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# Community College Succession Planning: Preparing the Next Generation of Women for Leadership Roles

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NATIONAL-LOUIS UNIVERSITY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE SUCCESSION PLANNING:  
PREPARING THE NEXT GENERATION OF WOMEN FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES

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

In

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

BY

ANGELA KAYSEN LUZBETAK

Chicago, Illinois

June 2010

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# Community College Leadership Doctoral Program

## Dissertation Notification of Completion

Doctoral Candidate: Angela Kaysen Luzbetak




Title of Dissertation: Community College Succession Planning:  
Preparing the Next Generation of Women  
for Leadership Roles

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Final Approval Meeting: March 9, 2010

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
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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my husband Jeff Luzbetak. Thank you for holding my hand and giving me the courage to do accomplish this dream...for listening to my fears and doubts and offering encouragement and compassion...for being Super-Dad and letting me bury myself in my work...or occasionally sleep in. My life would be unimaginable without you.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I credit one very important and truly special woman in my life for encouraging me to seek challenges and opportunities; grow from my mistakes; and truly appreciate the good and otherwise challenging “administrative moments.” Pattie Morrison, retired Dean of Student Development, believes with all of her heart in the mission of the community college. Without knowing, she has inspired so many individuals like me. I will always credit Pattie for giving me the strength to try and the courage to fail and try again...she is and will always be a super-hero in my book...

My dissertation chair, Dr. Martin Parks, and advisor, Dr. Rebecca Lake, words cannot express my gratitude. I can only aspire to make you both proud.

My parents, Michael and Kathleen Kaysen, for a lifetime of encouragement and support...for instilling a love of learning and commitment to “stick with it.” I learned that obstacles only strengthen one’s resolve to succeed from my Dad. Because of you, I am not afraid to fail; I have the tools and the tenacity get back up and succeed. Mom, you gave me the gift of compassion and the ability to play nice in the sandbox. I love you both.

My sisters Kathryn and Michelle for having my back...I hope to make you proud. I love you both.

My in-laws, Richard and Kathleen Luzbetak, for giving me the gift of time to work and research knowing Brody is happy and safe. Thank you for endlessly taking care of all three of us.

My brilliantly smart and entertaining niece Cameron Leigh Murzyn...you are one of the most important and influential people in my life.

My dear friend, Pam Dilday, who always knows when to give me a little push, hug, or pep-talk.

My family at Joliet Junior College... Drs. Gena Proulx, Betsy Oudenhoven, and Ryan Smith. Also, Joan Tierney, Gina Hoyt, and the entire Student Development team for their endless support and encouragement.

My little guy, Brody... We started this journey when you were 6 weeks old and together we made it. In moments of frustration I would look at you and remember why I was doing this. You remind me each day that anything is possible. I hope someday to return the favor when you are knee deep in your dissertation. There are no words to express my love for you.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies to enable community colleges to develop and cultivate women for leadership roles through succession planning. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the pace of administrative and other key staff retirements exceeds the pace at which these positions are being re-staffed (Shults, 2001). One might question why the purposeful development of future community college leaders is critical. Community colleges currently face a crucial leadership crisis in the United States. Pending retirements and the lack of succession planning to fill upcoming vacancies is reaching a critical turning point. The Chronicle of Higher Education (Leubsdorf, 2006) projects an administrative turnover exceeding 50% in the next decade.

This mixed-methods approach sought to identify strategies to enable community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, Specialists) for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) through succession planning. The study focused on cultivating women for leadership roles in rural community colleges, which often encounter distinct challenges attracting and retaining talented administrators. Challenges include geographic isolation and funding inequities in rural communities, as well as lack of resources within the rural community college system to train and develop professionals for future leadership roles.

The study also addressed implications of shared governance on succession planning. The study concluded that succession planning can be used as a tool to articulate



institutional sustainability by which community colleges can systemically and deliberately cultivate future leaders. Hiring practices and employment procedures do not have to change. Over time the effect of succession planning might reveal larger pools of well qualified and diverse applicants for senior-level administrative positions in community colleges.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies to enable community colleges to develop and cultivate women for leadership roles through succession planning.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), the pace of administrative and other key staff retirements exceeds the pace at which these positions are being re-staffed (Shults, 2001). One might question why the purposeful development of future community college leaders is critical. However, community colleges currently face a crucial leadership crisis in the United States. Pending retirements and the lack of succession planning to fill upcoming vacancies is reaching a critical turning point. A *Chronicle of Higher Education* article (Leubsdorf, 2006) projects an administrative turnover exceeding 50% in the next decade.

This chapter introduces the purpose of the study and illustrates the need for research on the topic. It also addresses the research questions investigated and highlights relative terminology and operational definitions.

