case study. A holistic

approach was employed in the design and execution of the inquiry.

Case Selection

This study is a single bounded case study of six institutions who have navigated through

a decision process considering offering of community college baccalaureate degrees. The

purpose of the research leads to the sampling method and the selection of the sites and the

participants for study. Decisions regarding where to conduct research and whom to include are

essential to the research validity (Maxwell, 1996). The criterion for case selection and the

sampling methodology follow from the purpose of the study.

A purposeful sampling technique incorporating maximum variation was used for site and

participant selection. Purposeful sampling is a non-random sampling technique where

information rich cases are studied in depth because they can inform the research (Creswell, 2007;

Speziale & Carpenter, 2007; Patton, 2002). The process of purposeful sampling allows the

researcher to focus in on people or events which they believe will be critical for the research

(Dane, 1990). According to Creswell (2007), the concept of purposeful sampling

> … means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can
> purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in
> the study. Decisions need to be made about who or what should be sampled, what form
> the sampling will take, and how many sites or people need to be sampled (p.125).

Purposeful sampling is appropriate in cases where the population is unknown or where

the researcher wishes to concentrate on instances which display wide variety or even focus on

extreme cases (Creswell, 2007). For this study the population of community colleges who chose

not to offer community college baccalaureate degrees is unknown. In addition, this research

seeks to include diverse sites through maximum variation to "document diverse variations" and identify "important patterns" (Creswell, 2007).

Maximum variation seeks representativeness through a wide range of extremes, emphasizing divergent perspectives and contexts (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; List, 2004; Patton, 2002). Focusing on wide variation in the sample population along dimensions of interest may reveal unique insights and can also detect important common patterns that cut across variation. Maximum variation is important to this study to uncover differences and common patterns associated with the institutions that decided to confer baccalaureate degrees and those that did not.

Each site was considered instrumental in and of itself to learning about the decision process and key factors considered in the community college baccalaureate decision. There are no closely defined rules for sample size (Baum 2002, Patton, 2002), however qualitative research usually relies on small numbers with the aim of revealing depth and detail to the research (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002). The number of sites was limited to six to balance the depth of inquiry with the breadth of findings appropriate to the research purpose (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

The site selection criteria were based on three public community college attributes: (1) the college followed a decision process to decide the question of offering baccalaureate degrees within last three years, (2) geographic location, and (3) the decision process outcome. Table 5 - Site Selection Criteria illustrates the study site section criteria for community colleges.

Table 5 - Site Selection Criteria

Order	Attribute	Process	Sampling method	Purpose
1	Employed decision process to evaluate community college baccalaureate decision within last three years	Nomination from experts in the field	Purposeful sampling	Include institutions that have evaluated the community college baccalaureate offering
2	Geographic location	Carnegie Foundation classification data	Maximum variation sampling	Explore differences associated with urbanization
3	Decision outcome	Nomination from experts in the field	Maximum variation sampling	Explore variation associated with decision outcomes

A nomination process using experts in the field of community college baccalaureates assisted in identifying sites which met the first selection criterion: community colleges that have employed a decision process within the last three years to evaluate the question to offer a baccalaureate degree. Community colleges which offer community college baccalaureate degrees are well documented. Community colleges that chose not to offer community college baccalaureates are not as well documented and some do not wish to be identified. To overcome the lack of knowledge regarding community colleges that engaged in a process and decided not to offer baccalaureate degrees, subject experts from Community College Baccalaureate Association (CCBA), the Washington State Higher Ed Coordinating Board and their collegial networks were employed to nominate sites for participation in this study.

The second criterion, geographic location, is a maximum variation attribute based on Carnegie Foundation classification data which defines the relative urbanization of the college

site. Institutions, whether rural, suburban or urban, may engage in the decision process differently. Urban, suburban and rural colleges can vary dramatically in the programs offered communities served and student populations, and therefore might consider the question of baccalaureate degrees differently. Including geographic attribute in the selection criteria provided insight to the unique considerations found in dissimilar community college settings.

Carnegie Foundation classification served to generically identify the United States community colleges. Carnegie Foundation classifications include 15 categories of two-year institutions. This research focused on the public community colleges represented in six Carnegie Foundation public associate's degree college classifications. Excluded from the research were private, special-use, tribal colleges, and public two-year colleges under a university system. For the purposes of this study, whether a community college was a single campus or a multiple-campus institution was irrelevant. Carnegie Foundation Classification Categories for Public Associate's Degree Colleges

- Public Rural-serving Medium
- Public Rural-serving Large
- Public Suburban-serving Single Campus
- Public Suburban-serving Multi-campus
- Public Urban-serving Single Campus
- Public Urban-serving Multi-campus

Decision outcome is the final criteria and a maximum variation attribute. This study includes sites that decided to confer community college baccalaureate degrees and those that chose not to confer community college baccalaureate degrees. Therefore, three community colleges deciding in favor of offering community college baccalaureate degrees and three that did not were selected each aligned with one of the three categories of urban, suburban and rural.

Participant College Contact Protocol

A contact protocol was established to ensure uniformity of the contact procedures   and consistency of the multi-phase data collection process. Participants at the community college sites were purposely selected as being "knowledgeable and experienced in the area" being studied (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 64). Each participant was intimately involved in the decision process under study.   The following sequence was utilized with each participant college as a contact protocol for participant selection.

Recruitment for participants followed the selection of the sites to include in the study. Initial contact was made with the president of the college (site) and an invitation was extended to include the college in the study.   Following confirmation from the president that the site could be included in the study, the president was asked to suggest a senior administrator with significant involvement in the decision process to confer baccalaureate degrees to participate in the study.   The president was allowed to nominate him/herself as the participant.

Where the president offered another senior administrator, that administrator was then contacted, briefed on the research, and invited to participate.   Six participants were selected for the research, one from each of the selected sites. Each of the six invitees accepted the invitation to participate.

Data Collection

Primary data collection for this research consisted of pre-interview survey, face-to-face interviews, post-interview survey, documents, and field notes. Data was collected to fulfill the intent of the research and to answer the driving questions. Variety of data collection sources is beneficial for triangulation of the data and enhances validity of the findings.

A sequential multi-method process was used for data collection as depicted in Figure 2 - . This multi-method sequential process allowed the researcher to build on the data collected in earlier steps to inform the subsequent data collection steps. According to Creswell & Plano-Clark (2006) "the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (p. 18).
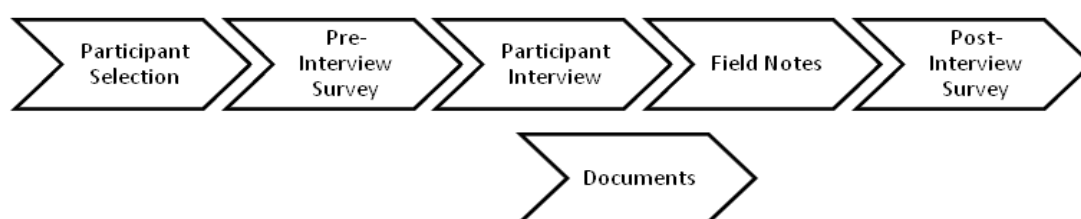
Figure 2 - Multi-Method Sequential Data Collection

Survey, Pre-Interview Questionnaire

A pre-interview survey was administered to each of the six participants through online survey service, Survey Monkey. A copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A. The function of the pre-interview questionnaire was to obtain demographics and background information on the interview participant and the college site providing context for the data analysis.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method. The open ended question format fostered the exploratory nature of the research by encouraging participants to respond in their own voice (their perspectives) (Hoepfl, 1997; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The

benefit of using face-to-face interviews is that the interviewer has the opportunity to establish rapport with participants and to gain their trust and cooperation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Essential to the use of interviews in qualitative research is to listen. Seidman (2006) in his book titled *Listen More, Talk Less* identifies three levels of "listening" for the interviewer: (1) listen for what the participant is saying, (2) listen for the inner voice versus the public voice, and finally (3) be attentive to the non-verbal cues. By listening in this fashion the interviewer is able to discern a greater level of detail and understanding of the participant's viewpoint.

The semi-structured format of the interviews allowed the researcher to interact with the participants in a relaxed conversational environment that fostered openness in dialogue and allowed the researcher to ask probing and clarifying questions (Creswell, 2007; Given, 2008). Exchange between the researcher and the participant included opportunities for the participant to ask questions and the researcher to provide answers (Given, 2008). These supplemental lines of questioning, assisted in verifying understanding and expanding the responses of the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Documents

According to Stake (1995) "Almost every study finds some need for examining newspapers, annual reports, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and the like. Gathering data by studying documents follows the same line of thinking as observing or interviewing" (p. 68). Furthermore, Stake (1995) observes that documents serve as substitute records for activities the researcher is not able to observe directly. The static nature of documents provides a reflection of what happened. They portray what was captured in the moment of their creation. Since they are not susceptible to the limitations of memory recall the data they contain is strongly valid.

Content analysis of the documents was invaluable to understanding details of the events, timelines and decisions

Participants were encouraged to share copies of documents associated to the decision process and outcomes that they were comfortable sharing. Documents included board summaries and internal communications where they existed. Searches of website content and media reports revealed electronic documents related to the community college baccalaureate deliberations.

Field Notes

Field notes employed throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the study were both observational (descriptive) and reflective. Descriptive field notes are a running detailed description of the events, people, and activities experienced and may include drawings, maps and photos (Creswell, 2007; Hoepfl, 1997). According to Patton (2002), descriptive field notes "should contain everything that the observer believes to be worth noting" (p. 302). Morse and Field (1995) however, call on researchers to go beyond what they believe is worth noting.

> Initially, the research may not know what constitutes important aspects of context in a particular situation and therefore should make notes on everything, even if it does not appear useful and relevant at the time. In this way, a more accurate picture of the context for the research will be obtained (Morse & Field 1995, p. 76).

Lofland and Lofland (1984) observed the difficulty of writing extensive notes during an observation or interview and recommended jotting down notes that would serve as a memory aid at a later time. So as not to distract from the interview and to maintain focus on the participant, only summary notations were taken during the interview process. The descriptive field notes were completed more fully immediately following the interview in a quiet place.

Reflective notes differ from the objective viewpoint of the descriptive notes in that they reflect the researchers own interpretation of the observed. They are a record the researcher's perceptions and are the written account of what the researcher reflects on during the course of qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2007). Reflective field notes keep the researcher aware of their personal bias and encourage an objective interpretation of the information gathered from the study participants. In addition, according to Bogdan and Biklen (2007) the researcher uses field notes to record ideas, reflections, perceptions, intuitions, and record thoughts on emerging patterns.

Survey, Post-Interview Questionnaire

Based on the data collected a secondary quantitative survey was constructed and administered to the participants. Based on initial interviews decision factors identified by participants were condensed into common themes or designations. These themes were Levin's (2001) four domains: political, cultural, information and economic. This mapping of decision factor terms to the domains was not presented to the participants prior to the final research publication. The survey collected the participant's perception of the relative importance of each decision factor on a Likert like-scale.

The data on the importance of decision factors was intended to reveal the balance or lack of balance across Levin's (2001) four domains. First the coding of decision factors across the domains provided insight into the variety of factors considered in each of the domains. Subsequent rating of the factors on the Likert like-scale provided insight into the relative weight applied to the four domains and how the four domains supported the policy decision of community college baccalaureate degrees. Furthermore, the results of this survey gave the

researcher the ability to analyze the decision factors importance across all institutions and to different subsets of the institutions.

Ethical Considerations

A qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that arise throughout the process of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 1998). It is important for the researcher to respect and protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of the research participants. Throughout all steps of the research process, conscientious observance of ethical standards and principles is essential.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined two guiding principles for ethical research as the following: (a) participants enter research studies voluntarily understanding the nature, obligations and dangers; and (b) participants are not exposed to undue risks greater than what would be gained from involvement in the research. In order to protect participants in this study, adherence to generally accepted ethical research tenets was maintained. The study design and procedures were approved by the National-Louis University Institutional Research Review Broad (IRRB) and served to guide the research.

Participant consent forms (Appendix B), which spelled out the participant involvement and their rights were shared with the participants prior to acceptance into the study and again prior to the face-to-face interview.   Prior to the interview, participants signed two copies of the consent form.   One copy was for the participant and the other copy was retained for the researcher's files.

A transcriptionist was employed to transcribe the audio files from each interview. Audio files were provided to the transcriptionist who secured the audio and subsequent data files while

in their possession. Prior to gaining access to the audio files, the transcriptionist signed the

Transcriptionist Confidentiality form Appendix C.

Anonymity can never be absolutely guaranteed and this research presented a significant

challenge to disguising the identity of participating sites and individuals. The list of community

colleges who decided in favor of offering baccalaureate degrees is small and well publicized.

Despite this challenge, every effort was made to maintain the anonymity of the participants and

their respective sites through securing access to the research data to only the researcher and use

of pseudonyms in the final report.

Data Collection Pilot

To improve the research process, the survey, interview questions and procedure were

piloted with two peer reviewers (pilot-participants). The peer reviewers were individuals with

knowledge in the area of community college baccalaureate policy decision making but were not

participants in the study. The pilot provided an opportunity for the researcher to hone his

interviewing skills and to elicit feedback on quality aspects of the survey and interview

questions. Minor adjustments were made to the research instruments as a result of the feedback.

No data acquired through the pilot surveys and interviews were included in the study results.

Data Storage

After transcribing of the interviews, only the researcher had continuous access to the

data. All paper documents were destroyed after being transferred to digital format. All digital

documents, recordings, photographs and field notes are stored in redundant encrypted storage.

All data and documents will be retained for five years after which it will be destroyed using

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) media sanitation overwriting technique.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is not a one-size-fits-all exercise; rather, it is comprised by multiple re-iterations applicable to the specific research (Preissle, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Data collection and analysis occurred concurrently in a process of iterative analysis to build understanding (Yin, 2009). A priori themes were derived from the literature review not only situated the research but informed the data analysis. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the use of a priori themes helps focus the data "without losing juice or meaning" (p. 155). At the beginning of the analytical process, data is examined in a larger descriptive context facilitating coding and categorization of themes.

> The first version of an index is often largely descriptive and heavily rooted in a priori issues. It is then applied to a few transcripts when categories will be refined and become more responsive to emergent and analytical themes. For these refinements, the researcher looks for conceptualizations which encapsulate and represent diversity of experience, attitude, circumstances, etc. (Miles & Huberman, 2002, p. 314).

Narrative analysis, content analysis and analytic induction were used in analyzing the data collected. Preliminary analysis was done after each survey and interview. Transcribed interviews, surveys, documents and field notes were reviewed and data was coded and recoded until themes began to emerge. Despite having *a priori* codes identified from the literature review, the initial analysis was performed using open coding techniques to ensure capture of all potential themes contained within the data (Given, 2008, Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Flick, 2006). This initial phase requires creative thought to allow the observation of the unseen or the unobvious. Corbin and Strauss (2008) clarify this initial creative phase by stating "it means putting aside preconceived notions about what the researcher expects to find in the research, and letting the data and interpretation of it guide analysis" (p. 160). This technique allows for thoughtful review

of the data or "to break open the data" so that all possible meanings and insights can be discovered (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 59).

Open coding was pursued to the point where the researcher was unable to uncover new or interesting relationships between who, what, when, how, why, what for, by which, and how much (Flick, 2006; Given, 2008). Coding then enable the allocation of data into appropriate categories in order to ascertain themes. As the discovery of new themes and concepts waned, analysis turned to a focused coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Given, 2008). Focused coding is more selective coding seeks to uncover the specific links and commonalities between and among data categories of themes.

During each of the analytical stages thoughts and ideas are recorded about the analysis in field notes. Miles and Huberman (1994) referred to this as memoing. Memos allow for the examination of the data in new ways and the scrutiny of new ideas and enhanced definition of relationships among categories (Knowles & Cole, 2008). According to Sherman and Webb (1988) memoing allows for quick and spontaneous recording of ideas in order "to capture the initially elusive and shifting connections within the data" (p. 135).

Triangulation of data from different sources serves to facilitate validation of findings through use of more than two data sources (Flick, Von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004; Creswell & Miller, 2000). Creswell and Miller (2000) suggest the purpose is to seek "convergence among multiple and different forms of information to form theories or categories" (p. 126). Denzin (1989) expands the concept of triangulation to include two types appropriate to this research: *Data triangulation* (different data sources), *methodological triangulation* (methods for data collection).

This study incorporated design elements for data source triangulation and methodological (data collection) triangulation. Data source triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of six participants selected to provide breadth of meaning through variation of sites and circumstances. Three participants each were selected for those colleges that have decided in favor of offering baccalaureate degrees and those who have decided against. To achieve methodological triangulation, a multi-method data collection design was used which provided a variety of data collection instruments including surveys, interviews and document reviews.

There is no doubt, data analysis is completed through the interpretative lens of the researcher. According to Creswell (2007), "researchers engage in interpreting the data when they conduct qualitative research" (p. 157). The process of interpretation starts during the collection phase and continues throughout the research in an iterative cycle of collection and deciphering that culminates in the final interpretation. Interpretation encompasses making sense of the data and extrapolating the lessons learned (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Trustworthiness: Confirmability, Credibility, Transferability, Dependability

Research quality is of vital importance and concern for all academic research. Quantitative research is concerned with the scientific notions of reliability and validity. Reliability referred to in quantitative research relates to the consistency of repeated measurements, stability of measurement across time and the similarity of measurements within a given time (Kirk & Miller, 1986). According to Bridges, Smeyers and Smith (2009) "validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are" (p. 129). Klenke (2008) claims "reliability and validity are

fundamental concerns in quantitative research but seem to have an uncertain place in the repertoire of the qualitative researcher" (p. 37).

To address this uncertainty Bogdan and Biklen (2007) assert "Some people may use an extremely narrow definition of science, calling only a research that is deductive and hypothesis-testing scientific. But part of the scientific attitude, is to be open-minded about method and evidence. Scientific research involves rigorous and systematic empirical inquiry that is data-based. Qualitative research meets these requirements" (p. 42). According to Golafshani (2003) the differing purposes of the qualitative and quantitative research makes the concept of reliability irrelevant in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) go so far as to stress that the researcher must persuade the reader that the findings of the research are worth paying attention to. This is the key succinctly put by Merriam (2002): the research itself must stand alone, persuading the reader of the "trustworthiness" of the findings (p. 15).

Trustworthiness examines the methodological integrity of a study. Frameworks for trustworthiness in qualitative studies differ among leaders in the qualitative research field.

Table 6 - Comparison of Trustworthiness Frameworks, lists the concepts and the frameworks from Lincoln & Guba, Yin, and Stake. These frameworks are designed to give the reader confidence in the findings of research.

Table 6 - Comparison of Trustworthiness Frameworks

Trustworthiness Concept	Lincoln & Guba (1985)	Yin (1994)	Stake (2004)
Objectivity	Confirmability: Data tracked to its source, explicit interpretation logic	Construct validity: multiple sources of evidence, established chain of evidence	Naturalistic generalizations: Researcher bias, methodology
Internal Validity	Credibility: Prolonged and substantial engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, progressive subjectivity, member checks, triangulation	Internal validity: pattern matching, explanation building, negative case analysis, logic models	Consequential validity: triangulated data sources, "substantial body of uncontestable description" (p. 110)
External Validity	Transferability: Extensive and vigilant description of time, place, context and culture	External validity: replicabilty, theoretical frameworks	Naturalistic generalizations: peer review
Reliability	Dependability: audit trail	Reliability: documented research procedures, strict adherence to procedures	Naturalistic generalizations: detailed procedures

For this study the four components of trustworthiness identified by Lincoln & Guba (1985) were used; confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability. Table 7- Components of Trustworthiness in this Study list the methods used to address trustworthiness and rigor of this study along with the description of the method and the component of trustworthiness to which it applies.

Table 7- Components of Trustworthiness in this Study

Trustworthiness Aid	Description	In Support of
Audit Trail	Researcher maintained an audit trail which served as a record of how the study unfolded	Confirmability Dependability
Maximum Variation	To broaden the scope of understanding and application, purposeful sampling with maximum variation of size and environment was employed	Transferability
Member Checking	Participants were requested to review interview transcripts and study results to confirm understanding.	Credibility
Negative Case Analysis	Attention was given to negative cases and contradictory evidence providing the reader the assurance the study included findings that were potentially contradictory	Confirmability
Peer Review	Pilot interviews were conducted with knowledgeable persons in the field of study to improve the interview methods and data collection instruments	Credibility
Research Design	Research design was developed appropriate to the research questions and adherence to the methodology was consistently maintained throughout the study	Dependability
Triangulation of Data	Multi-method data gathering technique was employed	Credibility
Triangulation of Sources	Multiple sources were used to gather the perspectives of those who decided for and those who decided against conferring baccalaureate degrees. Six total participants were engaged	Credibility
Thick rich description	The use of the participants words and "rich, thick" descriptions provides a breadth of understanding that the reader can use to ascertain the applicability of the research to their situation	Transferability

Confirmability

Confirmability seizes on the concept of objectivity. Davis and Buskist (2008) define confirmability as the "degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others" (p. 100). To achieve confirmability, research methods were employed to verify and confirm the data. An audit trail of data collection and analysis was employed throughout the research to assure that research design process was adhered to. In addition, negative case analysis was employed as part of the research design to assure that the researcher did not only find that which was anticipated but also identified those data that presented contradictions to the findings.

Credibility

According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) credibility is akin to the conventional criterion of internal validity and is a major criterion of trustworthiness. Credibility is constructed in the "believability" of the findings based on the data. In the judgment of the study participants and the readers, it is essential for data presented from multiple sources to explicitly lead to the findings and conclusions. Credibility, which relies on rigorous methods and integrity of the researcher, was addressed through strict adherence to the study design and the transparency of the researcher as a tool (Patton, 2002). Member-checking and peer review were also techniques used in this research as methods for developing credibility.

Member-checking provides the opportunity to correct errors of fact and amend interpretation adding to the overall adequacy of a study (Murphy & Dingwall, 2003). Accordingly, member-checking puts the respondent on record as having agreed that the researcher "got it right". Lincoln and Guba (1985) assert that "the member check is probably a reasonably valid way to establish the meaningfulness of the findings and interpretations" (p.

315). The opportunity to review a draft may provide opportunities to produce further evidence as participants may recall new material that they had forgotten during the initial data collection (Yin, 1994). Member-checking was used following the interview and to ascertain the researcher had clear understanding and provided the opportunity for participants to correct errors and omissions.

Peer review, or peer debriefing as Lincoln and Guba (1985) term it, is the process of revealing the preliminary research findings to a disinterested protagonist for the purposes of surveying aspects of the inquiry. Willis, Jost and Nilakanta (2007) posit that peer reviewers should challenge the researcher with opinions on emerging conclusions, differing frameworks for analyzing the data and provide suggestions on the study. The peer review process provides a standard of "quality control" by assisting the researcher to see past their own implicit assumptions (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Peer review was used throughout this research to help the researcher see past his implicit understanding and to make explicit those constructs and to help guide the exploration of new ideas.

Dependability

Dependability sometimes referred to as reliability or auditability, answers the question is the process of the study consistent and reasonably stable over time and across researchers and methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 278)? For qualitative research situated in the interpretive paradigm, the researcher is responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting, illuminating how and in what ways those affected the approach to data collection and analysis. Dependability is inherently embedded in the research design and relies on the consistency and fit of the process and methods to appropriately address the research topic.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), dependability can be determined through one "properly managed" audit. To establish dependability, the established audit trail examines the process by which the various stages of the study, including analytic techniques, were conducted.   In addition, transparency and rationale of procedure decisions also assist to corroborate the dependability of study findings.

Transferability

Naturalistic qualitative inquiry relies on a presentation of "solid descriptive data" and "thick description" to achieve transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). This thick description is achieved through broad representation of the situation and extensive quotations, to make the experience come alive for the reader (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Stake (1995) asserts "thick description is not complexities objectively described, it is the particular perceptions of the actors" (p.42).

During the presentation of the data analysis, the reader is immersed in the details of the interviews.   The voice of the participant is brought to light and exposed for the reader to hear. Field notes and documents were used to build context and to establish the setting of the participant and the site. The process of exposing the reality of the participants provides the necessary perspective for the reader to make judgments of applicability of the study to their own situation.

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

All studies have inherent weaknesses or limitation within their design (Locke et al., 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). Leedy and Ormrod (2010) assert "Good researchers know–and they also report–the weaknesses along with the strengths of their research". With

qualitative research, limitations are acknowledged as the natural boundaries and help to define what the study is and is not (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). While some limitations can be minimized through specific actions or methodology others simply need be acknowledged as realities of the study design. Limitations in this research were two: (a) small participant pool of participants (those community college having been involved in this decision process), and (b) recall or ability to share the decision-making details and process.

The relatively small pool of colleges that have considered offering community college baccalaureates is not well known. The lack of publicity around those colleges that have decided to forgo conferring baccalaureate degrees made it difficult to know the entire universe of site options. In addition, the well-publicized nature of those who decided in the affirmative, present a challenge to disguising and retaining the anonymity of the sites and participants. Therefore, experts in the field were relied on to provide qualified candidate institutions.

Participant's memory of the events and/or the ability to share the full story of the community college baccalaureate decision process is essential to achieving the objective of this research. Yow (2005) details the significance of memory in oral history including the psychological and physical influences, individual versus collective memory and effects of the interviewer-participant relationship on memory. In addition to the vagaries of memory, the relatively political nature of strategic decisions of the nature of community college baccalaureate degrees may impact the willingness of participants to share in great detail information about the people and process. The researcher created an environment that was approachable and safe for participants to share openly their experience and insights. Even in this environment the

researcher can never be certain the participant shared fully. Nonetheless, insights gained from this study contribute to the literature on this phenomenon.

Researcher as Research Instrument

Qualitative research in the interpretive paradigm does not pretend to be objective.   The qualitative researcher sees this subjectivity as strength of the paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Willis, Jost & Nilakanta, 2007; Creswell, 2007). It is the role of the interprevist researcher to explore, to reflect, to situate and contextualize. It is owing to the researcher's facilitative interaction that the participants share rich data regarding their experiences. It is through the researcher communications flow, information is gathered, and understanding is built of the multiple perspectives and realities.   Since the researcher is the tool and/or instrument through which data is collected and analyzed, it is essential for the reader to have an understanding of the researcher's prior experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

First experiences in the community college setting for this researcher were as a dual-credit student in high school. Following graduation from high school he attended community college as a fulltime student earning his Associate of Arts (AA) degree before moving on to a four year university. He attended Northern Illinois University where he obtained Bachelor of Science degrees in Computer Science and Marketing and later where he received his Master of Business Administration degree. He spent 20 years in management positions in a variety of business and industry sectors.   In 2006, he began his professional community college career at a very large suburban community college as a senior administrator, Vice-President of Technology. In this role, he has responsibility for all aspects of information technology planning, acquisition,

development and operations for the College. In addition to the more traditional information technology responsibilities, he has responsibility for multiple prominent auxiliary units. Participation at the senior level has provided substantial opportunity to influence both operational and strategic direction of the College.

Prior to joining the community college in 2006 the researcher held progressive posts in a variety of industries including transportation, financial, manufacturing and distribution. In his most recent position the researcher had responsibility for an international information technology organization with operations in China, United Kingdom, Germany, Slovakia, Italy, France, India, and the United States. This experience impacted his perspective on United States education and led the researcher to his current position within the community college.

The researcher is cognizant of the impact his background and prior experiences had on data collection and interpretation. It is important for the qualitative researcher to be reflective and openly willing to entertain differing points of view and perspectives. As an analytic who tends toward the positivist paradigm the researcher has become more receptive to the less prescriptive, socially constructed knowledge attained through qualitative interpretive research.

<div align="center">**Summary**</div>

This chapter detailed the community college baccalaureate (CCB) decision factors and process research design. It laid out the rationale for selecting a qualitative research methodology situated in the interpretive paradigm. Site and participant selection was performed using a purposeful sampling strategy. The design defined the instrumentation used and subsequent steps in analyzing the data.

Consideration was given to the comfort and wellbeing of the participants and their sites. Protection of participant anonymity and confidentially of their information they so kindly shared was considered a priority in the course of this research.

Every reasonable measure was applied to ensure trustworthiness throughout the study. The attention to detail and meticulous adherence to the study design and methodology throughout the course of the research served to assure the results of the study were arrived at in a manner that fostered the value of the research. Transparency was advanced through the self revelation of the researcher and his role as an instrument in the qualitative paradigm.

Limitations of the study were two: (a) the small population of the colleges who considered community college baccalaureates and (b) the willingness or ability of participants to recall all that went on during the deliberations to offer community college baccalaureates were identified in recognition of uncontrollable environmental factors that could influence the findings and their transferability to other situations.

Transferability, though left to the reader, will be enhanced by the audit trail or transparency showing the pathways to the findings. That is the applicability of the findings to the reader's particular circumstances is a function of the reader's assessment as to the fit of the research to their unique situation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA COLLECTION

Introduction

Data from qualitative research can reveal insights into emergent topics about which little are known. The research is designed to facilitate an organized interaction through which the lived experiences of the participants are divulged to the researcher. The data of the qualitative research is intended to "make-sense" of the participants' intimate experience in relation to the purpose of the study. This chapter describes the data collection techniques, introduces the site and participant demographic data, discloses the inventory of archival documents acquired, and highlights the top decision factors as rated by the participants. In addition, as pertinent information and data collected provides a more complete context of the research sites and/or a more in depth understanding of the decisions made by these colleges, it is included to add clarity.

Research Components

Quality of the research is dependent on many elements, one being a faithful disciplined execution of the research data collection plan. For this reason a plan is developed prior to commencing data gathering. From the onset of the inquiry, the researcher records field notes and is simultaneously collecting, coding and analyzing the data (Sherman & Webb, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The data collection plan for this research consisted of six components: 1) site and participant selection, 2) demographic & data survey, 3) participant interviews, 4) archival document collection, 5) factor survey, and 6) field notes (observation and reflective) which are collected and reviewed throughout the research. Field notes are generated throughout the research process documenting the field experience in descriptive notes as well as the thoughts

and insights of the researcher in reflective notes.   Figure 3 - Continuous Use of Field Notes

throughout Each Step of Data Collection highlights the six components comprising the complete

protocol for data collection in the research plan and indicates the continuous and extensive use of

field notes throughout each step in of data collection.

Six Component Data Collection Process

Field Notes Descriptive & Reflective

Participant Selection → Demographic & data Survey → Interview → Document collection → Factor Survey
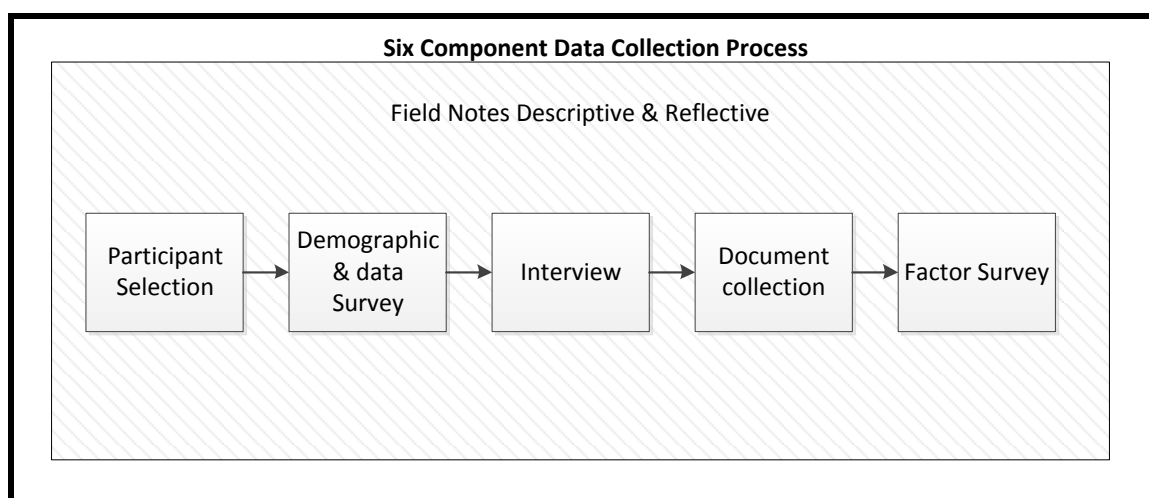
Figure 3 - Continuous Use of Field Notes throughout Each Step of Data Collection

Component One: Site And Participant Selection

The study design was crafted to interview six participants at six sites using a purposeful

maximum variation sampling methodology intended to reveal the similarities and differences

between institutions (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Johnson & Christensen).   As

the purpose of the study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that

influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees, an enhanced

maximum variation sampling strategy was employed to elicit a more encompassing perspective.

Therefore, the participants and thus their respective community colleges were divided between

two groups; those that decided to confer the community college baccalaureate and those that

decided not to confer.   Within each of the two decision demographics, participant sites were

selected along a spectrum of population density (urban, suburban and rural). Table 8-Table of

Research Site Profiles and Mnemonics illustrates the spectrum of participant sites for the study

and assigns mnemonics to each. The mnemonic is derived from the population designation (U-

urban, Suburban, Rural) and the decision outcome (CCB – community college baccalaureate,

AO – associates only).

Table 8-Table of Research Site Profiles and Mnemonics

| | | Population Density | | |
		Urban	Suburban	Rural
Research Profile	**Decision to offer CCBs**	(UCCB)	(SCCB)	(RCCB)
	Decision not to offer CCBs	(UAO)	(SAO)	

Appropriate community college sites for the study were identified through the assistance

of experts in the field and contacts in the field of higher education. Based on a strategy of

purposeful sampling plus maximum variation technique, sites were selected from across the

United States based on matrix variation in population density equating into the common

descriptors of urban, suburban and rural locations and whether or not the college decided to offer

community college baccalaureate degree(s) (CCB).   Figure 4 - Distribution of Research across

the United States, illustrates the wide geographical dispersion of research sites across the United

States.

Distribution of Research Sites
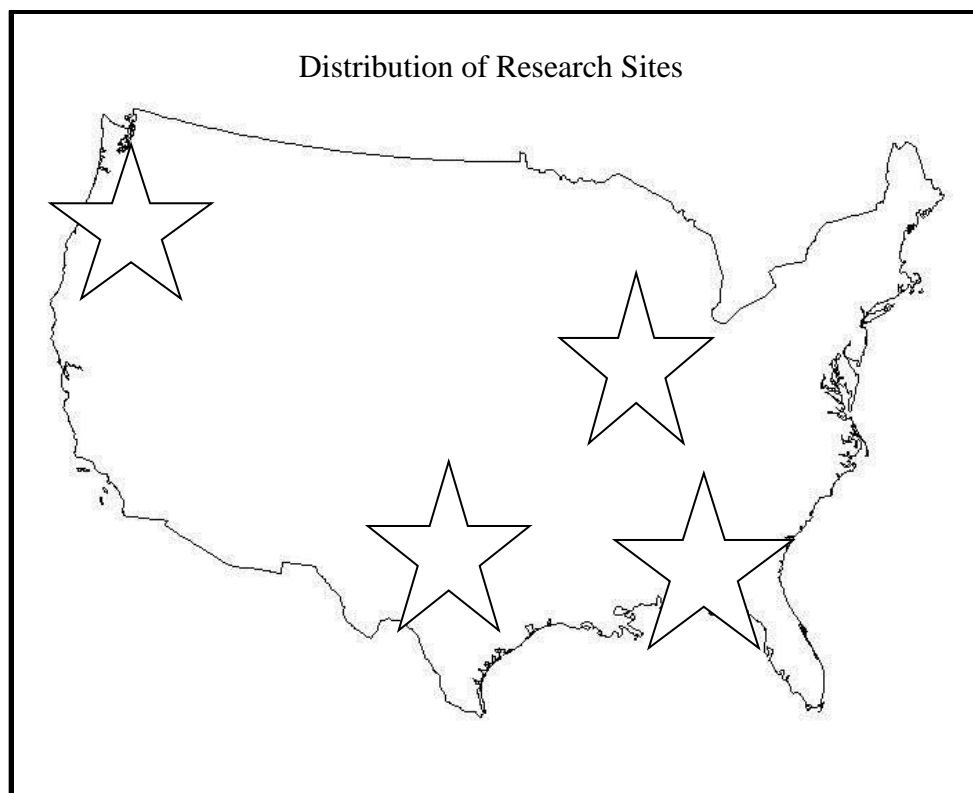
Figure 4 - Distribution of Research across the United States

Participant sites were identified for each of the demographic combinations with the

exception of the rural college who decided not to offer the community college baccalaureate.

Extensive attempts to identify a rural community college that had reviewed the option to offer a

community college baccalaureate but did not do so were not successful. Therefore, although

significant and repeated attempts were made to procure six sites as proposed in the research

design, only five community colleges and participants were included in the final research.

Institutional characteristics.

It is important to identify and discover key characteristics of research sites as they

provide context to understanding the participant's environment and the setting in which the

decision to confer baccalaureate degrees occurred. The pre-interview survey, conducted through

Survey Monkey, included questions on institutional characteristics. Carnegie basic classification

was added to the institutional demographics requested through survey, to develop a more

complete picture of the participant colleges. Together these two sources of institutional

information, compiled in Table 9 - Institution Demographics & Assigned Mnemonic, build a

profile to enhance understanding of these community colleges and enable transferability of the

research findings.

Table 9 - Institution Demographics & Assigned Mnemonic

College Mnemonic	Student FTE	CCBs Offered	Community College Status Retention	Four-year Partnerships on Campus	Decision Participants	Carnegie Basic Classification
UCCB	>10,000	yes	State – yes Accred - no	yes	Administrators Trustees	Assoc/Pub-U
SCCB	>10,000	yes	State – no Accred - no	yes	Administrators Trustees Faculty Staff Students Third Parties	Assoc/Pub-S
RCCB	2,000-4,999	yes	State – yes Accred - no	no	Administrators Trustees Third Parties	Assoc/Pub-R
UAO	> 10,000	no	n/a	yes	Administrators Trustees Third Parties Faculty	Assoc/Pub-U
SAO	>10,000	no	n/a	yes	Administrators Trustees	Assoc/Pub-S

Size of an institution conveys a certain expectation regarding resource availability, scope

of programs and curriculum. Student population, as defined by annual full-time equivalent, is

one such measure of institutional size. The two urban colleges and the two suburban colleges each were in excess of 10,000 annual full-time equivalent (FTE) students. The sole rural college was small with annual full-time student equivalents under 5,000. It might have served the study to find an escalating scale of student population moving from rural to suburban to urban sites. However, the lack of differentiation in annual full-time equivalent category between urban and suburban colleges used in this study should not serve to dissuade one that they are in fact different settings in other important aspects.

For those sites which ultimately decided to confer baccalaureate degrees, the research sought to determine whether the institution retained its community college status with the accrediting agency and with the state. Change from community college status to another designation might signal a significant shift from the traditional community college mission. Of the three sites in the study which decided to confer the baccalaureate degree, it was found that the accrediting agencies recognized each of these colleges as four-year institutions as a result of the decision. Once the accrediting agency approves a four-year degree the college moves into the realm of a four-year college easing the approval process for subsequent four-year degrees.