#### The Leadership Transition in American Community Colleges

Many scholars have explored organization and leadership structure in community colleges (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001). Emerging research on community college leadership suggests further inquiry regarding strategies to fill senior administrative positions should be conducted (Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001, Wallin, 2006). Therefore, the purpose of this doctoral research sought to investigate how the next generations of leaders are being identified and cultivated during this period of administrative change in American community colleges. Finally, the research addresses



whether community colleges are preparing women for roles in senior administrative positions.

Community colleges face a leadership crisis as many administrators are approaching or have reached retirement age (Leubsdorf, 2006). Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) suggest college leaders view this transitional period as an opportunity to explore the changing needs of community colleges. However, the authors also underscore that during this period of transition the large number of retirements—coined the “mass exodus”— can significantly impact community colleges (Fulton-Calkins & Millings, 2005). Therefore, leaders must be cognizant and prepare for the transition by training and cultivating new leaders. More specifically, this doctoral research focused on the advancement of women in community college leadership roles through succession planning. To further explore how community colleges will grow and prosper in the future it is necessary to understand the origins of community colleges.

#### Overview of the Origins of American Community Colleges

According to Cohen (1998), community colleges have been the cornerstone of American higher education since their inception. The community college has undergone great transition over the years. The Morrill Act of 1862 (also referred to as the Land Grant Act) was largely responsible for the creation of community colleges. The Land Grant Act emphasized coursework in agriculture and mechanics. The Morrill Act of 1862 also made higher education a reality for many who had been excluded previously.

The second passage of the Morrill Act in 1890 made a powerful social statement. States that did not allow admission to higher education to individuals based on race were not provided federal funding. Under the new legislation, such states had to admit

applicants to higher education or provide options for education at other institutions. This Act opened the door for individuals who previously were not allowed or were otherwise unable to attend college (AACC, 2007).

The next historical event to impact the community college was The Great Depression of the 1930s. This era served as a catalyst for community college growth because it provided access to job training programs to ease widespread unemployment. A decade later community colleges responded to the need of returning military personnel with the creation of the GI Bill post World War II (AACC, 2007). This provided access to job training for veterans. Further, community colleges were responding to a technologically advancing society by offering coursework in business and industrial training.

The community college has provided an opportunity for training as well as access to services for underrepresented individuals. As a result, the community college is partially responsible for the expansion of higher education (Lucas, 1994). The number of racial and ethnic minorities attending community colleges steadily increased from 1975 to 2000. According to Kasper (2003), minorities enrolled in community colleges made up 20% of students nationally in 1976 and by 1999 the total minority enrollment increased to 33%.

#### Statement of the Problem

The American community college system is at a crossroads. The system faces a leadership shortage as college presidents and vice presidents retire at a pace exceeding the pace at which they are being replaced (Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001). The AACC (2005) predicted that 45% of community college presidents would have retired by 2007.

According to Weisman and Vaughn (2006), the projected retirements of community college leaders will reach 84% by 2016.

Furthermore, research suggests that academic preparedness and training of new administrators will be a critical issue (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Piland & Wolf, 2003). According to Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), less than 2% of community college administrators have completed a degree in community college leadership and administration. The leadership crisis is also being viewed as an opportunity to explore the changing needs of community colleges and those who lead (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005).

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed-methods study is to explore and identify strategies that will enable community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, Specialists) for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) through succession planning.

Research indicates that American community colleges are reaching a leadership crossroads as senior-level administrators plan to retire (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001). Concerns include filling vacancies with individuals possessing the requisite skills and abilities and the proper academic training (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005). The AACC (2005) suggests a leadership crisis could be fiscally damaging to the community college system.

Accordingly, the AACC (2005) has documented the benefit of leadership development to minimize the tension future retirements may place on the system.

This period of change is being considered an opportunity to advance women into senior leadership roles traditionally held by men. Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, and Coyan (2000) suggest this period of transition could open doors for women who have been seeking senior-level administrative positions in community colleges. The pending leadership crisis has been forecast for nearly a decade; several initiatives have arisen for women and minorities to develop leadership skills for the purpose of advancement (Ebbers et al., 2000; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Vincent, 2004).

#### Research Questions

The following research questions are posed addressing how succession planning can cultivate women for leadership roles. These questions also ask how specific variables impact succession planning and cultivating a talent pool.

1. How do community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles?
2. What variables do community colleges face to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?
3. Does a catalyst or critical incident exist to trigger community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women?

4. How does the community college's shared governance structure affect or influence succession planning?

### Significance of the Study

In anticipation of the pending changes in community college leadership it is necessary for institutions to plan broadly and cultivate future leaders (AACC, 2005). The review of literature in succession planning for community colleges suggests opportunities for a comprehensive leadership development program that includes mentoring or coaching by current or former leaders in senior administrative roles and further academic experiences and training.

Succession planning could be a new strategy for many community colleges. It will require a paradigm shift regarding how colleges are staffed and lead. It will require a fresh approach to a lingering problem; that is how institutions can ensure a future with well trained and competent leaders (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001). This could be accomplished with the support and vision of a transformational leader.

Therefore, this research study explored succession planning based on the theoretical perspective of transformational leadership. According to Northouse (2007), transformational leaders are often successful in creating organizational change because they are viewed as attentive and responsive to the campus community's needs.

Transformational leadership is an important concept for this research because it examines how current community college leaders view the potential leadership crisis and how they choose to face the challenges of an uncertain future. This study focused on succession planning for cultivating women for senior leadership roles in community

colleges. Research suggests that men and women differ in career planning, preparation, and upward mobility (Phillips, 1997; Zeelenberg, Nelissen, Breugelmans, & Pieters, 2008).

Community colleges are part of a competitive global market. Therefore, research suggests that it would be advantageous to explore how future leaders are cultivated to continue building upon this foundation. Such research is increasingly significant as retirements are pending and the face of community college leadership is changing. Institutional sustainability, vitality, and growth require purposeful planning and consideration. Transformational leaders often possess the knowledge and tenacity to generate change and move institutions toward sustainability and growth.

#### Limitations and Delimitations

According to Creswell (2008), limitations or weaknesses may occur because of researcher bias and error. Potential exists for the researcher to misunderstand or misinterpret information. These limitations might weaken the study or skew findings. Creswell (2008) also suggests that a vague or unclear survey design potentially weakens research. A panel of experts was used to ensure clarity of survey and interview questions for this research. Limitations to this research study include the following points:

1. This study was bound by time and location because the focus was rural Illinois community colleges.
2. Respondents may not include answers that are forthright because individuals may be protecting their institution or leadership choices.
3. There was potential for researcher bias considering the relationship with Illinois community colleges.

4. The scope of the study was small; therefore, the study was limited to the generalization of the findings.

The delimitations or variables that limit the scope and define the boundaries of this study include the following.

1. This research focused on a small population of senior-level administrators from rural Illinois community colleges.
2. Participants were primarily men because there were low numbers of women in senior-level administrative positions in rural Illinois community colleges.
3. Survey respondents were modest in number; therefore, respondents are not representative of the entire Illinois community college system.

#### Assumptions

The following assumptions were held regarding the survey and interview findings: (a) it is assumed that the participants responded freely and honestly to the questions, and (b) it is assumed that participants spoke from their own experiences and opinions. Further, it is assumed that evidence would emerge regarding the necessity to plan for leadership transitions among rural community colleges influencing the need for succession planning.

#### Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following terms and definitions were utilized:

1. Future Leaders are individuals currently preparing to lead organizational or institutions (Gardner, 1990).

2. Glass ceiling is an invisible barrier that determines the level to which a woman or other member of a demographic minority can rise in an organization (Ayman, 1997).
3. Leadership is the process of interacting and influencing individuals, groups, or communities while meeting and enhancing institutional needs through change processes (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Gardner, 1990).
4. Leadership Development is the manner by which an individual provides direction; develops and implements plans; and engages, motivates, and inspires people (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Gardner, 1990).
5. Mentor is an informal trainer and guide focusing on the person often engaged in the collaborative development of a plan of action with the future leader and the coach providing guidance on the development of leadership skills (Starcevich & Friend, 2006).
6. Succession Planning as defined by Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005) is a group of strategies by which community colleges can implement a succession plan in order to “grow-your-own” leaders to sustain solid future leadership.
7. Shared Governance in a community college is a bureaucratic, political, and collegial governance structure that incorporates input from all levels of the bureaucracy (Cohen & Brawer, 1996).

#### Organization of the Study

This report of the research is organized into five chapters with Chapter 1 serving as the Introduction. The remainder of the research is organized as follows. Chapter 2



(Literature Review) provides a review of current literature and research regarding community college succession planning, women in community college leadership, and leadership development programs for the advancement of women. Chapter 3 (Methodology) illustrates how the research study was conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Chapter 4 (Findings) highlights the results of the study. The data collected through the survey (statistical) and the results of the interviews (descriptive) were triangulated with literature regarding succession planning to compare and contrast findings. Chapter 5 (Discussion, Conclusions, Implications & Recommendations) highlights the research outcomes and presents conclusions and recommendations.

#### Chapter Summary

Community colleges have made tremendous progress since their humble beginnings in Joliet, Illinois, when Joliet Junior College was founded in 1901. Two progressive leaders, J. Stanley Brown (superintendent of Joliet Township High School) and William Rainey Harper (president of the University of Chicago), envisioned the potential for a post-secondary experience that would contribute to the betterment of the community. Their leadership and vision can be credited for the success that community colleges have enjoyed nationwide.

Community colleges are in a period of transition as senior-level administrators are retiring, which is resulting in a potential leadership shortage. This transition is being considered an opportunity to advance women into senior leadership roles traditionally held by men. This study sought to explore and identify strategies that will enable community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, Specialists) for advancement into

senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) through succession planning.