In only one case, did the state change the designation of these three colleges. However, this may be primarily semantics as the state continues to require that college to remain an open access institution and the college continues as an Associates Dominate institution per the Carnegie Classification. From the perspective of this particular institution that had its designation changed by the state in which it resides, it has retained its traditional community college mission by expanding into the four-year degree as a way to serve the community.

Local access to baccalaureate degree is a key aspect for place bound community college students. Floyd (2006) identified four pathways to the a baccalaureate for community college students: (a) articulation model, (b) extension model, (c) university center model, and (d) community college baccalaureate model. Both the extension and university center models entail four-year institutions making available classes within or nearby the community college. Four of the five sites included in the study had at least one four-year institution on site providing courses. However, the one college that reported no on-campus university courses is rural and did choose to offer baccalaureate degree.

Site and participant contact protocol.

It is essential to enhance the validity of a research study, to develop a contact protocol for uniformity of approach to assure consistency of data gathering and analysis. A standard protocol was followed for each site and participant. Presidents at each site were contacted for permission to include the college in the research and to identify a key senior administrator for participation in the study. The key administrator was then invited to participate in the study. Each individual contacted agreed to participate without exception. Table 10 lays out the timing of contacts, surveys and interviews.

Table 10 - Site Contact Protocol for Data Collection

College Mnemonic	President First Contacted	President Authorization	Participant Confirmed	Survey #1	Interview	Survey #2
UCCB	March 4	March 16	April 12	April 12	April 20	Sept. 26
SCCB	March 4	March 15	April 1	May 24	May 25	Feb. 7
RCCB	Jan. 10	Jan. 14	Jan. 24	Jan. 24	Feb. 3	Oct. 4
UAO	March 4	April 28	May 4	May 25	May 25	Dec 6
SAO	Feb 28	Feb 28	May 5	June 8	June 8	Sept 25

Each participant was contacted again shortly before their agreed upon interview date to confirm meeting details including time and place. During one trip airline equipment delays forced a meeting time to be rescheduled to the following day. Through numerous phone calls and emails the scheduled time was able to be adjusted to accommodate the participant and the researchers travel constraints.

Component Two: Participant Demographic and Data Survey

To understand the "lived-experience' it is necessary to gather data and establish a background to understand the event's context and the participant's perspective of the event. Each individual has a unique background, as well as expertise, beliefs, and values, which define and influence their perception of experiences. Likewise, the community college site has a context of its own.

An online survey, delivered to the participants via Survey-Monkey was employed to gather not only basic demographic data but also institutional and decision data. Gathering data through electronic means allowed for quick dissemination, assembly and coding of survey data and results. The survey collected participant descriptive statistics (questions 1-4), institutional statistics (question 5-6), baccalaureate decision and outcome statistics (questions 7-9). Preceding the participant interview, the demographic survey was analyzed to establish a context of the site and participant. This early analysis helped inform the interview stage of the data collection plan through targeted probing follow-up questions.

All the participants in this study were senior administrators selected by the president of their respective community colleges. These senior administrators had direct reporting relationship to the president and participated in the process surround the decision regarding

whether to offer or not offer community college baccalaureate degrees. Tenure in their current position was noticeably diverse ranging from a low of one year to a high of 15 years. All participants had been with their respective institutions for six or more years with one having been only recently promoted into a new administrative role. The participants had a common ethnicity, age and gender. For confidentiality purposes each participant was assigned a participant pseudonym. These mnemonics are used throughout the research report to identify the sites and participants. Relevant participant demographic information is presented in Table 11.

Table 11 - Participant Demographic Data

Institution Mnemonic	Participant Pseudonym	Years in current position	Gender	Age Group	Ethnicity
UCCB	*Ms. Abby*	6	F	>60	White N/H
SCCB	*Dr. Bradford*	1	M	41-45	White N/H
RCCB	*Dr. Crown*	15	M	>60	White N/H
UAO	*Mr. Day*	4	M	55-60	White N/H
SAO	*Mr. Early*	8	M	51-55	White N/H

Component Three: Participant Interviews

A strict contact protocol was followed with each participant's interview characterized by an initial scheduling of the interview, timely arrival and meticulous observance of the agreed upon interview length. Face-to-face interviews were conducted on-sight at the participant's institution and were limited to 90 minutes. Each interview started as scheduled and held tightly

to the interview questions with varied follow-up questions as needed to obtain additional information or clarify participant answers and insights.

All but one of the interviews was conducted with only the researcher and the participant present in the participant's office. SAO community college was the singular exception. The protocol started with the assignment of the appropriate participant by the President, however, this president requested to be in attendance during the interview. In a private conversation between the researcher and the participant, the participant (E) expressed confidence in the arrangement feeling the President's presence at the interview would not have a limiting effect on his answers. During the interview, SAO's president added points of clarification to the discussion on several occasions. While these clarifications were recorded and transcribed, the researcher was cautious in using these comments validating the points with Earl.

Transcripts of the interviews were sent to the participants for review in a process of "member-checking". Only minor modifications were made from the original text in four of the cases. Due to difficulties associated with the interview environment, the recorded interview of Abby was difficult to interpret for the transcriptionist leading to significant editing of the interview text by Abby. The final adjustments were done and confirmed by Abby.

Component Four: Archival Documents

To facilitate the triangulation of data, a request was made to all participants for copies of documents related to the community college baccalaureate decision. In each case participants willing provided some related documents. Some documents were found on participant college web sites and in one case a strategic plan was obtained from the college's library. Documents gathered included board presentation materials, strategic plans, summary analysis and other

supporting documentation to the decision process.   Table 12 - Table of Archival Documents by

Site, contains a matrix of the documents and sites provided by the participants.

Table 12 - Table of Archival Documents by Site

Document	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO
Mission Statement	X	X	X	X	X
Vision Statement	X	X	X	X	X
Values	X	X			X
Strategic Plan		X	X	X	X
Institutional Priorities					X
CCB Board Item				X	X
CCB Anslysis/report	X				X
Trustee Communication					X
Decision Timeline	X				
State Board item	X				

Component Five: Factors Survey

This was the second survey in a sequential- step data collection process. Factors

identified in an initial coding and theming process from the interview transcripts were assembled

into a secondary survey (Appendix D).   This two-stage method for data collection was employed

to layer the participants' perceptions of the relative importance of the combined set of factors

identified during the five interviews.   "Two-step and multi-step sampling is in keeping with the

contextual orientation of qualitative research" (Jensen, 2002, p. 238).

By combining factors discovered in data collection, through a process of data reduction,

the participants were able to rate both factors identified within their interview and those from the

other study participant interviews. The reduction process combined mutual concepts expressed

through different words into a common nomenclature. The process of reduction was approached

cautiously to assure that the aggregating multiple terms into a single term would not unduly lose

contextual meaning. The second survey, which was a follow-up to the interviews, allowed

participants to rate the importance of each factor to their college's decision process on a scale of

one to five; low to high respectively, with an option to designate a factor as *not applicable* .

Globalization is a driving force in curriculum designs for contemporary community

colleges (Carnevale, 2008; Floyd, 2006; Levin, 2001). With this as the backdrop the four

domains of globalization (Levin, 2001) political, social, economic and technology were used as *a*

priori themes for categorizing the survey factors. While these categories were not revealed to

the participants, the factors were sequenced within the survey to keep categories discrete.

Each of the participants completed the survey rating each decision factor on a Likert like

scale from one to five; high importance to low importance respectively. Participants were also

given the option of identifying a factor as not applicable to their decision process. The complete

survey results are included in Appendix E. Analysis of the survey results will be covered in

chapter 5. Table 13 shows the aggregate rating for the top five rated factors used in the decision

process by all participants.

Table 13 - Top five ranked factors

Factor	Aggregate Rating
Program Quality	4.75
Presidential Leadership	4.75
Trustee leadership	4.75
Community perceptions	4.50
Pool of qualified faculty to teach upper level courses	4.50

Component Six: Field Notes

Field notes, which included both observations and reflective notes, were written immediately post-interview. These notes documented the researcher's thoughts and observations of the interview and surroundings. The notes provide context and insight into the environment as well as the interaction between the participant and researcher.   When observed in concert with the interview transcripts these notes illuminate the spoken meaning with visual cues and context observable only in the moment of the interview. In addition, the writing of notes and memoing continued throughout the data collection and analysis process providing an avenue to visually recall situations and perceptions.   This ongoing reflection provided an avenue for the researcher to isolate their personal bias and to concentrate on the meaning of the data gathered through multiple collection methods.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

To enhance the dependability of the study the researcher must provide transparency in the process so the reader can 'know' how the study process unfolded. An audit trail was developed which leaves the process and procedures open to examination. Systematic recording, theming, coding of data are supported through triangulation of data sources which in this study consists of interview transcripts, two surveys, and archival documents. The methods and procedures used in this research were intentional to support consistency, dependability and trustworthiness of the research.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three concurrent streams of qualitative data analysis; (1) data reduction, (2) data display and (3) drawing conclusions. Each of the three activities play a recursive role in influencing the next and previous step in a process of

refinement until no further interpretation or meaning can be derived. Data reduction entails grouping like data together based on a significant attribute, categorizing them so as to develop relationships among and between data from which sense can be made. Displaying and adding meaning may give rise to new ways and courses of performing data reduction. Creswell (2007) visualized this data analysis in the form of a spiral as the researcher progressed from raw data to a final account of the meaning.

Data collected in the course of interviews, surveys and documents were evaluated using the *a priori* themes extracted from the literature. Levin's (2001) book *Globalizing the Community College: Strategies for Change in the 21st Century* provided the four *a priori* themes, (a) political, (b) social, (c) economic and (d) technology, used in the initial coding of the data. Data collected were also evaluated against the framework of strategic planning which served to guide the analysis.

While these frames of reference were applied to the data, the researcher continued to be open and mindful of potential for new and emerging themes. Simons and Chabris (1999) demonstrated in their *selective attention test* that humans focused on a single task can miss obvious data within their field of observation.

> With each eye fixation, we experience a richly detailed visual world. Yet recent work on visual integration and change direction reveals that we are surprisingly unaware of the details of our environment from one view to the next: we often do not detect large changes to objects and scenes ('change blindness'). Furthermore, without attention, we may not even perceive objects ('inattentional blindness'). Taken together, these findings suggest that we perceive and remember only those objects and details that receive focused attention. (Simons & Chabris, 1999, p. 1059)

To avoid these errors the researcher processed data sources multiple times changing the frame of reference with each iteration. The first iteration focused on the four *a priori* themes,

subsequent iterations focused on strategic planning, and finally open context in the search for new undiscovered concepts.

Summary

Chapter 4 described the data collection techniques, presented the research sites and participants, identified the archival documents collected and highlighted the top decision factors as rated by the participants. Two surveys, participant interviews, documents and field notes were accumulated in a six component data collection process designed to uncover the "lived" experience of the participants during their respective institutions process of deciding whether or not to confer baccalaureate degrees.

The credibility of the research process is enhanced through the transparent presentation of the sources of data. Descriptive data was collected about the sites and participants through the first survey.   Interviews collected qualitative data about the decision process and outcomes presented from the participant's vantage point (Appendix F).   Descriptive quantitative rankings of decision factors were gathered through a post interview survey. Archival documents from participant sites were gathered and analyzed to validate the data collected through the other components.   The data collected during the data collection phase of the research will be presented and analyzed in chapter five.

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis and findings of the study. The purpose of this study was to discover insights into process and factors influencing the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees. This study included five participants from five public community colleges located around the United States who generously gave their time and expertise to this study to share their perspective. The participants, as senior leaders in their institutions, were actors in a process to decide whether or not to offer baccalaureate degrees at their respective colleges. Their shared experiences in this process provide a view into the dynamics, leadership and considerations in making complex and very difficult decisions affecting the direction and planning efforts in community colleges.

The five participants participated in a sequential multi-method data gathering process which consisted of a demographic survey, face-to-face interview and a post interview factors survey. The demographic survey informed and set the contextual foundation of the participants. Factors were drawn from the interviews and through a process of data reduction were organized into the second participant survey, the Factor Survey, to capture the participant's perception of each factors importance. Insights into the process and factors will facilitate leaders of community colleges as they approach various difficult and complex decisions. Design of the research is guided by the purpose and the conceptual framework which provides the frame or lens through which the data is viewed and analyzed.

Data Analysis

To enhance the dependability and transferability of the study, transparency must be provided with regards to the process so the reader can 'know' how the study process unfolded. An audit trail was developed which leaves the process and procedures open to examination. Systematic recording, theming, coding of data are supported through triangulation of data sources which in this study consists of interview transcripts, two surveys, and archival documents. The methods, protocols, processes, and procedures used in this research were intentional to support consistency, validity and trustworthiness of the research.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three concurrent streams of qualitative data analysis; (1) data reduction, (2) data display and (3) drawing conclusions. Each of the three activities play a recursive role in influencing the next and previous step in a process of refinement until no further interpretation or meaning can be derived. Data reduction entails grouping like data together based on a significant attribute, categorizing them so as to develop relationships among and between data from which sense can be made. Displaying the data assists in adding meaning and may give rise to new understandings of the data and information obtained. Creswell (2007) visualized this data analysis in the form of a spiral as the researcher progressed from raw data to a final account of the meaning.

Data collected in the course of interviews, surveys and documents were analyzed using the *a priori* themes found in the conceptual framework in the literature review. Levin's (2001) research involving globalization and its effect on community provided the four *a priori* themes, (a) political, (b) social, (c) economic, and (d) technology, used in the initial coding of the data. The strategic planning process also served as an *a priori* lens for data analysis.

While these frames of reference were applied to the data, great care was taken to be open and mindful of potential for new and emerging themes. Simons and Chabris (1999) demonstrated in their *selective attention test* that humans focused on a single task can miss obvious data within their field of observation.

> With each eye fixation, we experience a richly detailed visual world. Yet recent work on visual integration and change direction reveals that we are surprisingly unaware of the details of our environment from one view to the next: we often do not detect large changes to objects and scenes ('change blindness'). Furthermore, without attention, we may not even perceive objects ('inattentional blindness'). Taken together, these findings suggest that we perceive and remember only those objects and details that receive focused attention. (Simons & Chabris, 1999, p. 1059)

To avoid these errors or inattention, data sources were processed multiple times changing the frame of reference with each iteration. The first iteration focused on the four *a priori* themes, subsequent iterations focused on strategic planning, and finally an open context in the search for new undiscovered emerging themes.

Data presentation in this chapter will conform to specific protocols to enhance clarification of findings. Those community colleges which offer the associates degree as the highest degree awarded will be designated as associates-only (AO). Those community colleges offering baccalaureate degrees will be designated as community college baccalaureate (CCB) institutions.   Tables containing both AO and CCB institution data will have the associates-only data lightly shaded gray for ease of reading.

Research Findings

First-Mover

While the community colleges included in this study are classified by their population centers (urban, suburban, and rural) and their highest degree (associates-only, community college

baccalaureate) there is another useful and unique classification which emerged from the

interviews and data; first-mover. A first-mover is defined by their actions as *to be the first*

*community college in their state to offer baccalaureate degree*s. First-movers participated in the

process to restructure the state higher education system to allow community colleges to offer

baccalaureate degrees. These colleges and their leadership were not only champions but

pathfinders forging the way for community colleges beginning to offer higher level degrees.

Table 14 displays which participant sites were first-movers. Colleges which did not

participate in first-mover activities serendipitously benefited from the efforts of those community

colleges that assumed the work to gain legislative and accrediting approvals. Three of the study

participant sites were first-movers. Even though an institution may be a first-mover, it does not

render *a fait accompli* the decision to offer baccalaureate degrees. Thus two of the three first-

movers now offer four-year degrees while one remains an institution with the highest degree

awarded, the associates degree. What is also significant is that the first-mover status is almost

entirely limited to the political domain.

Table 14 - First-mover colleges

College	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO
Location & Size	Urban large	Suburban large	Rural small	Urban large	Suburban large
First-mover	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Catalyst

The Catalyst for the college to contemplate offering a community college baccalaureate

varied between the five sites. There was a lack of unanimity regarding the catalyst in either

group of colleges; those offering and those not offering the baccalaureate degree. Participants

shared their insights regarding the catalysts which included: a) employer demand, b) professional certification changes, and c) legislative changes.

Employer demand was the most common reason cited across the five participant sites, in fact, four of the five participant sites share this common catalyst. While both employer demand and professional certification align with the need for highly educated workforce, each participant site approached the need from a different perspective.   Employer demand is a direct reflection of the employer's needs and desires for education levels within its workforce; demand-side. Changing professional certification, on the other hand, imposes an increasing level of expected knowledge and skill attainment thus establishing an escalating norm for the industry; supply-side.   These two elements have the same outcome in driving the workforce to higher levels of educational attainment.   It could be advanced that employer demand and professional certification have similar intent, thus the three baccalaureate granting colleges share a common workforce driven catalytic event.

The outlier from this group being the only participant who did not identify a workforce related influence as the primary catalyst for considering the community college baccalaureate was Mr. Day of UAO which approached the decision as a sole result of the changing legislative landscape.   However, the decision hinged on identifying underserved community demand for baccalaureates. Thus, UAO made workforce need a part of the requirement for continuing the pursuit of a community college baccalaureate degree. Participant sites were selected for maximum variation along the population density spectrum (urban, suburban, rural). All but one of the participant sites cited workforce issues as primarily driving the decision. Thus there was

no perceived significance by the participants to population density and location site regarding the

catalytic force precipitating the institution's decision.

Table 15 presents the decision catalyst and supporting comments and participant quotes.

The *associates-only* (AO) colleges are shaded in all tables to distinguish from colleges offering

community college baccalaureates (CCB).

Table 15 - Decision Catalyst and Supporting Comments for Participant Sites

College	Participant Pseudonyms	Catalyst	Quotes & Findings
UCCB (Urban, Community College Baccalaureate)	*Ms. Abby*	Workforce - Employer demand	"We had a trustee who was in information technology and was following what was happening in the workforce and that there was the need for skilled people that the universities were not turning out; and we were also at the point where people were starting to look at the baby boom echo and all of the students who would be coming through wanting bachelor's degrees and there was no space at the universities to fill that demand." Summary finding: Gap in skilled people to fill workforce demands was primary driver with the lack of space in the university system to handle the demand for baccalaureate students as an additional dimension to the catalyst.
SCCB (Suburban, Community College Baccalaureate)	*Dr. Bradford*	Workforce - Professional certification change	"It really started specifically with the Interior Design program. We had a two year program in Interior Design and that one in particular the accrediting standards; they had changed from a two year to a four year nationally so there are no longer two year accrediting programs so we knew that we were stuck." On the issue of finding a university partner to confer the four-year degree Dr. Bradford noted "nobody wanted to partner with us." Summary finding: Accrediting change affecting well respected program in tandem with the lack of university partner to confer the four-year degree drove the College to consider offering baccalaureate degrees.

College	Participant Pseudonyms	Catalyst	Quotes & Findings
RCCB (Rural, Community College Baccalaureate)	*Dr. Crown*	Workforce - Employer demand	"It was primarily initiated by community request … we are a little bit isolated here with a 1-1/2 hour drive to the nearest University." Summary finding: Strong industry demand and lack of willing university partner to confer the four-year degree drove the College to consider offering baccalaureate degrees.
UAO (Urban, Associates-only)	*Mr. Day*	Legislative change	"A report came out at the state level called the Papas report which was a report being made to the legislature that indicated the need for an increased number of Baccalaureate's within the state." It "became a reality within the state, and other colleges began sort of immediately looking at it, and I think everyone of the community colleges in the state including *UAO* at that time suddenly in a sense had a decision to make." Summary finding: Legislative change in state initiated consideration. Strong identifiable community need was lacking. Close proximity of strong university partner was deterrent to further consideration.
SAO (Suburban, Associates-only)	*Mr. Early*	Workforce - Employer demand	"CEO's of our local hospitals came to us and said, 'We need more BSN nurses and we are having trouble finding them.' Career Advisory Boards and lot of our police and fire chiefs who knew that we had a BSN program in Nursing said, you know a lot of our personnel in order to get promoted, they need a Bachelor's degree in Public Safety." Summary finding: Initial catalyst came from CEO's of hospitals who were seeking access to BSN's credentials for current staff. In addition, police and fire chiefs raised the need for baccalaureate degrees for their staff who required four-year degree for promotion.