Succession planning will require a visionary leader unafraid of presenting new ideas and strategies for building a leadership pipeline. Transformational leaders are agents of change with transparent leadership agendas characterized by vision before action. It has been suggested that transformational leaders are able to see changes through to the end with the support of the campus community because they build trust and enthusiasm related to their vision. Solid leadership is the foundation for a successful succession plan.

There are limitations to this research because it was bound by time and geography. Senior-level administrators from rural Illinois community colleges were participants for the survey and interviews. Finally, it was assumed that participants responded freely and honestly to the questions and spoke from their personal and professional experiences.

The next chapter, Chapter 2, will explore literature germane to the study. Research on succession planning, the changing face of community college leadership, women in higher education, and theoretical framework will be explored.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The American community college is the cornerstone of educational opportunity and access (AACC, 2007). Its unique rich history is painted as a vivid picture through its historical timeline of events. Forty years before the founding of the nation's first public community college, Joliet Junior College, a significant and historic event occurred. In 1862, the Morrill Act was passed. Often referred to as the Land Grant Act, this legislation provided access to higher education for previously excluded individuals. In 1890 the second passage of the Morrill Act strengthened the intent of the original Act as higher education funding from states would be withheld if minorities were not provided equal access to higher education (AACC, 2007).

Joliet Junior College is the nation's first public community college (Kasper, 2003). Its founding is a significant event in the historical timeline for community colleges. It was founded by J. Stanley Brown, superintendant of the Joliet Township High School, and William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago. The endeavor began as an experimental post-graduate high school program to provide higher education. In 1901, Joliet Junior College's enrollment was six students. The founders' intent was to provide higher education to community members while allowing them to remain in their community.

The Great Depression changed the community college forever (Kasper, 2003). The economic peril created by the Depression generated a catalyst for social change.

Community colleges provided opportunities for job training to ease the burden of unemployment.

Sterling (2001) offers that during this period when people were suffering from the economic devastation of the Depression that J. Stanley Brown came to Joliet, Illinois to serve as principal of Joliet High School. It was Brown who noted that many of his students came from working class families and could not bear the financial obligation of higher education. According to Sterling (2001) Brown made a public address regarding access and opportunity to higher education.

...Since September, 1894, some continuous effort has been made to inspire pupils to continue their work in some higher institutions after graduating here. Unfortunately, the expense of leaving home and attending college was beyond their financial reach of many students. (p. 6)

It has been reported that J. Stanley Brown made personal loans to his students that allowed them to continue their education. Brown was a visionary; under his leadership Joliet High School enrollment increased (Sterling, 2001).

In 1944, The G.I. Bill of Rights, another significant historical event, provided access for minority service men and women to access higher education. The passage of this bill contributed to the enrollment growth of the community colleges (Cohen, 1998). As the post World War II “baby boomer” generation entered higher education in the 1960s and 1970s there was another significant wave of community college enrollment growth.

According to the AACC (2007) this generation of Americans looked favorably upon the opportunity for higher education. During this period of time, a shift occurred; federal assistance opportunities such as student aid legislation made higher education

affordable. Further, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation released federal grant funds to establish training center for 2-year college leaders.

This historical timeline of growth and changes occurring in American community colleges reflect the evolving need for competent leaders. The AACC (2007) reports that of the current 1,195 community colleges in the nation, 987 are public, 177 independent, and 31 tribal. The American community college system currently educates over 11 million students.

The purpose of this study was to explore strategies that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women for leadership roles through succession planning. This chapter highlights the leadership crisis in American community colleges and suggested preparation for the future. Furthermore, it will explore women's roles in higher education and more specifically advancement into senior-level administrative positions. Finally, this chapter highlights literature regarding succession planning and its potential for community colleges.

### Theoretical Framework

This research explored succession planning as a strategy for building and sustaining leadership in community colleges. The study includes an exploration of current leaders and their views regarding what future leadership looks like. Transformational leadership is the theoretical lens that will be used to illustrate the evolution of leadership.

#### Transformational Leadership

According to Cashman (1998), Gardner (1990), and Greenleaf (1970) the transformational leader can be defined as an individual that successfully facilitates the change in composition, structure, character, or condition of an organization such as the

culture and climate. The attributes associated with transformational leadership match the demands of top-down leadership for institutions looking to develop and implement a succession plan. Transformational leaders, according to Gardner (1990), create a vision that includes commitment to followers that is motivating and engaging.

Transformational leadership evokes images of a powerful visionary or agent of change (Bass, 1990; Cashman, 1998; Gardner, 1990). According to Northouse (2007) those images are accurate. A transformational leader is genuinely interested in transparent leadership that allows a free exchange of views and thoughts. Furthermore, this leadership style is characterized by developing a vision before a plan is set in motion. This often leads to harmony among the campus community as individuals have a sense of security and more importantly support the vision of the leadership (Bass, 1990).

Transformational leaders are characterized by their willingness to see change through to the end with unwavering dedication and enthusiasm (Bass, 1990). This often generates continued motivation for employees even if the process is daunting. A transformational leader acknowledges difficulties or obstacles that may occur but uses those moments as opportunities to rally a team and continue to move forward (Bass, 1990).

It is imperative that campus leaders work collaboratively with boards of trustees in the development stage of succession planning to earn their support (Drucker, 1999). A transformational leader is transparent and will help trustees and stakeholders see the potential in the purposeful development of college leaders.

Transformational leaders are capable of developing the necessary support to develop and implement a succession plan. Community college hiring practices are a

judicious process. Succession planning efforts require a leader that can demystify the process and serve as the plans advocate. A transformational leader provides strength to lead an organization through uncharted territory. Succession planning is a new concept for community colleges and requires the vision of a transformational leader.

#### Leadership Crisis: The Next Generation of Community College Leaders

The American community college system faces a leadership shortage as presidents and vice presidents are retiring at a pace that exceeds the pace at which they are being replaced (Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001). According to Weisman and Vaughn (2006), the projected percentage of retirements of community college leaders will reach 84% by 2016. Shults (2001) reports strikingly similar findings stating that 800 of the 1,195 community college presidents will need to be replaced by 2017.

Historically, new community college presidents have come through the ranks of academics. Most often these presidents began as faculty and then were appointed to subsequently more responsible administrative positions. However, this pool of potential successors has also declined drastically due to faculty retirements (Evelyn, 2001; Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2006).

In a survey of community college presidents, Weisman and Vaughan (2006) compiled information regarding positions held prior to the presidency. This data was collected from surveys completed by 545 community college presidents. The survey found that nearly 70% of presidential survey respondents came primarily from the following three positions. Chief Academic Officers are the largest group to move into a community college presidency at 37.3%. Vice Presidents with Academic Overview (e.g., Technology, Distance Learning, and Research) comprise 9.6% of community college

presidents. Individuals serving in Chief Student Services Officer positions are among the smallest group to move into a community college presidency at 7.5% (Weisman & Vaughan, 2006).

The American Association of Community Colleges (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002) also studied community college senior administrators' career paths. The purpose of Amey and VanDerLinden's study explored the positions held in community colleges prior to the presidency. The findings of this survey are strikingly similar to the later Weisman and Vaughan (2006) survey indicating little change. The survey conducted by Weisman and Vaughan (2006) found that most frequently 37% of presidents held a Chief Academic Officer position prior to the presidency. It was reported that 25% had served previously as community college presidents while 15% had served in academic or instruction roles.

Boggs (2003) suggests the declining pool of qualified presidential successors is further limited by the pending retirements of senior vice presidents and faculty members. According to Boggs (2003) many of those currently serving in senior leadership positions advanced through the system coming up through the ranks. Boggs comments on the preparedness of the next generation of leaders as follows:

The question is whether the capacity exists or can be built to prepare new faculty and administrators who are representative of the population, who will understand the unique mission of the community colleges, and who have the skills to lead these institutions into the future. (p. 16)

The opinion is shared by Shults (2001), who is concerned about the impact retirements will have on the collective institutional memory of the community college system. Shults (2001) contends that:



Inestimable experience and history, as well as an intimate understanding of the community college mission, values, and culture, will disappear leaving an enormous gap in the collective memory and the leadership of community colleges. (p. 2)

The leadership crisis is also being viewed as an opportunity to explore the changing needs of community colleges and those who lead (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005). The researchers suggest that an examination of leadership qualities, attributes, training, and skills are necessary for the future.

The old assumptions made about leadership cannot be held sacrosanct in a technological, fast-paced environment, with a growing ethnically diverse population. The questions that must be asked by today's leaders are these: 1) what skills are needed by community college leaders in 2010 and beyond? 2) how are these skills developed? (p. 233)

The progress of an institution requires that leaders stay on the forefront of change. Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) state that future leaders must possess the following basic skill-sets to practice the art of leadership: (a) learning from the past while embracing the future, (b) enriching the inward journey, (c) leading from the center (values), (d) making connections (vision), (e) looking broadly for talent, (f) providing continual leadership opportunities through succession planning, (g) keeping faculty in the mix, (h) forging business and industry connections, and (i) not forgetting students (preparing the future workforce).

Drucker (1999) precluded the statement made by Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) regarding the leadership skill of learning from the past while embracing the future. Drucker (1999) argues that old assumptions about leadership and management must be let go; there is no longer only one "right" way to manage people or organizations. Drucker continues by arguing that while academic institutions can learn from their rich

history it is time to lead people rather than manage them. Drucker concludes this will allow institutions to develop leaders by focusing on their strengths and abilities. This period of change could afford community colleges with the opportunity to look within and strategize to develop and retain talented individuals.