The two associate-only colleges arrived at the position of not offering community college baccalaureate degrees through two different pathways.   For UAO the pathway included an assessment of the environment and alternatives for meeting the community need resulting in a decision to remain a two-year college.   The pathway for SAO was more protracted.   SAO's leadership team pursued the community college baccalaureate decision to a point but was unable to achieve authorization required to continue toward conferring the community college baccalaureate degree. This distinction of UAO electing not to pursue the community college baccalaureate degree while SAO was unable to achieve authorization potentially separates these two institutions and how they undertook the complex process and viewed the elements of the decision to confer four-year degrees.

Global Domains of Influence

The four domains of global influence presented by Levin (2001) provide a context to the growing demand for globally aware and highly skilled workers which is at the heart of the growing demand for baccalaureate educated workforce. These four domains (political, economic, social and technology) furnish the *a priori* themes for evaluating how and in what ways these four factors influence the college's decision process to decide to offer community college baccalaureate degrees. Triangulation of the data from interviews, surveys and documents served to present a more holistic understanding of the decision process.

After the five interviews were finished, member check done and analysis completed, the revealed decision factors were then aggregated into the Factor Survey and sent to the study participants to complete. This purpose of this second survey was to shed light on the relative importance of each factor to the participant institutions' decision process. The Factor Survey

allowed the researcher to layer the participant's perceptions of the relative importance of each factor to the institution's decision process. Factors were scored, or weighted, on a scale of zero to five, where zero represented not applicable and one through five represented low through high as to the importance to the decision process. When presenting importance of factors to a subset of participant sites in the study a mean average score is calculated to help keep the ratings on a consistent scale of one to five.

Political.

The domain of politics in the contemporary community college includes internal and external relationships and influence. Externally, government policy and the community direct, guide, and/or influence how and in what ways the community college operates and where it focuses its resources. Internally, governing boards, administration leadership, staff, faculty and students all are stakeholder in the actions and activities of the College. Whether originating externally or internally, politics influences and impacts what a college can and cannot do as well as what a college does and does not do.

The predominance of the political influences was external according to the participants. External sources of political influence identified by the participants included legislature and legislators, the governor, state level higher education governing boards, state level community college governing boards and accrediting agencies. The participants also identified other parties who helped influence these political bodies. Included among the set of those who helped influencer the political bodies were industrial leaders, universities, private colleges and peer institutions.

However, only one source of internal politics appeared to be common with the colleges. Participants from four of the five sites (UCCB, RCCB, UAO and SAO) agreed that the college's involvement with internal politics revolved around the interactions with their own Board of Trustees. Dr. Bradford of SCCB discussing his expectation for other community colleges in the state moving toward community college baccalaureates noted his experience with his college's Board stating,   "there is pressure from the board to not be an outlier." Other sources of potential internal politics appear to be viewed by participants more appropriately as organizational cultural issues as none resulted in any significant political influence on the decision process.

Key factors considered in the political domain by the participants are presented in Table 16 - Political Factor Scores by College and Aggregate. Participants weighted, or rated, each factor on a scale from one to five (low importance to high importance). Aggregate scores are calculated by determining the mean average ratings. In aggregate, the associates-only (AO) colleges weighted the political factors as having a higher level of importance to the decision process than the community-college-baccalaureate (CCB) colleges on 13 out of the 15 political factors.   Perhaps those having completed the process, cleared the political hurdles and have taken on the greater work of implementing the baccalaureate degree maybe assessing the political importance relative to the overall effort of the move to baccalaureate degrees and therefore retrospectively, did not place as much emphasis on these political factors.

Table 16 - Political Factor Scores by College and Aggregate

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Relationship building before the decision process	4	5	3	4	5	4.20
Legislative relationships with college	5	3	3	4	5	4.00
State governing board	5	5	1	5	4	4.00
Accrediting agencies	1	5	4	5	3	3.60
State legislative goals	4	5	1	4	4	3.60
Willingness of university partner to offer baccalaureate degrees locally	4	5	3	1	5	3.60
University cooperation in offering baccalaureate degrees locally	3	5	0	4	4	3.20
Peer community college support	2	3	1	3	4	2.60
University opposition	3	5	0	1	4	2.60
Community college president associations	1	2	3	5	1	2.40
Lobbyist	0	2	1	2	5	2.00
Peer community college opposition	1	3	1	1	4	2.00
Foundation support for developing CCB	3	1	1	1	3	1.80
Moving university partners to competitors	1	1	1	2	2	1.40
Private College partnerships	0	2	0	1	3	1.20

Table is ordered by overall rating score. Associate Only (AO) colleges are shaded.

Participants from the associates-only (AO) sites cited *relationship building, legislative relationships with the college* and *state governing boards* as having the highest political influence (importance) to the decision process. Having sound relationships in place prior to engaging in tough decisions reduces the barriers to garnering support from those in positions to assist with key legislation and rule making. Mr. Day of UAO in discussing how other community colleges in the state moved to obtain approval and permission to offer baccalaureate degrees observed "… the first time that they attempted to bring it to legislation, it went through. It happened pretty quickly for (them), and it opened the door for a lot of others." Mr. Early of

SAO noted "It was really strong political leadership getting it through despite intense opposition is how we saw other states getting this through and we thought that that would have to be the case here."

Community college leaders in adopting anything new take the risk of alienating those that have an interest in maintaining the current state of affairs. First -mover institutions assume the risk of moving into uncharted territory. Not having done this before, they must develop the mechanisms regarding how to approach their unique situation, how to counter the certain resistance and how to maximize their opportunity for success.

As a first-mover, SAO encountered some resistance from other community college leaders in the state. According to Mr. Early of SAO, "even ones who kind of supported it did not like the way that we went about it and opposed us just on that principle." Mr. Early further noted that while some of the other community college leaders did not necessarily think it was a bad idea, it was apparent that "nobody was willing to go the wall."

The associates-only (AO) participants widely diverged on *university cooperation in offering baccalaureate degrees locally*. Mr. Early of SAO and Mr. Day of UAO placed the importance at opposite ends of the spectrum with Mr. Early indicating that it was of high importance while Mr. Day indicated that it was low importance. The wide variation on *willingness of university partner to offer baccalaureate degrees locally* may be attributed to the close proximity of a university partner to UAO (Mr. Day) versus the greater distance associated with SAO (Mr. Early). UAO has a major state university within five miles of its main campus while SAO's closest major state university is in excess of forty miles away.

Of the three community college baccalaureate institutions (CCB), only RCCB seemed to indicate a very low level of importance on the political factors scoring only one above moderate importance; *accrediting agencies*. This stands in sharp contrast to the urban CCB and suburban CCB who respectively scored five and seven factors above moderate importance. However, this decidedly apolitical assessment by Dr. Crown of RCCB belies the participant's reflection on the process which involved legislators, community college coalition, and some intrigue with the state board of higher education. Dr. Crown reflected on the coordinating board's meetings

> we had a little difficulty with the Higher Education Coordinating Board because I think part of that came because when the local industry started talking with us about the need . . . they also talked with their legislative people and their lobbyists worked on it as well . . . the actual statutory approval for us . . . to offer a bachelorette degree came through the legislature. . . . I think that upset the coordinating board a bit because they had to respond to the legislative mandate from the legislature . . . the coordinating board members felt pushed into that and they were resistant.

Dr. Crown of RCCB also discussed the development of a coalition of three community colleges which approached the legislature versus the state coordinating board for higher education. The tact was intentional to avoid some of the potential impediments associated with the state board and its leader who held a personal perspective regarding degrees granted by four-year institution. In approaching the state legislators, Dr. Crown noted "you have of course different groups of legislatures in each of those three areas and their neighboring areas so you are going in with support already from 10 or 12 legislatures that have local backing." Using the breadth of the legislative representation from the coalition's districts, the colleges were able to gain approval in one legislative session.

For community college baccalaureate institutions (CCB), only three factors aggregate scores averaged above moderate importance. Even correcting for the apolitical stance of Dr.

Crown of RCCB by removing RCCB's scores from the averages, the associate-only institutions continue to perceive a higher level of importance for the political factors. Therefore, for the colleges which remained associates-only institutions, effectively dealing with political factors was clearly problematic and an impediment to the decision to move towards implementing a baccalaureate degree.

Both Ms. Abby of UCCB and Dr. Bradford of SCCB perceived the *state governing board* as being of high importance to the decision. According to Ms. Abby, the state board worked well with us and provided assistance in clarifying and quantifying the need "on a statewide level you have to be very strategic and work with the system." For Dr. Bradford from SCCB, those community colleges that had pursued baccalaureates ahead of SCCB created some political hurdles that the leadership of SCCB then had to contend with. Dr. Bradford recounted how another college appeared to be striking out on its own without attempting to work with the nearby university partner. That action garnered some opposition from the offended university leadership which surfaced in discussions at the state board. Dr. Bradford revealed "there are still some politics with the Board. Some folks think it is good that colleges are doing baccalaureate degrees and some think it should stay with the universities." Dr. Bradford also noted "our President is very good about that, working the politics, you have to show that you collaborated and anything you can do to try and help that Board understand that this is a good thing for our community.'

Ms. Abby of UCCB and Dr. Bradford of SCCB also aligned in their perceptions as to the high importance of *willingness of university partners to offer baccalaureate degrees locally*. For Dr. Bradford partnering with the local university was first priority.

The main thing I want to make sure is that it was something that *(the local university)* was going to agree with. We did not want to get our primary partner upset. We have not gone gang busters because our goal to partner with *(the local university)* whenever possible. Some colleges have not done that across the state and some I would say the relationships between the local universities has been strained and there are some even today that are kind of battling it out and both trying out for the same Baccalaureate degree in the same city and that is not good for taxpayers.

For the three "first-mover" institutions (UCCB, RCCB and SAO), four items in the political domain were correspondingly of high importance to their decision processes. The four items scored on the Factor Survey were *legislative relationships with the college*, *relationship building before the decision process*, *willingness of university partner to offer baccalaureate degrees locally* and *state governing board*.

Population centers (urban, suburban, and rural) may influence how community colleges reflect on the political significance of particular factors. The two urban institutions shared similar significance in importance of the *legislative relationships with the college*, *relationship building before the decision process*, *state governing board*, and *state legislative goals and university partnerships*. However the urban institutions significantly diverged on the importance of *community college president associations*, with Ms. Abby of UCCB rating the presidents association as not important (1) while Mr. Day of UAO answered very important (5). Ms. Abby's rating seems incongruent with data from the interview where she commented the "President had to convince the other Presidents of the other Community and Technical Colleges that this was important to get behind her to support this because if they were not supportive it would not have gone anywhere." It is likely that UCCB's President used other more direct avenues to solicit the support of peers and did not rely on a formal Presidents association.

The suburban community college participants ranked a predominance of the political factors as being important to very important. Of highest importance was *relationship building before the decision process*, *Legislative relationships,* and *lobbyist*. Of least concern to the two suburban institutions were the *president's association* and *moving university partners to competitors.* The lack of importance placed on the *community college president's association* relationship may be a reflection of the independent nature of the President at SAO. Furthermore, the lack of importance of moving *university partners to competitors* should not be construed as a lack of concern. According to Mr. Early of SAO, the university partner "refused to work with us. They just said that they did not have such a program and the other public universities were not interested in it." In this environment, lacking a suitable four-year partner institution, community colleges find they are well positioned to compete with the universities cost structure (tuition, fees, room and board).

For UCCB, a first-mover, the pathway to the community college baccalaureate was a political event. Ms. Abby of UCCB noted "It was very, very political and it was handled masterfully in this state". Choreographed by the President, UCCB enlisted the help of a number of peoples and organizations to support the bid for baccalaureate degrees. The President enlisted the support of other community college and technical college presidents in the state, as she saw these as essential to motivating the legislature to act. Ms. Abby speaking on leveraging the college's foundation said "We engaged our foundation and had them talk to their legislators about why this was important to do. We basically created fact sheets for them on the benefits that a community college baccalaureate would offer them."

Factoring in the influence of the opposition or one's supporters is part of the calculations demanded when dealing with complex tough decisions. It was apparent some participants sought the involvement of others as an element of their decision. Dr. Bradford of SCCB commenting on the politics of engaging partners noted "you cannot do this in isolation. I mean you can but depending on who is in *(the state capital)* or how much political power your institution has, you may get some backlash by doing that."   Mr. Early of SAO concurred and observed "from the beginning it was looked at as a political issue as much as a policy issue." Reflecting on the importance on building relationships Mr. early shared

> At that time we did not have really have much in the way of political connections to *(state capital)* or frankly our local delegations so there would have to be a real organization and a year of building foundational work to get the political strength that we needed to even advance this through one house and then eventually, the house, the Senate and the governor

Mr. Early of SAO observed the breadth of opposition for SAO "we knew public four year universities and privates would be opposed and frankly our neighboring community colleges were opposed and as were our regulatory agencies." Dr. Bradford of SCCB further pointed out "if you set up or your predecessor has set up a confrontational environment that may impact the ability to serve the needs of your community."

Economic.

The economic domain encompasses the local, national and global economies which dictate the jobs for which the contemporary community college is educating its students as well as creates the climate in which funding for the community college is established. Economic domain also entails the internal and external fiscal environment that community college administrations must consider when contemplating decisions which have a budgetary impact on

the institution. Community colleges balance the financial resources available with serving the

mission of the college as embodied in fulfilling student needs, community desires and business

demands. Some of these activities are focused on students and others on community, business

and industry. Partnerships, commodification, restructuring, productivity& efficiency,

marketization, internationalization are all strategies employed by community colleges to vitalize

the college in the face of changing world economies (Levin, 2001).

Much of the decision to pursue community college baccalaureate degrees rides on the

demand for employees with skills to compete in a growingly complex world economy. *Creating*

workforce related degrees and *Industry demand were* seen as of very high importance to the

decision by most of the participants. According to Ms. Abby of UCCB, "the workforce fields

are growing in such a way that they are demanding more and more bachelor's degree education

for even many entry level jobs."   Ms. Abby furthered her perspective on how the changing

landscape within our economy was driving changes in workforce needs.

> Truck drivers are sort of a radical example; companies are not hiring those guys. Mostly
> they become entrepreneurs. They buy a truck and they go out and do their own thing.
> Well to do that there are a lot of advanced, critical problem solving skills and accounting
> and bookkeeping skills, and meeting with people and other skills that one would gather
> from a four year degree that two years of learning how to drive a truck are not going to
> get you, so the employment landscape was changing quite a lot, and so we saw the need
> to fill that niche.

For RCCB the need arose out of community need for employees to move past the career and

technical expertise into jobs requiring expanded managerial and critical thinking skills.

According to Dr. Crown of RCCB when explaining these demands (often referred to as

"drivers") for expanded skills in business and industry, "they were seeing that as a baccalaureate

level position that someone would have an Associate of Applied Science and know the

technology of being a process operator but then could take upper division coursework in supervision, management, logistics and safety." These drivers that bring community colleges to the point of considering offering community college baccalaureates are firmly and inextricably situated in an evolving local, state, national and global economic environment.

It is the forces of the ever evolving workplace that are pushing community colleges into the uncharted territory of community college baccalaureate degrees. This is obvious by the new and interesting opportunities pursued by some community colleges. Ms. Abby, speaking of the opportunities UCCB has taken advantage of, noted the college has developed a degree in Radiation and Imaging Sciences that few others have pursued. "It really has given us the opportunity to blaze new ground in places where the industry is moving but the educational opportunity hasn't caught up with it yet."

Tightly aligned with the demand for highly trained employees is the issue of access. Place-bound students need local access to degree programs to strike a life balance between work, family and education. The changing economic factors are inadvertently transpiring in a way as to limit access for these students. According to Mr. Day of UAO, tightening state finances have caused university partners to place enrollment limits on high-demand career academic programs. Despite state policy mandating acceptance of community college graduates into the university system, students are often not able to access desired programs near to home. Dr. Bradford of SCCB is quite aware of this conundrum and notes "Students are place-bound; they do not want to drive far. . . . they are trying to save money and gas."

Key factors considered by participants in the economic domain are presented in Table 17 - Economic Factor Scores by College and Aggregate. Findings show that all of the participants

felt *Program Quality* was of high importance to the decision process. This was revealed through the participant's affirmation that the decision would not be made to move ahead with offering baccalaureate degrees unless the program quality could be assured. Dr. Bradford of SCCB in discussing the need to find ways to save resources while developing the community college baccalaureate degree asserted "You have to take shortcuts in certain areas, not in quality of programs."

Table 17 - Economic Factor Scores by College and Aggregate

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Program Quality	5	5	5	4	5	4.80
Qualified faculty to teach upper level courses	5	5	5	4	4	4.60
Industry demand	5	5	4	3	5	4.40
Creating workforce related degrees	5	5	3	3	5	4.20
Alignment of accreditation with baccalaureate	2	5	5	5	3	4.00
Developing a full business plan	3	5	4	5	3	4.00
Sufficiency of resources for current mission	3	3	5	5	3	3.80
Enrollment growth	4	3	3	3	4	3.40
Tuition cost for upper level courses	4	4	3	2	4	3.40
Curriculum development	3	5	3	3	3	3.40
State Funding	3	2	3	5	3	3.20
Budget cuts	1	1	5	5	3	3.00
Faculty professional development	1	3	3	3	4	2.80
Sources of financial support	2	3	3	3	3	2.80
Faculty compensation for upper level courses	2	1	2	4	4	2.60
Community college cost model	1	2	1	4	5	2.60
University tuition & Cost model	1	4	2	1	5	2.60
University partner option	1	5	0	2	5	2.60

Table is ordered by overall rating score. Associate Only (AO) colleges are shaded

All five of the participants also shared a perspective which highly rated the importance of *qualified faculty to teach at the upper level courses* to the decision process. For community colleges finding, compensating and retaining qualified faculty who can teach at the junior and senior baccalaureate level has an impact on the economics of being able to offer upper division courses. Dr. Crown of RCCB shared the context for why qualified faculty was a factor of high importance to the decision, "We had to look at the staffing requirements which are a little different when you do upper division courses because at least three-quarters of the sections have to be taught by terminally degreed faculty." For some participants the requirement was detailed at a program level. For Mr. Day of UAO the requirement for the new community college baccalaureate degree as established by the accrediting agency was for "at least 25% of the overall four year program taught by people at the terminal degree level." Ms. Abby of UCCB posed the hypothetical question regarding where to find degreed faculty to fill the upper level course, "Where do you get the faculty who are willing to come to your college and teach a specialty that you do not have or you do not have faculty for?" Dr. Bradford discussed SCCB's requirement to find terminal degreed faculty with industry experience "we needed PhDs in supervision or management and one that had some industry experience so they would really have some knowledge as to what goes on in this kind of program." In the case of UCCB they chose to fulfill the need from within. According to Ms. Abby

> We also granted funds for professional development to help with the salary issues. Our college does professional development funds, as well, but this was above and beyond that . . . some of our faculty teaching in the program did not have the appropriate level of degree, we helped pay for their education to raise *(their degree level)*.

Recruiting, hiring and retaining qualified faculty with industry experience comes at a price.   Dr.

Bradford of SCCB remarked on the added cost of hiring new faculty members with PhD's "and

then we had to consider compensation."

Faculty compensation is driven by the nature of the instructional work and plays a role in

attracting, hiring and retaining qualified faculty. Only the associates-only colleges ranked the

importance *faculty compensation for upper level courses*, high. However, each of the

participants shared perspectives acknowledging the economic realities of faculty compensation

variances for teaching upper level courses. Mr. Day posed the questions that needed answers for

UAO to consider around faculty compensation "What are the costs in terms of faculty? What

does union negotiations get to look like? Do the people in the upper division have the same load

as the people in the lower division?" Mr. Early of SAO saw faculty motivation being in part

driven by the opportunity to increase earnings, "some faculty frankly saw exactly that. It was an

opportunity to increase their pay." Mr. Day of UAO presented an overarching appraisal of the

faculty compensation issues faced by community colleges moving into baccalaureate degree

programs.

> At a University it is quite normal for faculty in Engineering to get paid more than faculty
> in the English department. Faculty in the medical school get paid more than the faculty
> almost anywhere else and so forth. You have different levels of faculty pay based upon
> the discipline and department. Most Community Colleges do not have that. We have
> faculty pay based on years of experience and educational qualifications and so it does not
> matter if you are teaching Electronics Engineering or if you are teaching English if you
> both have PhD's and you both have 12 years of experience, you are being paid the same
> amount.

For community colleges that have benefited from fairly simple compensation structures,

it can be challenging to manage new complexity in compensation particularly when having to

navigate these changes through unionized organizations. Several of the participant's shared

strategies for leaving upper level teaching faculty on the current compensation schedule but modifying other variables to achieve compensation differences. Ms. Abby presented an instructional assessment of how changing other variables allowed UCCB to keep baccalaureate program faculty on the same salary schedule.

> The biggest issues that they had run into were things like bifurcated salary structures , bifurcated number of hours that a faculty member has to teach, so it was all kinds of faculty-related issues; the number of students in the class, things like that that impact a faculty's workload . In this institution our faculty are unionized and so what I learned from doing the study was that there are ways to make up for the fact that someone is teaching a different kind of student or a different level, you know what their personal requirements for the amount of work that they have to do with the students, how many more research assignments they assign. There are ways to make up for that you do not have to do through salary or a number of hours in the classroom. So our (community college baccalaureate) degree faculty are on the same salary schedule as our other faculty.

In noting this same disparity in the university faculty compensation model, Dr. Bradford of SCCB pointed out, "if (faculty) are doing a business or a finance degree in a business school, they are making a lot more (salary) than they are going to be able to make here, so we have not done those degrees yet where we are finding that."

 For those community colleges that had made the move into community college baccalaureates and those that had not, each clearly articulated the considerations needed to adjust compensation plans to reflect the demands of teaching higher level courses. A number of different mechanisms including reduced class sizes and reduced load were used to compensate faculty for the more demanding rigors of upper level course instruction. These actions in combination with other economic factors drive a higher cost structure for upper level courses which must be offset.

While faculty salaries are a major cost category for community colleges, these colleges deciding on whether to pursue four-year degrees had to evaluate other cost considerations. The

substantial financial impact of additional resources required to develop the new degrees, advance the documentation through the appropriate state and federal accrediting agencies as well as securing start-up and the needed continuous operating capital must also be calculated into the final tally. The assessment of whether or not to offer a community college baccalaureate had resource consequences for the colleges as they engaged in this complex decision process. Dr. Bradford of SCCB summarized the impact on the staff resources of the college in this way, "We just added this on top of already overburdened staff and I think that is what really hurt us . . . the idea was they know how to do this but it is like, it is one of ten things that they are trying to do."

The process of developing the community college baccalaureate was time consuming for those participants who saw the process through to the final accreditation. It represented a significant investment in college resources and capital. Dr. Crown of RCCB commented on the three year process from inception to accreditation; "it is very time intensive and you have to be willing to make a pretty good financial commitment." Both UCCB and RCCB made substantial investments in library resources in order to meet the demands of accreditation at the four-year degree level. For RCCB that entailed expanding library acquisition to coincide with the baccalaureate program and physically expanding the library space on the main campus. Ms. Abby of UCCB commenting on the actions to reach accreditation noted "it costs money to change your name and change your business cards" and the library "is a very expensive (area)." For SCCB moving to the community college baccalaureate entailed making significant investments in preparation for accreditation review. "All of the changes that you have to do, systematic review, policies, procedures, it is a huge amount of effort the first time you switch" noted Dr. Bradford of RCCB.

The experience of Mr. Early of SAO parallels these findings. Mr. Early affirms the substantial investment involved in developing the first community college baccalaureate degree on a campus. According to Mr. Early, "the costs and the personnel time involved in (developing the baccalaureate degree), that was the biggest issue." For some community colleges, the financial climate is such that taking on the burden of developing a community college baccalaureate degree was too much.   Mr. Day of UAO offered that as a result of five years of budget cuts UAO was "more focused on operational and unit planning and in sort of survival mode."

Community Colleges routinely make decisions on where they will apply finite resources. Resources may be earmarked for specific usage such as funds from grants and capital sources. But the remaining resources can be applied in an infinite number of ways to the educational and community mission of the college. Most of the participants cited the importance of *developing a full business plan* prior to engaging in the decision. Having a business plan allowed participant's to assess the impact on of the new baccalaureate programs on the college.   Ms. Abby of UCCB commented on finding finances for community college baccalaureates, "Community colleges are used to doing things on marginal dollars because they do not get much money, and so we were able to demonstrate that in fact we could do it but finances are a big deal." Dr. Bradford of SCCB noted "We were concerned about cost in terms of the business model" and wanted to assure that the community college baccalaureate was "going to make sense for us." Leadership at SAO developed a business plan as Mr. Early pointed out because "the biggest issue for us was finances."   Mr. Early further asserted "Getting the finances right . . . was a major piece of this

initiative." At least one college explored benchmarks as part of developing and validating the business plan.

> As a part of the process of getting ready to request a change to (four-year degrees), we had already started comparing ourselves to small liberal arts colleges in terms of holdings, square footage, dollars spent per student. Whereas before we always compared just to community colleges . . . we were matching up very well for small liberal colleges in terms of what we spent and what we had. (RCCB's Dr. Crown)

The application of limited resources brings with it the presumption that resources are applied on a somewhat rationale basis to the priorities of the college until each priority is sufficiently satisfied and balanced against the rest. Mr. Day of UAO poses the hypothetical question, "we do not have enough resources to do things as well as we could and why would we strain those resources even more to try to do something else?" Dr. Bradford of SCCB also notes the tension between existing programs and the new community college baccalaureate being considered. "We are funded to do some things well but we are trying to do everything well" so the consequence is "there is not enough financial aid staff, but that is all that we can afford to do." An interesting point made by Ms. Abby of UCCB entailed the scale of the community college baccalaureate programs. Ms. Abby commenting on the funding of four-year degrees made the point "these are very small programs. The first Bachelor's degree, first year we had 23 FTE (students)."

While new community college baccalaureate programs tend to be internally financed, it seems for these study participants that the long-term funding continues to be sorted out through state and local governments. In evaluating the financial landscape for funding the community college baccalaureate, leadership of SAO made assumptions about how financing for the degree

would evolve into a long-term funding model after the initial pilot. Mr. Early of SAO explained those assumptions and their consequences

> After the pilot phase ends, we would expect the same state support for this program as (the state) would support any other public college for Baccalaureate degree programs and of course that got the universities very upset. Not only were we sticking our nose in their academic life as far as offering a Bachelor degree but we were also taking a piece of their increasingly small pie as far as revenue goes."

Community colleges offering four-year degrees may change the structure of financing for higher education. Mr. Day of UAO foresees this as a possibility and sees a negative funding consequence for those colleges that have decided not to pursue community college baccalaureates. According to Mr. Day "It is not absolutely sure at this point whether there are going to be budget consequences; no one knows yet if they are going to move forward with a plan to re-tier higher education in (the state)." Mr. Day commented on the effects if that were to happen "it becomes very clear that if you have not become a four-year college, that there is going to be strong budget implications, you are not going to be funded at the level as the (colleges that have become four-year institutions)." For UAO this may be a catalyst for the college leadership to reconsider offering four-year degrees. While Mr. Day expects the state to reconfigure its funding to support community college baccalaureates he also noted the opportunity exists, because of strong support in the community, to fund four-year degree locally. He states, "we could have made the case that we can use property taxes and we do not need to be supported the same way that (state universities) are supported."

Three of the participants (UCCB, SCCB, and SAO) in this study identified *tuition cost for upper level courses* as of moderately-high importance to the decision process. Tuition and fees stand as a significant source of revenue for most community colleges which fund the

ongoing operations. Tuition legislation varies from state to state and tuition policy may vary from college to college within a state. Ms. Abby of UCCB compares rising tuition rates for two-year and four-year degrees in her state "two-year tuition has been going up about nine or ten percent a year and the four-year (tuition) has been going up about two percent more than that. For some these rising tuition rates pose a concern. Dr. Bradford of SCCB noting the impact of tuition policy on the community college open-access mission "we serve a population that generally is in a lower economic standing on average than the students going to the university system."

The participants of the community college baccalaureate (CCB) colleges identified a variety of tuition policies for their respective baccalaureate programs. For UCCB, the four-year degree is self-supporting based on tuition. According to Ms. Abby of UCCB, while the state generally controls tuition rates, the college was "allowed (by the state) to set the tuition for that program." However, the community college is still bound by tuition discount breaks that favor the universities' student course-taking profile. Dr. Crown of RCCB related how tuition for upper level courses is set at a point halfway between the community college tuition rate and tuition rate of the local university. Although upper level courses were comparable to tuition in the nearby universities Dr. Bradford of SCCB noted that place-bound "students really don't want to drive with the price of gas and the traffic (to the nearby university)."

The associate-only (AO) colleges did not precede as far as the community college baccalaureate (CCB) colleges in their intentions on setting upper level course tuition. Although according to Mr. Early, SAO had planned to set the tuition rate for upper level courses at the same rate as the nearby state university. The college would have protected the two-year

programs by funding the remainder of the cost for the four-year program through foundation support.

Economics domain consists of influences that are simultaneously driving new behaviors in workforce development, new directions in funding higher education and new directions in how and where baccalaureate degrees are offered. Knowledge based work and global influences require workers capable of handling the dynamic work that has become the new work place reality. At the same time greater numbers of students entering higher education are finding themselves place-bound leading to a shift in where and how higher education is delivered. Concurrent with the changing workforce requirements, higher education is facing evolving funding models. All of these influences, and ones that are not known as yet, are emerging to force these complex decisions so community college leaders had best know how to navigate this knotty economic challenges well.

Cultural.

Culture consists of and is a reflection of beliefs, ideas, social norms, and behaviors. Culture, or the shared attitudes and beliefs that characterize a group, plays a role in defining how a group will respond to the changing environment. In the context of the decision to offer community college baccalaureate degrees, culture plays a role in influencing how and in what ways community college leaders approach the decision and how they react to stimuli from various segments within and outside the community college.

Cultural factors rated by the participants for their importance to the community college baccalaureate decision are presented in Table 18 – Cultural Factor Scores by College and Aggregate. The data show that all of the participants scored the importance of *trustee*

leadership, community perception and *student demand* as moderately high to high importance to the decision to confer baccalaureate degrees. *Trustee leadership* was rated the highest overall aggregate of the cultural factors.

For each of the colleges, the trustees (or the board) played very different roles. Some boards were not supportive while others were part of the catalyst to consider the decision to offer community college baccalaureates. In the case of UCCB, it was one of the trustees who was an initial source of support for the idea of offering students a community college baccalaureate degree. According to Ms. Abby of UCCB, the "trustee kept talking it up at board meetings" and talking about "how we needed to be doing (baccalaureate degrees)." At RCCB the trustees initially expressed concern at losing the structure of the community college. Dr. Crown of RCCB recounted trustees expressing concern that "we do not want to change our mission." Once Dr. Crown and other college leaders assured the board that community college baccalaureates would not detract from the current college mission but would rather fulfill the needs of the community trustees affirmed their support for pursuing the community college baccalaureate degree.

Table 18 – Cultural Factor Scores by College and Aggregate

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Trustee leadership	5	5	4	5	5	4.80
Community perceptions	5	5	4	5	4	4.60
Presidential Leadership	5	3	4	5	5	4.40
Student demand	5	5	4	4	4	4.40
Communication plan	5	4	3	4	5	4.20
Student Access	4	5	4	4	4	4.20
Student support for baccalaureate degrees	5	5	3	4	4	4.20
Place-bound students	3	5	4	3	5	4.00
Campus constituent support	5	3	3	4	4	3.80
Campus culture	5	3	3	4	4	3.80
Faculty leadership support	5	1	3	4	5	3.60
Divergent Mission views by constituents	1	3	1	5	4	2.80
Staff workload	2	3	2	3	3	2.60
Growth in non-traditional student populations	2	2	2	1	5	2.40
Mission creep	1	1	0	4	0	1.20

Table is ordered by overall rating score. Associate Only (AO) colleges are shaded.

For Mr. Day of UAO, the importance of the trustees may be seen in their negative perception of the community college baccalaureate; "some of the board members definitely see this as potentially as mission creep, moving away from what your real mission should be. However, this perception may have been fostered by the President of UAO who according to Mr. Day "the board was strongly influenced by the President" whose take was "that the Community College itself fulfills a very distinct and important Mission." Mr. Early of SAO also acknowledged a lack of board support for investigating the community college baccalaureate offering.

Mission creep as a factor is interesting considered in light of how participants perceived its importance on the decision to offer community college baccalaureates.   Participants from the

four colleges that actively pursued the community college baccalaureate (UCCB, SCCB, RCCB, SAO), three of whom now offer the degree, each rated the importance of mission creep of no importance or low importance. Mr. Day of UAO was the lone participant who rated *mission creep* of moderately high importance to the decision. It may be that those colleges who were able to rationalize the fit of the community college baccalaureate to their mission as a community college no longer saw any relevance to the issue. While UAO's President and trustees continued to see incongruence between UAO's "distinct" mission and the community college baccalaureate.

Community colleges as their name implies are designed to be responsive to their communities. The culture of the community in which the community college resides provides a context and foundation for shared expectations of the community college. For RCCB, this presented itself as a community interest in offering four-year degrees. According to Dr. Crown of RCCB, "the community had been asking for years, when are you going to become a four year institution?" Having community support for the idea before the opportunity presented itself allowed RCCB to focus attention on the other activities of making the community college baccalaureate a reality. Leaders for UAO were also hearing the similar questions from their community. In the wake of state legislative changes UAO had legislative permission to offer four-year degrees. Community members were showing some interest in having UAO become a four-year institution. But because UAO's president and board continued to see the community college baccalaureate degree as independent from the need of the community, the college leadership did not continue to consider the decision to offer four-year degrees. Mr. Day of UAO

explained this incongruity by noting the "community need and community perception sometimes do not always coincide."

For other colleges in the study, the community support may not be readily apparent nor come as a precursor to the decision. Mr. Early of SAO recounted how the college's leadership surveyed the community to obtain their feedback regarding their perceptions of the college pursuing a community college baccalaureate. As a result of the survey, SAO leaders found they had a very positive perception in the community and a community ready to support a move to four-year degrees. In SCCB's case Dr. Bradford noted how the community reacted when SCCB announced their first community college baccalaureate; "Our community was excited about it. We got such recognition from the community; we got great press in the paper."

Students are participants and contribute to shaping the overall college culture. Factors that draw students to the college campus serve to unite this group through common attributes and characteristics that help to establish their own student cultural identify. All five of the participants identified *student demand* as being moderately-high to high importance to engaging in the community college baccalaureate decision at their respective colleges. Participants cited student familiarity with the local campus and issues of importance to place-bound students as strongly defining elements of the student demand. Ms. Abby of UCCB commented that students favored attending UCCB, rather than a university, because they were "comfortable on this campus" and were "afraid of being lost in the shuffle" at the university. For Mr. Early of SAO the demand was more about the place-bound students who were "supportive because they saw this as an affordable and accessible way to get their Bachelor's degree."

However, an emerging concept embedded in the student cultural dimension is an element of self-esteem that comes from attending a four-year institution. Both Dr. Bradford of SCCB and Mr. Early of SAO both identified elements of this in their experience. Mr. Early noted student's perceptions as "you are (attending) a real college if you offer Baccalaureate. You are not something less than a university or a four year college." Dr. Bradford disclosed

> I see a lot more exuberance, students are wearing a lot more of our logo stuff now from T-shirts, hats, things of that nature so I think they take a greater sense of pride in knowing that they are going to a State College.

Presidential leadership was rated moderately-high to high by four of the five participants in the study. There is no doubt, the President stands as a figurehead of the community college. They have the platform to set the tone and tenor the institution which in turns powerfully influences the culture of the college. UCCB, RCCB, UAO and SAO participants each considered *Presidential leadership* as of being of higher importance. Each of the participants from these four colleges perceived the president as shaping the decision to offer community college baccalaureate degrees and motivating others to act on the behalf of the college's interest. Ms. Day defined several key characteristics that made UCCB's presidential leadership of high importance to the decision. "Our President is the most positive, proactive, driving and strategic forward thinking." Ms. Day connected those characteristics to the behaviors of the senior staff, "Certainly the President's staff, if they are going to remain in their positions and be successful in their positions, subscribe to that (culture) as well." Ms. Day noted

> The culture is one of always driving for whatever is on the next edge of education. We see new opportunities and we seize them. So culture in that respect played a big part, because it never would have happened if the President was not behind it driving it all the way.

For SAO's President one of the elements that prompted he's leadership push to baccalaureate degrees according to Mr. Early was enrollment. He stated, because "(The President) very much felt offended at people's perception of community colleges to be something less than a real college. (The President) felt that if the college offered Baccalaureate degrees that more (students) would come here."

Dr. Bradford of SCCB considered *presidential leadership* only moderately important to the decision. This rating seems to be reflective of the President's vision which served to guide the whole institution. Dr. Bradford shared, "(the President) sets the vision; you will be partners" and the President "wants us to be known as partners." The presidential focus on partnering first may be in part responsible for the perception that the presidential leadership for this college is of lesser importance when making the decision to offer community college baccalaureates.

Communication, ideas and imagery play an essential role in the establishment and continuance of culture. For community colleges engaged in the process of change developing a coherent message that carries significance for those affected by or expected to enable the change can facilitate the pathway to completion. Communications can energize the supportive, moderate the opponents and move the uncommitted towards commitment. Four of the five participants in the study scored *communication plan* as moderate-high and high importance to the community college baccalaureate decision. Ms. Abby of UCCB discussed the importance of "doing your homework" in preparing for communications with external parties, specifically legislators. Dr. Bradford of SCCB considered the internal constituencies and the need to "keep folks abreast of what is going on." RCCB developed a broad approach to their communications plan. Dr. Crown of RCCB discussed the varied nature of the plan, "we … had communication

plans in place depending on the audience." The concept develops the idea that communications are planned and varied to address needs expressed by the cultural differences or characteristics of different audiences.

The importance of *faculty leadership support* seems to have little correlation to the outcome of offering community college baccalaureate degrees. Participants from colleges that do and do not offer the community college baccalaureate (UCCB, UAO, SAO) considered the factor to be of moderately-high to high importance to the decision. Of the three colleges that now offer community college baccalaureate degrees (UCCB, SCCB & RCCB), they rated the importance of *faculty leadership support* to the decision to offer four-year degrees across the entire spectrum; Ms. Abby of UCCB rated it high, Dr. Crown of RCCB rated it moderate and Dr. Bradford of SCCB rated it low. The underlying reasons for this are not readily apparent.

Information.

The information domain incorporates the academic and administrative manifestations of information and technology. From the perspective of this study, the information domain considers the influence of information and technology in the factors considered in the decision process of whether or not to offer community college baccalaureate degrees. The academic manifestation of the information domain includes *facilities*, *digital library resources*, *distance learning options*, and *developing multi-campus resources*. The administrative manifestation includes the effects of information technology on administrative work.