### Preparing the Future Leaders

Research suggests that academic preparedness and training will be a critical concern (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005; Piland & Wolf, 2003). According to Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), fewer than 2% of community college administrators have completed a degree in community college leadership and administration. Shults (2001) reported a decline of 78% in the number of graduate degrees held by community college leaders from 1982 to 1997. Furthermore, Shults (2001) reports that many of the Kellogg Foundation programs launched in the 1960s—specifically those in community college leadership—have disbanded.

Piland and Wolf (2003), noted researchers and authors on community college leadership, state that training and development for future leaders is critical.

We believe that the challenge of providing development programming for community college leaders is among the two or three most important issues facing the enterprise. To overcome this crisis will require departures from the patterns with which we have grown comfortable, new thinking, and sustained effort. (p. 3)

In addition to academic preparedness future leaders must also be equipped with skills that might not be obtained in the classroom. Formal academic training must be coupled with tools that might be developed through personal relationships such as mentors or coaches. According to Piland and Wolf (2003) effective community college leaders will also learn how to work collaboratively and involve many different groups of

people in their work. Leaders must serve as a catalyst for change to ensure growth for the institution and opportunities for its employees. Future leaders must also be flexible and supportive of innovative ideas.

### The Changing Face of Community College Leadership

Community colleges face a potential leadership crisis in the United States. Pending retirements and the lack of succession planning to fill vacant roles is reaching a critical point. According to researchers Eddy and Cox (2008), while women are represented in senior-level positions, the aggregate number of women holding such positions continues to be less than one third of that held by men.

The American Council on Education (ACE) regularly surveys college presidents through the American College Presidents Survey (2007); the resulting data has been compiled for nearly 20 years. According to this data the face of the American college president is changing. Data from a recent survey compiled in 2006 reflects slow growth for women assuming presidencies. The data findings from 1986 suggested that among American presidents only 10% were women. That number had more than doubled by the 2006 survey, which reports that 23% of American college presidents are women. There is also a shift in the average age of presidents. In 1986 the average age for a president was 52; in 2006 the average age was 60.

### Gender and Leadership

The study of gender-specific leadership is significant because a propensity exists for men to occupy leadership roles. As suggested by Eagly and Karau (1991), considerable empirical literature supports gender theory as a result of natural humanistic inquiry and research.

Eagly and Karau (1991) identified gender-specific characteristics and traits prominent in emergent leaders. These researchers explored the complexity of personality and natural gender-specific tendencies in relation to emerging leadership roles. Eagly and Karau's (1991) research on emergent leadership suggests that men occupy the majority of leadership roles because they engage in certain types of behaviors and because they perform differently than women in the same settings. Moreover, the significance lies in the factors that drive the behaviors allowing men to achieve leadership roles.

Eagly and Karau (1991) then asked what behaviors or characteristics give men an advantage. This study indicates significant lifestyle advantages that propel men into the top seats. Such advantages include greater resources as men continue to earn more than their female counterparts. Men are also typically less burdened by familial obligations such as children or caring for elderly parents. Social roles and behavior continue to divide the genders as expectations continue to be assigned based on socially identified sex characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 1991).

The research of Eagly and Karau (1991) drew on earlier research completed by Bakan (1966). Bakan concluded that there is a correlation between sex orientation and behavior. According to Bakan's study men and women are divided into two categories: *agentic* (or instrumental) and *communal* (or expressive) behaviors (Bakan, 1966; Eagly & Karau, 1991). These characteristics are suggested to be among factors differentiating the leadership styles of men and women.

According to Northouse (2007), women possess different leadership behaviors and characteristics. Women tend to lead more democratically and value participatory collaboration. These characteristics are not typical for men. Therefore, the tendency for

men to become emergent leaders was tied to a specific activity or task that demonstrated a firm commitment to act swiftly with little hesitation or input from others.

Finally, Eagly and Karau (1991) state that a new definition of leadership is needed to constitute a change in hiring practices. Men and women currently situated in leadership roles must reassess the social norms that influence hiring within their institutions. This may help facilitate a new dialogue regarding leadership qualities that serve as a hiring template and will contribute to the development of a succession plan.

The acknowledgment of gender-specific differences is only the first of three distinct variables that contribute to the “glass ceiling” phenomena (Northouse, 2007). The other two variables are human capital and prejudice. Eagly and Carli (2004) suggest that from a career perspective women invest less in themselves. More specifically, women do not pursue training and relevant work experience in the same manner in which men do largely because of familial obligations and domestic responsibilities. Men are more likely to have the opportunity for advanced training, networking, and opportunities that will contribute to their career mobility. The research indicates that women often must choose between career mobility and family (Northouse, 2007).

#### Gender Bias and Career Mobility

Northouse (2007) suggests that the lack of training and upward mobility for women in leadership roles in organizations is likely related to prejudicial tendencies toward women. The glass ceiling phenomenon is affected by a lack of human capital and muddled by gender inequalities; some prejudice also exists.