The data shows participants from the two associates- only colleges rated the importance of information domain factors significantly higher than did the community college baccalaureate colleges. Actually, the associates-only (AO) college participants rated all the factors as

moderately-high or above. Of the community college baccalaureate (CCB) colleges, only Dr. Bradford of SCCB and Dr. Crown of RCCB had any item on the list as rate above moderate. Dr. Bradford and Dr. Crown each rated *digital library resources* as of moderately-high importance to the community college baccalaureate decision. Dr. Bradford of SCCB also rated *developing multi-campus resources* as moderately-high importance to the decision. Table 19, Information Factor Scores by College and Aggregate, presents the information domain survey factors in descending order by aggregate score.

Table 19 - Information Factor Scores by College and Aggregate

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Facilities	3	3	3	5	5	3.80
Digital library resources	1	4	4	4	4	3.40
Distance learning options	2	3	1	4	4	2.80
Developing multi-campus resources	1	4	0	4	4	2.60

Table is ordered by overall rating score. Associate Only (AO) colleges are shaded.

The magnitude of the difference between the associates-only and the community college baccalaureate colleges on the information factors is compelling. However, it is less certain as to the meaning of the difference. One hypothesis may postulate that colleges who have navigated through the decision process and now do offer community college baccalaureate degrees retrospectively do not perceive these information factors to have been of consequence to the decision. While conversely, the associates-only (AO) colleges see these as added to the numerous and large variety of factors which added to the complex issues as they contemplated the possibility of yet pursuing community college baccalaureate degrees in the future.

Distance learning is a fast growing and evolving area of technology for community

colleges. It is somewhat surprising the participants did not lend greater importance to this area

of information and technology. However, through their interviews the participants all

acknowledged the availability, prevalence and importance of online and distance learning

alternatives. Some of the participant colleges have extreme examples. Ms. Abby of UCCB

cited the case of a student in a medical technician program "we have a student who does his

clinical work in Boston where he lives, but all of his classroom sessions are (online)." It is

possible to conceive that online and distance learning are beginning to reach critical mass where

issue of geographical place in higher education is truly being superseded by virtual access.

Digital library resources was the most cited information factor for having above

moderate importance to the decision to offer community college baccalaureate degrees across the

complete participant pool. It was found the need for broader collections in support of higher

level course work was the common impetus for expansion of library resources. For colleges

with multi-campus footprints and expanding online portfolios of courses had to contend with

deciding of where to house discipline-specific physical materials. This issue was particularly

acute for those colleges covering large geographic districts. The solution for some colleges was

digital resources. Dr. Crown of RCCB revealed that "a little over two-thirds of our materials are

available online." Mr. Day of UAO cited the lack of technology alternatives for library

resources as an impediment to dispersed and online courses; "you cannot do it all through

electronic resources, some of it going to be hard copy resources in the library in almost any

discipline." Mr. Day further postulated, colleges may "offer most of the courses online but the

research capability for the student has to be centered at least in one physical spot."

The information domain also encompasses aspects of technology that influence how administrative work gets done. It is easy to overlook the essential nature of technology in processing and managing an organization's new line of business such offering baccalaureate degree represents to the community college. For those colleges that adopted the community college baccalaureate degree adapting business processes associated technology systems represented a significant challenge.

Participants for both UCCB and SCCB observed conflicts between the needs and demands of the community college baccalaureate enterprise and the entrenched applications and administrative systems designed to support the associates degrees and certificate programs. Differences in access, variable tuition, state reporting, financial reporting, financial aid, student services among others created required technology changes. Overlooked during the decision process, technology became an inhibitor to implementing the community college baccalaureate degree for several participant colleges. UCCB's technology issues were not at the forefront of the factors considered in the decision process according to Ms. Abby, "there were issues that came up that we had not really looked at such as our student management system." The problem for UCCB was compounded by the lack of institutional control over their student application which was a state-wide system. According to Ms. Abby of UCCB, "the student and financial management systems were not created to figure in the differences that would be necessary when you added bachelor's degrees." Dr. Bradford of SCCB likewise noted "it was a big change to our systems. We had to change all of our student information systems in our computer systems to handle Baccalaureate that took a lot of effort."

For SCCB, administrative applications required major improvements. According to Dr. Bradford, "we underestimated the installation (time) for making (the application process) work well. I have learned not to do that anymore." One matter made a particular impression on Dr. Bradford who noted "we took probably a year between our IT folks (and) our Student Services folks, to try to figure out how we are going to do (variable) tuition." Dr. Bradford also made note of now needing to exclude upper level students (juniors and seniors) when preparing state reports for community college students. Other elements of the application technology portfolio which required attention included accommodating differences in financial aid rules for baccalaureate programs and performance management reporting that now needed to be segmented between upper and lower level programs.

College Mission, Vision and Strategic Planning

A mission statement describes the overall purpose of the organization including what it does and for whom. A vision statement conveys an image of the ideal future. The mission and vision statements in tandem serve to set the strategic compass and guide everyday priority setting. Together an organization's mission and vision are the foundation on which strategic planning is situated (Grünig & Kühn, 2011).

The mission and vision statements collectively contained nine major concepts; affordability, comprehensive community college, culture, excellence in education, globalization/diversity, innovation, maximizing student potential, recognition and serving community need. Each of these nine major concepts was expressed in different words within the mission and vision statements of the five participant organizations. Table 20 - Mission & Vision Statement Concepts describes the nine concepts.

Table 20 - Mission & Vision Statement Concepts

Concept	Description
Affordability	Encapsulates the concepts of the community college economic model which subsidizes the operations of the college through alternate revenue sources so as to maintain lower tuition rates than other segments of higher education.
Comprehensive community college	Terminology applied to community colleges that deliver a variety of programming including transfer, career and technical, developmental and continuing education.
Cultural	In the context of the mission statements captures the concept of delivering cultural experiences to the community.
Excellence in education	Terminology reflecting high quality curriculum and programs
Globalization/Diversity	Appear in the form of preparing students for global economies and dealing with the realities of growing diversity of community inhabitants.
Innovation	The college will be at the forefront of innovating programs and curriculum
Recognition	Recognized in some form by others in higher education for their excellence, innovation, leadership or performance
Maximize Student Potential	Through education and services the college seeks to maximize student potential and contribution to community, commerce or global concerns.
Serving community need	Meeting the educational needs of the community.

In the interest of preserving the anonymity of the study sites and participants the collected mission and vision statements are not included in the data presented here. In the place of the mission and vision statements, Table 21 - Participant Mission & Vision Statement Concepts cross-references the concepts deconstructed from the participant college's mission and vision statements.

Table 21 - Participant Mission & Vision Statement Concepts

Concept	Community College Baccalaureate			Associates-Only	
	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO
Affordability			X		X
Comprehensive community college	X	X	X	X	X
Cultural	X	X			
Excellence in education	X	X	X	X	X
Globalization/Diversity	X	X		X	X
Innovation	X	X			
Recognition	X	X	X		X
Maximize Student Potential		X		X	X
Serving community need	X	X	X		X

Concepts of comprehensive community college and excellence in education were unanimously included in the five participant organization's mission or vision statements. It is of some interest that UAO, the only college in the study to independently decide not to pursue the community college baccalaureate degree, is the only college which did not convey the concept of recognition and the concept of serving community need in either their mission or vision statements.

Mr. Day of UAO talking about the relationship of mission to the community college baccalaureate trend offered "it may be the trend (to offer community college baccalaureate degrees) but it does not apply to us and it would take away from core mission which is providing the first two years of higher education and maybe sometimes even more importantly providing access to those two first years." Mr. Day further explains "(the community college baccalaureate) is a definite addition to the Mission at the very least."

The concept of mission creep was expressed by other participants as well. Dr. Crown of RCCB noted that "the (college) board (trustees) had initially the same concern that the (state)

coordinating board did … we do not want to change our mission." Dr. Crown conceded "they just wanted insurance that we were not…changing from our mission." UCCB likewise had to answer the questions regarding mission creep. Ms. Abby of UCCB recounted "In our mind it was never an issue because again they are workforce preparation programs, and this is just part of our workforce Mission." This broader interpretation, in contrast to that of Mr. Day of UAO, was supported by Mr. Early of SAO

> Our mission statement is that (SAO) is a comprehensive community college and the President took that to mean comprehensive; meaning comprehensive what people need today. What was comprehensive 10 years ago is not necessarily what was comprehensive today so he felt that it fell right into our Mission Statement.

Dr. Bradford of SCCB, the issue was not so much about mission creep as it was about the impact of the decision to offer community college baccalaureate degrees. Dr. Bradford asserted "we like our comprehensive mission" the only question was would the addition of community college baccalaureates make the mission "too broad to fund."

Strategic plans are developed in furtherance of the organizational mission and vision. Using a variety of techniques developed from research on strategic planning each of the participant colleges had a published strategic plan as they approached the decision to offer community college baccalaureate degrees. None of the participant colleges included in those plans any mention of pursuing four-year degrees at the community college. For Dr. Crown of RCCB this was not of consequence as he noted "there was already, the general kind of goals in there about meeting the needs of the community for education." He further noted

> (Community college baccalaureates) just kind of fit in as one more need that needed to be met so we set a goal, it was stepwise goals for surveying the community and determine the need and then were going to begin the application process and in the third year you start the process. It fit in real well.

UCCB followed a similar path. Ms. Abby of UCCB recalled "it got written into the strategic plan after the (community college baccalaureate) plan was developed."

The literature review noted the difference between strategic planning and strategic decision making. Given the lack of evidence in the participant colleges' strategic planning documents that these colleges intended to pursue community college baccalaureate degrees it would appear the study participants are affirming that organization leaders rely on the plan for context but practice strategic decision making which is outside the specifics included in the strategic plan. This illustrates how these community college leaders act quickly and opportunistically in order to keep their organizations vibrant and relevant.

Summary

In this chapter the results of the study were presented along with the data analysis. Data from interviews, surveys and documents were presented and correlated to the *a priori* themes identified in the literature review. Chapter six will present the findings and implications for community college leaders as they contemplate tough, multi-faceted, complex decisions on which their colleges rely to remain vibrant institutions of higher learning.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION, FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Introduction

The effects of globalization can be seen in changing economic conditions, political agendas, cultural phenomenon and technology realm.   These changing conditions are driving community college leaders to consider a variety of new and innovative program alternatives.   In the midst of this evolving landscape one of the transformations the nation is beginning to see in the community college curriculum is the movement from two-year degrees to four-year degrees. Community colleges are starting to make the move from associates only to offering baccalaureate degrees spawning a new Carnegie classification; Associate's Dominate.

Colleges entering this new classification are trail-blazers, acting to create new structures in higher education. These college leaders are reacting to environmental forces, economic pressures, and seeing new opportunities to extend the comprehensive community college mission in meeting the needs of students and employers in their communities. These first-movers who take the initiative to show the way can provide valuable insight into these complex strategic decisions. Five participants with intimate knowledge of the community college baccalaureate decision at their respective institutions shared their views and assessments as part of this study. Insights derived from analyzing the data from the five participants could be beneficial to current and future leaders who face decisions to offer community college baccalaureate degrees or other future complex strategic decisions.

The Research Findings and Implications chapter will provide: (1) a quick overview chapters 1-5 which situate the study and provide context for the findings; (2) summary of the

findings organized by research driving questions; (3) implications for current and future community college leaders; (4) presentation of the Currier model for strategic decision making; and (5) recommendations for future research.

Summary of Chapters 1-5

Chapter 1 presented a background and context to community colleges considering whether or not to confer community college baccalaureate degrees. In addition the chapter covered the significance of the study and the purpose of the study along with the guiding questions. A brief literature review looked at internal and external environment as well as identifying themes which are the lens through which this study was viewed. Finally the chapter introduces the research design.

Chapter 2 proffers a review of the relevant literature. The literature served to situate the community college, provide context for the globalization influences affecting workforce development, examined the four domains of influences affecting community colleges (Levin, 2002), reviewed pathways to the baccalaureate degree and finally strategic planning.

Chapter 3 detailed the study design and offered rationale for the selection of a qualitative case study, situated in the interpretive paradigm. The methodology was detailed including the maximum variation site selection, participant selection, sequential data collection methods, analysis techniques, quality factors, significance of the researcher as an instrument, and ethical considerations. From the design five participant sites were selected with maximum variation on the population classification (urban, suburban and rural) and whether or not the college offered a community college baccalaureate degree (community college baccalaureate or associates-only).

Chapter 4 detailed the six data collection components used in the course of the study: (1) component one - site and participant selection, (2) component two - participant demographic and data survey, (3) component three – participant interviews, (4) component four – archival documents, (5) component five – factors survey and (6) component six – field notes. Components, one through five, were performed sequentially, thus incorporating a sequential and multi-method data collection model. Component six, field notes, was executed throughout the entire research study.

The data collected through the execution of the study according to the study design were detailed and analyzed in chapter 5. The themes defined in the literature review were used as lenses to present the data collected through interviews, and from surveys and documents. The data analysis presented opportunities to identify new concepts in the context of the study.

Findings and Implications

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

Research Guiding Question 1

What catalysts induce community colleges to revisit their mission priorities to investigate conferring baccalaureate degree(s)?

The shift in the United States economy from industrial to knowledge economy, driven in large part by the explosion of data and communication technologies, has inextricably changed the nature of employment and jobs nationally and globally. Value creation in the workforce shifted from conversion of raw materials into tangible goods (industrial) to the exploitation of

ideas, thoughts and concepts (knowledge). This altered economy demands workers with higher

level skill sets and cognitive abilities.

It is not surprising then that the primary catalyst for all the colleges considering whether

or not to offer community college baccalaureate degrees centered on education of the workforce.

While this was expressed through a variety of avenues, the heart of the matter remains an

increasing need for better educated workers with a bachelor's degree. Juxtaposed to this belief is

the perception that four year institutions simply cannot handle the volume of students who must

enroll to satisfy the demand for baccalaureate degreed citizens. One reason universities and

traditional four-year institutions cannot meet this demand is that they lack appropriate physical

presence in the communities for meeting the needs of place-bound students.

Another issue challenging universities is some areas of workforce education requiring

baccalaureate level degrees are career and technical programs where two-year degrees were the

highest degree awarded. Thus these Baccalaureate of Applied Science (BAS) degree programs

may be outside the interest and expertise of the local universities.   Therefore, in response to the

growing need for baccalaureate degreed work force, state legislators in some states have been

convinced to authorize community colleges to offer community college baccalaureate degrees.

Implications of Findings for Community Colleges

An assessment of the environment in which the institution operates serves to inform

community college administrators and the board of trustees what is needed in their respective

communities. While staying true to the mission of the community college, this relevant

assessment assists them in setting new priorities or readjusting current strategic priorities for the

institution.   New strategic alternatives may, and often do, arise from catalysts outside the

strategic planning process.   All community college leaders must remain constantly aware of events, needs, or demands that serve as the impetus for organizational change.

New strategic opportunities do not follow a prescribed path in becoming known. Thus community college presidents should attend to developing robust networks of industry and community leaders who can reveal these new opportunities to the institution. It is incumbent on the community college administration to evaluate these newly identified opportunities for consistency with the college mission or lacking consistency with the mission consider undertaking the effort to reframe or revise this guiding statement. In addition, community college leaders must be able to anticipate the political, cultural, economic and technology hurdles that may be encountered in pursuing the requisite organizational change.

Research Guiding Question 2

What issues are identified as crucial to the decision pursuant to offering a baccalaureate degree?

How community college leaders decide to undertake significant challenges and what crucial elements they consider along the way as they embark on any difficult and complex decision can influence the decision outcome. It would be tidy and so convenient if leaders gathered all the factors and considerations into the process at once and evaluated them all at one time.   But that is not how the decision process works in the real world.

Items, factors and issues to be considered are often revealed along the pathway of the decision process particularly if the decision is a complex one. Some items are evaluated immediately while others are deferred for later based on their lesser importance to the decision or the greater time and effort to evaluate.   Study participants' experience in a complex decision

such as conferring community college baccalaureates showed that factors have different levels or intensity of significance and require differing amounts of resource and effort to assess.

This study revealed several universal factors which were unanimously ranked highly by the study participants as they undertook this complex decision of whether or not to offer a baccalaureate degree. These were: (a) the assurance of program quality, (b) the involvement and support of the college's trustee leadership, (c) the strength of the presidential leadership, and (d) the positive community perceptions of the institution. These four factors do not have unique attributes associated with the specific decision studied in this research and therefore would fit universally with any complex strategic decision under review. The remainder of the factors included in this study did not consistently hold a high level of perceived importance across the study participants. Yet, with so many of the factors deemed to be of high or moderately-high importance to at least one of the participants, it is difficult to exclude them from consideration.

It is of note that the lowest ranked factor from the survey of these study participants was moving university partners to competitors and therefore all of the participants saw this as a non-issue in their deliberations. Whether this represents an entrepreneurial flair and the adaptive nature associated with community colleges or recognition that community college baccalaureates as a necessary structural change in the higher education landscape is unclear from the findings of this study.

Implications of Findings for Community Colleges

In any change process, whether large or small, leadership remains a critical element to success. For complex decisions of a strategic nature as is community college baccalaureate, leadership must come from the top; presidents must lead the decision process and trustees must

support the process.   When considering any complex decisions such as offering community college baccalaureates that fundamentally defy the long standing position of community colleges in higher education, leaders must be prepared to lead.

Significance of decisions, specific issues, and factors are situated in the context of the discrete community college consequently what is important to one community college is not necessarily important to another. This limits the usefulness of sharing a common set of factors ranked for importance. However, community college administrations can certainly benefit from a comprehensive list of the factors to weigh as others have done, as a method for selecting factors relevant to the decision under consideration so that no crucial issues are missed.

Factors which represent clear *go* or *no-go* criteria for pursuing a decision can be dealt with early in the process saving time, effort and resources. Some factors may be given a cursory assessment with detailed assessments deferred until later in the decision process. This allows critical factors to be vetted expeditiously thus deferring the more resource intensive critical factors until later in the process. Study participants saw critical factors as serving a precipitous "Gate" function. Using critical factors as gates allows the process to end at any point where a critical factor evaluates to a *no-go* decision thus saving time and limited resources.

Faced with deciding to undertake a complex decision of the magnitude of offering community college baccalaureate degrees, community college leaders need methodologies to help them efficiently consider undertaking these complex endeavors. These types of complex and difficult decisions are capable of propelling their institutions forward or dragging the institution down in failure. Community college leaders can benefit from a structured approach

which will assure that critical decision elements are considered in turn and each critical element is properly evaluated.

Research Guiding Question 3

Does the prominence of specific factors influence the outcome of the decision to offer a baccalaureate degree?

Each of the study sites pursued the decision to offer community college baccalaureates to an end-point. For some, the end-point was the implementation of offering a community college baccalaureate degree. For others, the end-point was when they either decided offering a community college baccalaureate degree was not the right decision or when they failed to gain authorization from the state legislature to offer four-year degrees at the community college.

It is clear from these participants that only the president can mobilize the organization and drive the choice for the college to undertake the complex decision process leading to any outcome (yes or no). Someone has to decide to take the first step in considering the complex tough decision of a strategic opportunity. Although presidents may be influenced by any number of considerations including personal agenda, this initial choice is mandatory to start the process.

Once the initial choice was made to begin, there were no single or combination of factors that drove the decision as whether to offer community college baccalaureate degrees. It was apparent that these colleges were influenced by their own series of factors considered in the decision process which reflected their college's distinctive environment and concerns. Because all colleges were novices at this type of complex decision making, relying only on what influences that arose, this venturing into the unknown led to some confounding situations where difficulty of issues were under-estimated or in some cases entirely missed.

Factors evaluated during the decision process fit into four decision domains: economic, political, culture and technology. No new domains influencing the decision process emerged in the study. Whether economic, political, cultural or technological, participants considered a significant number of critical factors on the pathway to the community college baccalaureate decision. However, what became apparent is without a defined plan evaluating a wide range of factors as these colleges did, can lead to something being overlooked. Several participants acknowledged that factors which impacted the implementation of the decision were missed or not adequately vetted.

Every decision has a consequence; what is not known is just what that consequence might be. However, nothing endures quite like change. Complex decisions such as whether or not to offer a baccalaureate degree can be revisited as political, economic, cultural, technology environments and the personnel involved change. Subsequently, a participant colleges choosing not to offer the community college baccalaureate degrees, now finds changes have occurred do causing the college to reconsider their original choice.

Implications of Findings for Community Colleges

There is no "silver bullet" factor or factors which determines the outcome of deciding to offer community college baccalaureate degrees and by extension any strategic option. Every strategic option will bring its own unique set of factors that will need to be considered which are inextricably related to the individual characteristics of the college and its situation. It is incumbent on the leaders to ascertain which factors are important to their decision.

In practice, selecting individual factors to use for the decision is often predominately based on intuition and experience particularly if this is an unfamiliar situation to the college

leaders. This leaves open the likelihood that important aspects or issues in the decision will be overlooked. The importance assigned to decision factors reflects the value the president assigns. In this way two presidents in similar situations may arrive at different outcomes.

Evaluations of critical decision factors or elements that lead to the conclusion that a strategic option is not appropriate are a point-in-time judgment.   These judgments serve as "gates" which terminate the evaluation and thus the decision process. What is important to remember is that assumptions of a critical factor or the assessment of factors which are the "terminal gates" to the decision may, over time, change; thus any decision can be open to re-evaluation.

Community college leaders can improve outcomes by using standardized tools to assess the issues and factors and by remaining vigilant and open to changing information. To assure that a comprehensive set of factors to be considered and evaluated are developed, decision makers should rely on devices and models which encourage a broad perspective of the decision under consideration and stimulates the identification of factors to be included in the evaluation. In addition, leaders must guard against becoming so invested in a decision that they are unable or unwilling to re-evaluate the decision in light of new or changing information.

Research Guiding Question 4

How and in what way is the decision process undertaken in community colleges considering conferring baccalaureate degrees?

Both before and during the decision process the president set the stage for the college. The participants noted how the president's style, agenda, and risk tolerance all played a part in how he/she interpreted the opportunity and how the college approached the assessment of the

opportunity. Once the president chooses to pursue the decision, a process unfolded in which factors associated to the decision are evaluated. The process continued until either information gathered contradicted the opportunity (no-go decision), or the evaluation reached critical mass (go-decision).

What was apparent from the participants is that the decision process is set in a context of the culture of the college, the personality of the president and the constructs of the environment. When a new strategic opportunity arises for the college, as was the case with these five colleges, it obviously is not contained in the present strategic plan. These strategic opportunities for change arrive unpredictably. Leadership need to move quickly to deal with these unique opportunities and evaluate their appropriateness for the college.

The processes of evaluating the opportunity to adopt community college baccalaureate degrees were undertaken by all participants without using a formal decision plan. These participants confirmed that their colleges' decision process unfolded as a learning endeavor with the plan and process being refined along the way.

Presidents select who will be involved in the decision process and at what point they become involved. Some presidents elected to keep the decision process within a tight community of administrative participants thus avoiding the potential political wrangling that would be encountered from individuals or factions who opposed the new strategic direction. Other presidents chose to have more broad participation seeking to leverage support from a variety of constituents and benefit from a multitude of viewpoints and expertise.

The first-movers, those colleges beginning to undertake this complex decision process before others, experienced a heavier dose of political maneuvering then did the follower

colleges. Navigating through multiple layers of state agencies and legislatures presented unique challenges to those leading the evolution. Some colleges were successful in navigating this thorny process and some were not. Those that were successful moved quickly and perceived they achieved approval before opposition to the new direction could organize.

Implications of Findings for Community Colleges

Strategic opportunities arise without regard to planning cycles exposing the strategic plan as a point-in-time appraisal and thrusting the community college leadership into a mode of strategic decision making versus long-term planning. This unavoidable circumstance argues for fostering networks for identifying emergent opportunities and enhancing organizational preparedness to handle these crucial decisions.

Strategic decisions are complex, multi-faceted choices which demand executive involvement and direction. Not every opportunity holds the same value and appeal for every organization. Thus leaders must be prepared to assess the appropriateness of the opportunity to the college's specific circumstance. Deciding whether to undertake the decision process is the first critical step as the leader is committing scarce resources to an uncertain endeavor. Once the choice is made to pursue a decision the institution must identify those factors unique to this opportunity and the circumstances of the college that need to be evaluated to arrive at the appropriate decision.

Leaders who take on these complex and tough strategic decisions will want to identify exit strategies for every "terminal gate" reached in the decision process. Having a prepared exit strategy allows the leader to frame a *no-go* decision in the most favorable light thus avoiding the perception that the leader or the institution failed. Part of the exit strategy might entail defining

how effort expended in the decision process can be used for something else. A decision to abandon the pursuit of a strategic opportunity is not an irrevocable decision. Choosing against a strategic opportunity can be viewed as a temporary decision, or maybe more correctly, the deferral of the decision to adopt the opportunity.

Leaders who employ a model for assessing strategic opportunities are more likely to have predictable outcomes. Accordingly, presidents should employ a thorough model and toolset which replaces the need to rely solely on intuition and experience. Use of a decision model reduces the likelihood that pertinent information or decision criteria are overlooked and can expedite the process by making explicit the criteria for assessment.

Conclusion

Truly unique and college altering opportunities seldom present themselves. All colleges establish annual strategic plans to meet their mission and goals. This strategic planning exercise performs an invaluable service of informing decision makers and creating a context into which new stimulus can be inserted to clarify opportunities.

New opportunities do not follow a prescribed pattern in presenting themselves. Therefore, community college leaders need to be prepared to properly assess these emergent alternatives as they become known. Faced with complex environments these emerging opportunities present tough decisions which can propel an institution forward or impair the institution's abilities into the future. The Currier model for Complex Institutional Decisions has been developed to assist community college leaders in making these tough complex decisions.

Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions

Based on the findings of the research, a model is needed to assist college leaders to systematically engage in complex institutional decisions the likes of the community college baccalaureate decision undertaken by the study participants. Developed by the researcher, the Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions provides community college leaders with a comprehensive and orderly method for evaluating whether the college should engage in a complex decision process. The constructs of the model presents the steps to manage the process of any unfamiliar complex and complicated decision by college leaders.

No decision is complete until it is made. The process leading up to the final decision is replete with assessments, evaluations, alternative courses, and outcomes. Community college leaders who have a mental map of the components of the process are more prepared to manage any complex institutional decision process as it unfolds and predictably have better outcomes.

The Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions is based on the need for community college leaders to quickly and efficiently bring strategic opportunities to a decision. The model is sequential nature, flexible to adapt to any decision needed and incorporates appropriate exit strategies throughout. Three "terminal gates" along the path assist in identifying decisions points where exit strategies can be utilized. These gates and the exit strategies are innovative as it keeps the decision process moving and allowing the college to consider the opportunity incrementally (

Figure 5). The model is situated within the environment and culture of the college, the community, as well as networks and alliances appropriate to that particular decision.   The four main steps of the Currier Model are:

a) emergent concept *(identification of new strategic opportunity)*

b) strategic fit (*appraisal of strategic opportunity against mission and SWOT*)

c) critical evaluation *(review of opportunity within the four decision domains)*

d) decision *(the* final decision outcome) .

Description of the Currier Model's Steps

Step 1: Emergent Concept

This step is quick and decisive for the process. From the environment of the community college periodically arise strategic opportunities.   These concepts many times come from catalyst outside the college. To maximize the likelihood of being made aware of these opportunities, leaders can develop robust sensing networks. An emergent concept may be more or less appealing based on the current state of the institution and its environment which impact the desirability of the option. Incorporated into this step of the Model is the deliberate use of

Sensing Networks. Sensing networks are people and groups who will help the college leadership identify opportunity in its infancy. Entities which can be described as part of a community college sensing network include advisory councils, industry contacts and community organizations as well as those from inside the organization.
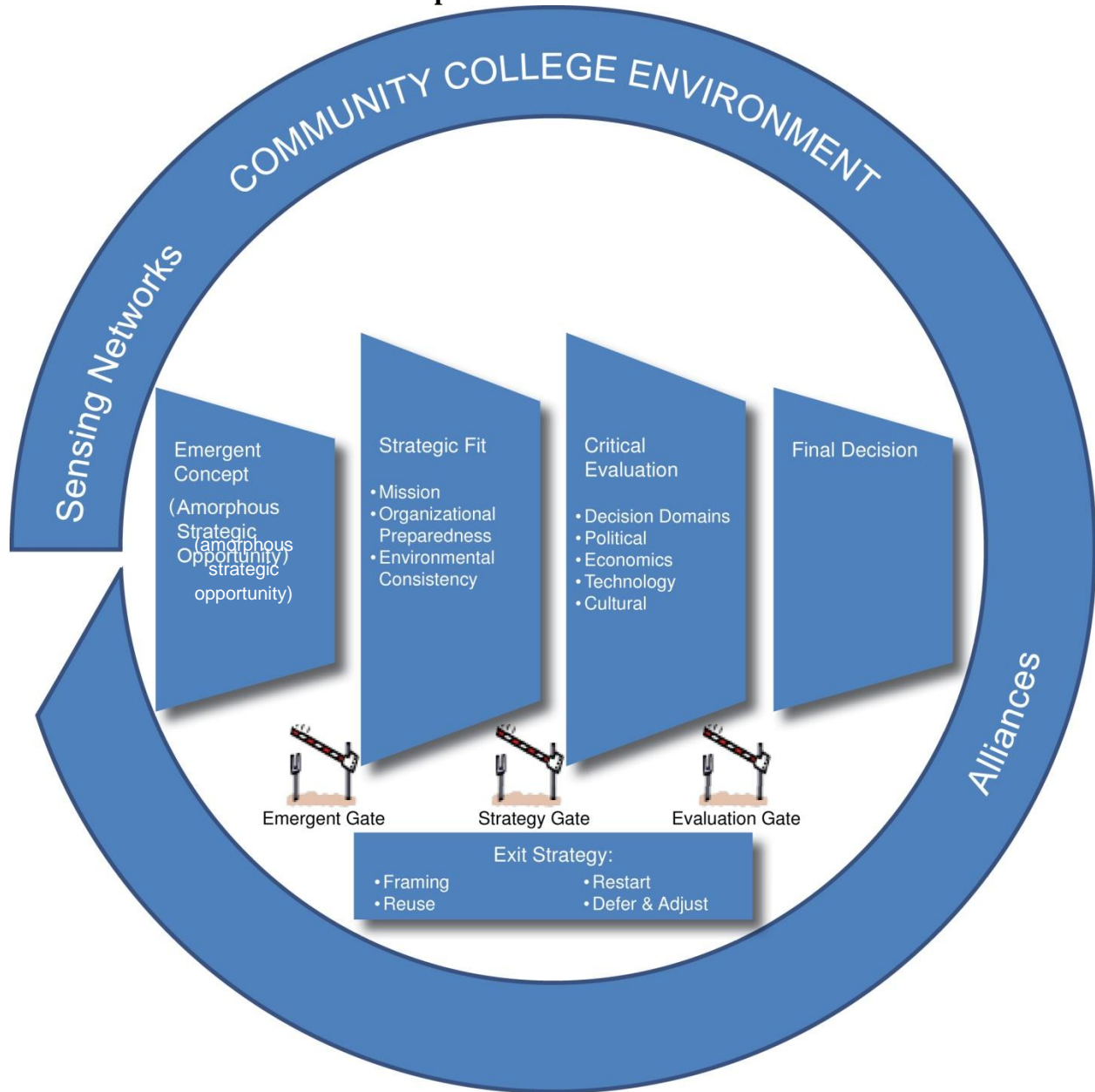
Currier Complex Institutional Decision Model

Figure 5 - Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions

The Emergent Concept Gate (First of the Model's Three Terminal Gates)

The concept gate represents the point where consideration of the Emergent Concept Step stops or where the concept moves forward into the next step, the assessment of strategic fit. Once the concept is made known and its scale is established the college leadership must make a determination as to whether the opportunity is appropriate for the college at this time and worthy of investing in a decision process. Leadership's appetite for pursuing a decision process may also influence whether the opportunity passes on to the subsequent steps. This point is arrived at quickly and the president's makes a choice as to whether to proceed which relies heavily on their experience and intuitive assessment.

Step 2: Strategic Fit

This step is more formal, longer in duration and focused on decided if the new opportunity is a good fit with the college's mission and is appropriate for the college at this time. The President having made the choice to considered strategic opportunity, further assesses the opportunity in light of the organization itself and the organization's strategic plan. An initial team of senor leaders might be gathered to assist with these general assessments. Included in this step is the general assessment of whether the concept fits with the college mission; are internal capabilities sufficiently prepared to take on a new strategic alternative; and is the emergent concept consistent with the external environment in which the college resides.

Consistency with college mission is essential for considering new strategic opportunities (emergent concepts). Pursuing options which do not fulfill the mission divert resources from mission critical endeavors. Similarly, leaders must be able to make honest appraisals of the college's internal capacity and capability. Strategic opportunities will most likely require new

ways of working and often new administrative and even physical arrangements within the organization. Colleges whose workforce or management structures are not in order may find the adoption of new initiatives too taxing on the organization leading to serious work disruptions or worse a failed initiative.

The Strategy Fit Gate (Second of the Model's Three Terminal Gates)

The second gate represents the point where consideration of the Strategy Fit Step stops or where the decision process moves forward into the next step, the Evaluation Step. Use of this gate indicates the new opportunity under review failed a general scrutiny of consistency and appropriateness with the mission and strategic direction of the college and therefore should be abandoned. In the opinion of college leadership, the strategic opportunity did not reasonably meet the mission; it was neither practical nor conducive to the current abilities of the institution to implement.

Step 3: Critical Evaluation

This step is the longest in duration and the most intense. In this step, the leadership team concentrates on gathering pertinent data, information, advice, and building appropriate alliances as the college pursues a decision regarding the new strategic opportunity. Community college leaders gather data and information across a number of domains with which to evaluate the new strategic opportunity. Because the emergent opportunities are often not well known and involve new issues the college has not dealt with before, following a formal process assists in keeping on track and ensures that nothing is missed.

In the Currier Model for Making Complex Institutional Decisions there are four domains of influence pertinent to the evaluation of the strategic opportunity. These four domains

(political, economic, cultural, and technology) represent four critical areas of consideration used in vetting the strategic opportunity. It is important for leaders to understand what these four domains embody as these constitute the scope of the evaluation for the strategic opportunity.

Within the four influence domains are factors which are the detailed evaluation components. Table 22 - Currier Model Influence Domain Factors contains a list of the factors and a brief description of each.   Use of these predefined domains and factors serve to reduce the time and effort of compiling items to be considered during a complex decision process.

Since each opportunity has unique characteristics and each college possesses distinctive traits those leading the decision will want to consider which factors are relevant to the opportunity under consideration. Using the table of factors, leaders can quickly assemble a series of items to be evaluated with assurance that they are not overlooking critical factors.   This list is meant to be a starting point. Additional factors may be appropriate for some decisions and can be added by the college leadership team.   In this process the institution and the direction of the president assesses issues in a detailed fashion and make take some early actions to prepare the way for implementing the decision.

Table 22 - Currier Model Influence Domain Factors

Domain	Factors
Political:	
City/local	City or local ordinance may require modification
Federal Agency	Strategic opportunities may require federal regulatory action to authorize or enhance a strategic opportunity
Federal legislative action	Federal legislation may be needed to allow or enhance the opportunity
Opposition	Define opposition and influence they may have on others.
Peer institutions	Define how peer institutions & presidents can support strategic opportunity

State Agency	Strategic opportunities may require state regulatory action to authorize or enhance a strategic opportunity
State legislative action	State legislation may be needed to allow or enhance the opportunity
Trustee/Board action	Trustees or Boards require structured communications. Action may be required to finalize the adoption of a strategic opportunity.

Economic:	
Business plan	Develop business plan for strategic opportunity; sources of funding, fully loaded expenses.
Competition	Identify and gauge competitive suppliers.
Partners	Define impact of strategic opportunity on partners
Resource competition	Define impact on existing operations.
Resource utilization	College resources required to develop strategic opportunity and to support ongoing operations.
Student Benefit	Define student benefit
Workforce Development	Define workforce .development need. Including fit within global economic market place.

Information/Technology:	
Adequacy of Infrastructure	Define how technological infrastructure will support strategic opportunity and potential gaps.
Require new systems	Define what new application systems will be required to support strategic opportunity
Require modification to existing systems	Define what, and scope of, policy and procedures embedded in existing systems will need modification to service strategic opportunity.
Communications	Define communication strategy for communicating the strategic opportunity to college constituents. This may vary by population to address specific concerns. Communication in this context is comprised of both the message and the delivery channel(s).

Cultural:	
Community support	Define consistency between community culture and strategic opportunity.
Faculty support	Define consistency between faculty culture and strategic opportunity.
Foster globalization perspective	Define how strategic opportunity fosters globalization in the community college.
Special Populations	Identify how strategic opportunity benefits under-represented groups or impacts specific groups
Student support	Define consistency between student culture and strategic opportunity.

The Evaluation Gate   (Last of the Model's Three Terminal Gates)

This gate represents the point where consideration of the Evaluation Step stops or where

the process moves forward to the final step. By the time the process has reached this point, the

college has invested a significant amount or resource into the pursuit of the strategic opportunity.

Having completed the Evaluation Step and analyzed the data for factors representing the four

domains of influence, the College is ready for a decision concerning the strategic opportunity

(emergent concept).   The decision may be influenced by the president's perception as to the

quality and sufficiency of the information gathered through the Evaluation Step.

However, each decision regarding a new strategic opportunity can be ended at the three

terminal decision gates or decision points. It is important for community college leaders to have

planned an exit strategy from the very beginning of the process. These plans allow leaders to

make the most of the departure from the opportunity. The exit strategy may serve to recognize

and maintain morale of team members who often contributed to the process through their

significant efforts.   Recognition and morale are important as it positively positions the president

and the college for the next strategic opportunity to be studied.

Exit Strategy

What is unique to the Currier Model is the inclusion of an Exit Strategy right from the start of the complex decision process. The exit strategy represents a plan of how to manage the aftermath of deciding not to pursue the strategic opportunity at any time during the decision process. Exit strategies assist leaders to maintain their esteem and to craft how the work that was done can be leveraged for benefit. Making leaders cognizant of the need to craft strategies early on can protect them and the institution from being caught off-guard if a decision process comes to an abrupt end.

The initiation of a process to decide on a strategic opportunity creates expectations of an outcome. One outcome is to pursue the strategic opportunity. The other outcome is not to pursue the opportunity; this is where an exit strategy becomes valuable. An outcome or final decision to not implement a strategic opportunity may have greater consequences to the institution than if the option were unknown. For those aware of the option, the act of beginning to evaluate the strategic opportunity creates expectations: both positive and negative. Ending the process with a rejection of the opportunity often may leave these expectations unfulfilled and even with a negative connotation surrounding the process and the final decision. Thus the adoption of an exit strategy allows the president to anticipate how to resolve these expectations in a positive manner. Several general types of exit strategies can be available to the president: (a) framing; (b) reusability; and (c) restart.