One prominent explanation for the glass ceiling is gender bias stemming from stereotyped expectation that women take care and men take charge. Research comparing the presidential campaign of Elizabeth Dole with the

campaigns of George W. Bush, John McCain, and Steve Forbes found that Elizabeth Dole received significantly less media coverage on policy issues and more coverage on her personality and attire than her male counterparts. (p. 275)

According to Chemers and Murphy (1995), stereotypes continue to be particularly damaging for women seeking leadership roles because of the belief that communal qualities are not as valuable as agentic characteristics. Inconsistencies in hiring practices coupled with the belief that agentic qualities are more in line with strong emerging leaders leads to prejudicial judgments that prevent women from being considered.

There is also conflicting research related to the upward mobility of women in the workplace. One view suggests that women have the ability to earn senior-level positions on their own merit, but some choose not to (Lockwood, 2004). However, Galbraith's (2008) study indicates that challenges presented by familial obligations interfere with career mobility more so than external barriers. Furthermore, according to Lockwood, women experience a subconscious glass ceiling that can be as damaging as actual or perceived external barriers.

#### Women in Community College Leadership

Tedrow and Rhoads (1999) conducted a study of women in senior administrative roles in Midwestern community colleges. They explored several factors regarding gender and leadership. These factors include (a) how women viewed themselves in their current leadership positions; (b) current and future challenges; (c) perceptions and realities of gender issues at their community college; and (d) how they balanced the responsibility of their professional and personal lives (p. 4).

Each senior woman administrator who adapted or conformed to traditional standards held important positions at her college. ...Each found herself,

however, in a double bind: by breaking with relational norms expected of women, the women who adapted were isolated by other women. Paradoxically, although they conformed to male norms of leadership, they nonetheless were never fully accepted by the men simply because they were women. (p. 8)

Shirley Pippins, Suffolk County Community College President, writes about her experience navigating the occasionally gendered waters of community college administration (2008). Her advice to women in leadership roles is simple: “Don’t get lost.”

How do we maintain balance, remain true to our personal vision, and not lose ourselves in the rough, sometimes almost abusive world of higher education. (p. 29)

Pippins (2008) reflected on how women can remain balanced yet be good leaders. The first suggestion for women leaders is to seek the support of national organizations. Networks have been established to help support and guide women in leadership roles and assist in maintaining perspective regarding work–life balance. Secondly, Pippins states women leaders must work by example and promote balance and help institutions evolve family and people-friendly standards. Finally, Pippins concludes:

...if quality of life is important to you, if you seek to retain your voice and remain a real woman, keep that perspective in mind as you time your choice to seek advancement in your career. ...When you make significant career steps, you need as much stability in other parts of your life as possible, so plan accordingly. (p. 29)

### Women in the Leadership Pipeline

Eagly and Carli (2004) call this career mobility issue a “pipeline problem” because women are not seen as emerging leaders. This was, in part, the rationale used by the Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in 2005 when they launched a new initiative to promote leadership development programs for women. It was a proactive

solution to get women into the community college leadership pipeline and offer support networks consistent with the unique challenges many women face.

The American Council on Education (ACE) recognized the need to support the career endeavors of professional women in the early 1970s. The Office of Women in Higher Education (OWHE) was formed in 1973 by the ACE. The purpose of OWHE is to provide leadership to ensure the advancement of women into senior-level appointments. The mission of OWHE is to (a) identify women leaders, (b) develop their leadership abilities, (c) encourage using those abilities, (d) advance careers, (e) link women and mentors, and (f) support women in their current roles and throughout their careers. The Office of Women in Higher Education also provides initiatives to better serve and support women. Leadership forums, summits, and various support mechanisms are in place for professional women to connect, network, and be supported.

### Succession Planning

The leadership crisis occurring in community colleges has been called the “mass exodus of leadership” by Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005). The significant number of pending retirements coupled with the lack of academic training in the area of community college leadership causes great concern according to Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005).

Current research indicates that a mass exodus of community college leadership will occur within the next few years...Approximately 50% of the current community college presidents will retire over the next 3 to 7 years. (p. 234)

Drucker (1999) responds to changing organizational climates by affirming the benefits of succession planning. Already a widely accepted practice in the business,



succession planning is needed in community colleges to prepare future leaders for 2010 and beyond (Drucker, 1999).

According to Rothwell (2005) succession planning has often been erroneously referred to as replacement planning. Succession planning or talent management is a comprehensive initiative that involves developing a philosophy about cultivating talent within an organization, agreeing on a process, and looking strategically and broadly at institutions that grow and evolve. Rothwell (2005) elaborates that replacement planning is about immediacy and filling a void within a position. It is not a strategic initiative that is designed to develop and cultivate talent and create pools of skilled leaders to draw from later.