Framing is the act of setting the rejection of the strategic opportunity in a positive light. Setting the rejection decision in the context of an outcome with greater benefit than the opportunity being considered allows the president to claim victory. Conveyed is the reliability of

the evaluation process, the good work of the review team, and therefore the correct decision to reject the strategic opportunity.

An alternate exit strategy to be considered is reusability which is fairly positive in nature. This is when information and assessments made through the evaluation process can be used now or in the future for other purposes of value to the organization. Thus, even though this decision ended in a rejection of the strategic opportunity the understanding constructed is useful to the college.

The final strategy is the restart strategy which is also fairly positive in tone. This is when the current conditions of the college or the environment are not optimal to support pursuing a strategic opportunity at this given time. Therefore, the president may decide to reject the opportunity now, but shares with the institution and possibly college constituents, an intent of returning to the opportunity at a future time when conditions and circumstances are more supportive. The president might also at this juncture offer steps the college will take to improve the conditions and a timeframe for reconsidering the opportunity.

Checklist

The Currier Model for Complex Institutional Decisions includes a two page checklist to assist colleges and presidents with complex difficult decisions involving strategic opportunities of which they are not familiar (Figure 6 - Strategic Opportunity Checklist (pg. 1), Figure 7 - Strategic Opportunity Checklist (pg. 2)).The checklist has a section for each of the three primary steps of the model (emergent concept, strategic fit and critical evaluation) with space to make assignments, take notes and record the date completed. Gate sections which terminate the

process, separate each of the primary sections with suggested exit strategies that can be employed at that juncture.

To assist with managing the complex decision this check list is extremely practical. Using the checklist leaders can monitor and manage progress towards the decision with assurances that critical considerations are not being overlooked.   The checklist will save time and effort as leaders seek to quickly begin the process of evaluating emergent opportunities. The inclusion of exit strategy information reminds leaders to develop these in advance of each stage of the process.   Finally, the check list provides a complete record of the decision process. This record can be used to inform future decisions. With change as a constant in our world, this record can serve as a beginning point to re-evaluate a strategic opportunity as circumstances change.

Strategic Opportunity Checklist

(identify opportunity here . . .)				

Concept Section

Terminal Gate #1 - Concept

This checklist is appropriate after the president has determined the concept is appropriate for the college.

Preparation Section

Team

Team Composition:
   (define team composition; tight, broad, specialization, etc.)

Team Members:
   (identify team members and appropriate abbreviations for use in checklist)

Exit Strategies

Strategy Gate
   (define appropriate strategies for exit)

Critical Evaluation Gate
   (define appropriate strategies for exit)

Strategic Fit	Assigned	Date	Notes
Strategic factors:			
Mission appropriate			
Internal capabilities / Organizational preparedness			
Consistency with external assessment			

Terminal Gate #2 - Strategic

Strategic Fit: Pass / Terminate
   Possible exit strategies:
      Framing communications
      Defer and build organizational preparedness
      Modify opportunity to more appropriate concept

Terminal Gate - Strategic

Figure 6 - Strategic Opportunity Checklist (pg. 1)

Strategic Opportunity Checklist

Critical Evaluation	Assigned	Date	Notes
Political factors:			
City/local action			
Federal Agency action			
Federal legislative action			
Opposition			
Peer support			
State Agency action			
State legislative action			
Trustee/Board action			
Economic Factors:			
Business plan			
Competition			
Partners			
Resource competition			
Resource utilization			
Student Benefit			
Workforce Development			
Technology Factors:			
Adequacy of Infrastructure			
Require new systems			
Require modification to existing systems			
Social Media			
Cultural factors:			
Communications			
Community support			
Faculty support			
Foster globalization perspective			
Special Populations			
Student support			

Terminal Gate - Evaluation

Evaluation Outcome **Pass / Terminate**

Possible exit strategies:
  Framing communications
  Defer and address critical factors
  Modify opportunity to more appropriate concept
  Reuse evaluation for future opportunities

Terminal Evaluation Gate

Decision

Final Decision & Rationale:

Possible exit strategies:
  Framing communications
  Defer and address critical factors
  Modify opportunity to more appropriate concept
  Reuse evaluation for future opportunities

Figure 7 - Strategic Opportunity Checklist (pg. 2)

Recommendations for Future Research

After an extended period of growth and development the common understanding of the community college meta-mission has stabilized around the themes of open access, affordable education, and community engagement. The educational mission is commonly understood to include transfer, career & technical, ESL/developmental, community serve, and continuing education/professional development. The rapid rise in the knowledge economy fueled by ever more pervasive technology requirements in the work place is challenging the traditional notion of education and the needs for workforce development. This simultaneously presents contradictory worlds of uncertainty and opportunity.

Missions of the contemporary community college compete for finite resources. It seems that presidents follow the structure for allocation of resources based on past practice. Future research focusing on how and in what ways the community college presidents make decisions could assist in allocating resources to strategic opportunities. Some pertinent research topics could include what basis presidents allocate resources between the many missions of the college and what events cause them to rethink the legacy allocation of resources to those missions. Findings from such research could inform other college presidents how best to approach the allocation of scarce resources.

The speed of change in the economy and the resultant jobs will continue to challenge community college leaders to keep their institutions relevant through adoption of innovative opportunities. Small changes in the environment from year to year are obscured by vast amounts of information contained in strategic plans. Future research may explore the process of flexible strategic planning; examine the make-up of the college planning committees and what each

brings to the table related to their expertise and perspectives; examine how colleges are structuring ongoing assessment process of the annual strategic plan; and explore what intentional activities are most productive in finding strategic opportunities. Findings from this research would inform leader's design of strategic planning processes which are timely and accurate in exposing opportunity.

Innovation is the rallying cry for many community colleges in these turbulent times. According to Martinez and Wolverton (2009) "innovation is not a prescribed, step-by step process. Opportunity takes many forms, and the strategies that best position an organization to capitalize on it are almost always customized to fit the situation" (p.8). Future research might study what characteristics of how presidents and boards of trustees work together in tandem to initiate and support entrepreneurial endeavors. Findings from this research could help inform community college presidents and trustees on appropriate fit between these two leading functions.

There are many factors that influence whether an emergent opportunity can become a successful strategic choice. In each situation there are factors which support, enhance and enrich an opportunity. There are other factors which obstruct, impede and hinder the adoption of an opportunity. There are foundational factors which set a basis for how work is done. Policy, procedures and practices fall into this category. There are structures which reinforce these guiding constructs and cause the foundational factors to stagnate. Stagnation in these foundational factors is a hazard to strategic opportunities. Future research may look at what structures cause community college policy, procedures and practices to stagnate. Studies may

include topics on information technology, employment contracts, legislative rules and

regulations, and state and federal educational policies relevant to community colleges.

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APPENDIX A
DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

1. Survey Overview

This survey consists of six pages including this overview page and ten (10) questions.

Time to complete should be under 10 minutes.

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study

2. Consent

The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2010 to January, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Charles W. Currier a doctoral student at National-Louis University, located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled Exploration of Issues Relevant to Decision Making to Confer Community College Baccalaureate Degrees. The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

I understand that my participation will consist of completing an initial survey, an audio recorded interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes with a possible second, followup interview and a final short survey instrument. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and the information I provide confidential. I understand that only the researcher, Charles W. Currier, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, audio recordings, documents and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be used to assist community colleges.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Charles W. Currier xxxx Xxxxxxxx, Xxxxxxx, IL nnnnn-nnnn. Phone: (nnn) nnn-nnnn or Email: chuck.currier@comcast.net.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone: 3122613534 or Email: rebecca.lake@nl.edu

Do you Consent to participate in this study?

○ Consent
○ Refuse

3. Participant Demographics

1. Participant Information:

Participant Name: _____
Institution: _____
Job Title: _____
City/State: _____
Number of years in current position   _____

2. Gender:

○ Female
○ Male

3. Age Group:

○ 25 - 30 years
○ 31 - 35 years
○ 36 - 40 years
○ 41 - 45 years
○ 46 - 50 years
○ 51 - 55 years
○ 56 - 60 years
○ Over 60 years

4. Ethnicity:

○ Asian or Pacific Islander
○ American Indian or Alaskan
○ Black, non-Hispanic
○ Hispanic
○ White, non-Hispanic
○ Withhold
○ Other
  Other (please specify) _____

4. Institutional Demographics

Collect information about the study site.

1. Institution Size (annual FTE):

○   500 1,999
○   2,000 4,999
○   5,000 9,999
○   10,000 or greater

2. Are any four year institutions holding classes on your campus(es)?

No
Yes

5. Community College Baccalaureate Degree Decision Process

Think about the process your institution went through to decide the question of offering a Community College Baccalaureate degree when answering the questions on this page.

1. Who was involved in the decision making process? (Check all that apply)

- ○ Administrators
- ○ Board/Trustees
- ○ External Parties to the college
- ○ Faculty
- ○ Staff
- ○ Students
- ○ Others (please specify)

2. This question seeks three answers.

1) Is your college now conferring baccalaureate degrees?

2) If the college is conferring baccalaureate degrees, did the college retain its community college status with the regional accrediting agency? and finally

3) If the college is conferring baccalaureate degrees, did the college retain its community college status with the state?

Question 1: Conferring Baccalaureate Degree
Question 2: Regional Accrediting Agency Status
Question 3: State Status
Other information you wish to supply

3. If appropriate, please list the baccalaureate degrees conferred by the college and the associate program

Program/Degree #1
Program/Degree #2
Program/Degree #3
Program/Degree #4
Program/Degree #5
Program/Degree #6
Program/Degree #7
Program/Degree #8

6. Thank You

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your thoughtful responses will aid in the providing context for this study.

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2010 to January, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Charles W. Currier a doctoral student at National-Louis University, located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled **Exploration of Issues Relevant to Decision Making to Confer Community College Baccalaureate Degrees**. The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

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I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Charles W. Currier 11985 Devonshire Road, Algonquin, IL 60102-2512. Phone: 847-226-4674 or E-mail: chuck.currier@comcast.net.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone: 312-261-3534 or E-mail: rebecca.lake@nl.edu

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Data Transcription

This confidentiality form articulates the agreement made between Charles W. Currier, the researcher, and [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY OF A PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIBER].

I understand and acknowledge that by transcribing the audio files provided to me by Charles W. Currier, that I will be exposed to confidential information about the research study and the research participants. In providing transcription services, at no time will I reveal or discuss any of the information of which I have been exposed.

In addition, at no time will I maintain copies of the electronic or paper documents generated. Further, upon completing each transcription, I agree to provide the electronic and paper documents to the researcher:

    Charles W. Currier
    Address: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
    City/State :xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
    Phone: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
    email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx

I understand that breach of this agreement as described above could result in personal and professional harm to the research participants for which I will be held legally responsible.

Transcriptionist's Signature:_____ Date:_____

Researcher's Signature:_____ Date:_____

APPENDIX D

FACTORS RATING SURVEY

This survey consists of five pages consisting of this overview page, consent page, participant page, factors page and conclusion page. Time to complete should be around 10 minutes. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study

The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2010 to January, 2012. This form outlines the purposes of the study and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

I consent to participate in a research project conducted by Charles W. Currier a doctoral student at National-Louis University, located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled Exploration of Issues Relevant to Decision Making to Confer Community College Baccalaureate Degrees. The purpose of this study is to discover insight into the variety and magnitude of factors that influence the community college decision to confer baccalaureate degrees.

I understand that my participation will consist of completing an initial survey, an audio recorded interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes with a possible second, follow up interview and a final short survey instrument. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and the information I provide confidential. I understand that only the researcher, Charles W. Currier, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, audio recordings, documents and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could be used to assist community colleges.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Charles W. Currier xxxx xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx, xxxxxx, IL xxxxx-xxxx. Phone: (nnn) nnn-nnnn or Email: chuck.currier@comcast.net.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my Primary Advisor and Dissertation Chair: Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone: (312) 261-3534 or Email: rebecca.lake@nl.edu

Do you Consent to participate in this study?

__ Yes   __ No

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION:

Participant Name: _____

Institution: _____

The following page will present community college baccalaureate decision factors identified during interviews. Please rank the relative importance of each factor to the decision process.

At the bottom of the page you may provide comments which clarify your answers or provide additional detail you consider pertinent.

FACTOR RATING:

Please rate the following factors as to their importance to the Community College Baccalaureate Degree Decision.

Note: Answer columns are ordered from high importance to low importance; High, Moderately high (MH), Moderate, Moderately low (ML), Low

Factor	High	M H	Moderate	M L	Low	N / A
Budget cuts	•	•	•	•	•	•
Community college cost model	•	•	•	•	•	•
Developing a full business plan	•	•	•	•	•	•
Enrollment growth	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sources of financial support	•	•	•	•	•	•
State Funding	•	•	•	•	•	•
Sufficiency of resources for current mission	•	•	•	•	•	•
Tuition cost for upper level courses	•	•	•	•	•	•
University tuition & Cost model	•	•	•	•	•	•
Alignment of accreditation with baccalaureate	•	•	•	•	•	•
Creating workforce related degrees	•	•	•	•	•	•
Curriculum development	•	•	•	•	•	•
Program Quality	•	•	•	•	•	•
Accrediting agencies	•	•	•	•	•	•
Community college president associations	•	•	•	•	•	•
Community perceptions	•	•	•	•	•	•
Industry demand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Legislative relationships with college	•	•	•	•	•	•
Lobbyist	•	•	•	•	•	•
Moving university partners to competitors	•	•	•	•	•	•
Peer community college opposition	•	•	•	•	•	•
Peer community college support	•	•	•	•	•	•
Private College partnerships	•	•	•	•	•	•
Relationship building before the decision process	•	•	•	•	•	•
State governing board	•	•	•	•	•	•
State legislative goals	•	•	•	•	•	•
University cooperation in offering baccalaureate degrees locally	•	•	•	•	•	•
University opposition	•	•	•	•	•	•
University partner option	•	•	•	•	•	•
Willingness of university partner to offer baccalaureate degrees locally	•	•	•	•	•	•
Faculty compensation for upper level courses	•	•	•	•	•	•
Faculty leadership support	•	•	•	•	•	•
Faculty professional development	•	•	•	•	•	•
Qualified faculty to teach upper level courses	•	•	•	•	•	•
Campus constituent support	•	•	•	•	•	•
Campus culture	•	•	•	•	•	•

Factor	High	M H	Moderate	M L	Low	N / A
Communication plan	•	•	•	•	•	•
Developing multi-campus resources	•	•	•	•	•	•
Digital library resources	•	•	•	•	•	•
Distance learning options	•	•	•	•	•	•
Divergent Mission views by constituents	•	•	•	•	•	•
Facilities	•	•	•	•	•	•
Foundation support for developing CCB	•	•	•	•	•	•
Growth in non-traditional student populations	•	•	•	•	•	•
Mission creep	•	•	•	•	•	•
Place-bound students	•	•	•	•	•	•
Presidential Leadership	•	•	•	•	•	•
Staff workload	•	•	•	•	•	•
Strategic Plan	•	•	•	•	•	•
Student Access	•	•	•	•	•	•
Student demand	•	•	•	•	•	•
Student support for baccalaureate degrees	•	•	•	•	•	•
Trustee leadership	•	•	•	•	•	•

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your thoughtful responses will aid in building understanding about the community college baccalaureate decision process.

APPENDIX E

Factor Survey Results (Complete)

Factor results are presented in the same order in this table as they were presented in the online survey.   Scores range from 1 (low importance) to 5 (high importance) with 3 being the mid-point (moderate importance).

UCCB = Urban college with community college baccalaureate degree
SCCB = Suburban college with community college baccalaureate degree
RCCB = Rural college with community college baccalaureate degree
UAO = Urban college associates only
SAO = Suburban college associates only

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Budget cuts	1	1	5	5	3	3
Community college cost model	1	2	1	4	5	2.6
Developing a full business plan	3	5	4	5	3	4
Enrollment growth	4	3	3	3	4	3.4
Sources of financial support	2	3	3	3	3	2.8
State Funding	3	2	3	5	3	3.2
Sufficiency of resources for current mission	3	3	5	5	3	3.8
Tuition cost for upper level courses	4	4	3	2	4	3.4
University tuition & Cost model	1	4	2	1	5	2.6
Alignment of accreditation with baccalaureate	2	5	5	5	3	4
Creating workforce related degrees	5	5	3	3	5	4.2
Curriculum development	3	5	3	3	3	3.4
Program Quality	5	5	5	4	5	4.8
Accrediting agencies	1	5	4	5	3	3.6
Community college president associations	1	2	3	5	1	2.4
Community perceptions	5	5	4	5	4	4.6
Industry demand	5	5	4	3	5	4.4
Legislative relationships with college	5	3	3	4	5	4
Lobbyist	0	2	1	2	5	2

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Moving university partners to competitors	1	1	1	2	2	1.4
Peer community college opposition	1	3	1	1	4	2
Peer community college support	2	3	1	3	4	2.6
Private College partnerships	0	2	0	1	3	1.2
Relationship building before the decision process	4	5	3	4	5	4.2
State governing board	5	5	1	5	4	4
State legislative goals	4	5	1	4	4	3.6
University cooperation in offering baccalaureate degrees locally	3	5	0	4	4	3.2
University opposition	3	5	0	1	4	2.6
University partner option	1	5	0	2	5	2.6
Willingness of university partner to offer baccalaureate degrees locally	4	5	3	1	5	3.6
Faculty compensation for upper level courses	2	1	2	4	4	2.6
Faculty leadership support	5	1	3	4	5	3.6
Faculty professional development	1	3	3	3	4	2.8
Qualified faculty to teach upper level courses	5	5	5	4	4	4.6
Campus constituent support	5	3	3	4	4	3.8
Campus culture	5	3	3	4	4	3.8
Communication plan	5	4	3	4	5	4.2
Developing multi-campus resources	1	4	0	4	4	2.6
Digital library resources	1	4	4	4	4	3.4
Distance learning options	2	3	1	4	4	2.8
Divergent Mission views by constituents	1	3	1	5	4	2.8
Facilities	3	3	3	5	5	3.8
Foundation support for developing CCB	3	1	1	1	3	1.8
Growth in non-traditional student populations	2	2	2	1	5	2.4
Mission creep	1	1	0	4	0	1.2
Place-bound students	3	5	4	3	5	4
Presidential Leadership	5	3	4	5	5	4.4
Staff workload	2	3	2	3	3	2.6
Strategic Plan	4	4	3	3	4	3.6

Factor	UCCB	SCCB	RCCB	UAO	SAO	Overall rating score
Student Access	4	5	4	4	4	4.2
Student demand	5	5	4	4	4	4.4
Student support for baccalaureate degrees	5	5	3	4	4	4.2
Trustee leadership	5	5	4	5	5	4.8

APPENDIX F

MAPPING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO DRIVING QUESTIONS

Driving Questions	Interview Questions
What catalysts induce community colleges to revisit their mission priorities to investigate conferring baccalaureate degree(s)?	Why did you college begin to look at community college baccalaureate degrees?
	Where did the impetus come from?
	What organization, person or group made the catalyst knows?
	What is your perspective on the catalyst?
What issues are identified as crucial to the decision pursuant to offering a baccalaureate degree?	What issues were identified for consideration in decision process?
	Which of the issues do you think were critical?
	How would you characterize the critical issues?
	Which issues took the most time and energy to assess?
	Were there any issues from your perspective that were overlooked?
Does the prominence of specific factors influence the outcome of the decision to offer a baccalaureate degree?	Which issues seemed to carry the most weight when being assessed and why?
	Did any specific issues have an over-riding effect on the decision?

Driving Questions	Interview Questions
How and in what ways is the decision process undertaken in community colleges considering conferring baccalaureate degrees?	Describe your college's decision process.
	Who participated in the decision process?
	What role did faculty play?
	What role did administrators play?
	Did anyone external to the college participate?
	What role did mission statement play in the deliberations?