Rothwell (2005) also acknowledges that succession planning has obstacles. For public community colleges one obstacle might be that individuals cannot be named as a successor for a specific position sans a formal posting and search process. However, this does allow for opportunity as community colleges can proactively develop a talent pool through a succession plan that will provide access to a number of skilled individuals.

Rosse and Levin (2003) acknowledge the complex cultural differences between the boardroom and the college campus when considering how to develop a succession plan. However, Rosse and Levin (2003) add that during down economic periods institutions of higher education might explore succession planning and further development opportunities to reduce costs during periods of leadership transition.

Carey, Ogden, and Roland (2000) suggest that colleges and corporations share many common attributes among succession planning best practices. Colleges and

corporations committed to developing a succession plan perform the following actions: (a) create strong and involved boards, (b) continually expose senior leadership to trustees, (c) encourage both college presidents and corporate CEOs to be involved in community organizations, (d) form executive committees to facilitate the development of several administrators who are aware of the challenges, business plans, and strategies across the entire institution, (e) view succession planning as ongoing, (f) link the compensation of presidents/CEOs to the development of succession plans, (g) require the trustees to make a personal commitment to the institution, (h) periodically calibrate likely internal candidates for presidents against comparable outside leaders, and (i) develop a succession culture.

#### Succession Planning Processes and Characteristics

Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005) outline key characteristics for successful succession plans. Seven key characteristics were suggested by Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005) for community colleges to engage in succession planning: (a) developing a vision that looks to the future and challenges, (b) reviewing long-term goals and hiring practices (so that individuals are being hired with diverse and rich backgrounds who will move the institution forward), (c) critically examining the organizational culture, (d) developing a broadly structured succession plan that recognizes the organization needs leadership not just at the top, (e) recognizing leadership attributes and skills needed for the future; (f) reviewing ongoing leadership programs that exist within the organization, and (g) involving the board of trustees or regents when appropriate; succession planning for a Chief Executive Officer, President, and vice Presidents require the board level support.

Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005, p. 28) have suggested a process for developing a community college succession plan: (a) establish a committee to provide oversight for the succession planning process, (b) identify key positions within the organization that are critical for the future, (c) establish criteria for these positions determining what skills and traits are necessary for individuals to be successful in meeting the long-range goals of the organization, (d) identify possibly interested and potentially successful candidates who exist within the present organization while looking for a diverse population, (e) establish a mentor/coaches program for the emerging leaders, (f) establish mentor/coaches from within the organization who can offer the necessary guidance and support and are committed to the succession plan, (g) assist candidates in preparing development plans, and (h) consistently evaluate the effectiveness of the succession planning program.

Succession planning based on competencies. According to Rothwell (2005) succession planning should be done based on competencies. Succession planning is about forecasting needs and exploring individual positions as they relate to the overarching strategic vision for the institution.

Research indicates that once key competencies are identified for a particular position then a model of competency can be developed (Rothwell, 2005). Developing a competency model provides the institution an opportunity to thoroughly examine and define specific knowledge, skills, and abilities sought in future leaders. Succession planning can be an arduous task; the disadvantage of the competency model is the expenditure of resources. However, according to Rothwell (2005) utilizing the

competency model is essential for a succession plan to succeed; it provides the foundation on which everything is built.

Internal leadership pipeline. Succession planning is a mechanism used to look broadly at positions as they relate to the strategic vision of the institution (Rothwell, 2002). Therefore, once institutions have determined the needed competencies in future leaders, a self study of current employees can occur. This study will allow competencies, which again are determined prior to the self study, to be discussed in terms of current employees who might be in the leadership pipeline.

A study of the internal pipeline will help define future needs; it will provide a snapshot of existing competencies and potential organizational gaps (Rothwell, 2005). At this point leaders in an institution will have defined what they feel are necessary leadership competencies to operate most effectively. Therefore, the self study will reveal individuals with the potential to earn roles with greater responsibility. It will also signal further training and development needs to help cultivate those individuals.

Looking within an organization to fill voids has been criticized; historically community college leaders were not diverse because most were Caucasian men.

One of the major issues surrounding a tradition of seeking leadership from within ranks was the predominance of white men in to leadership positions. Women and people of color were less likely to gain promotion through the ranks, and those in charge naturally looked for replacements that looked like them. (Piland & Wolf, 2003, p. 66)

Publicly funded community colleges would be hesitant to engage in a planning exercise for the purpose of naming successors for any specific positions. This practice has been prohibited to ensure equality among hiring practices. Succession planning can offer pools of identified individuals with the requisite skills and abilities to lead. This

also does not guarantee that a well-trained individual will stay at one institution. However, community college succession planning might encourage talented professionals to stay within the community college system (Rothwell, 2005).

Attracting and retaining talent. Attracting and retaining talent might require more incentives or opportunities for future growth and development (Rothwell, 2002).

As different sectors of the economy confront shortfalls of experienced talent the leaders in those organizations will most likely be compelled to take more aggressive steps to attract and retain talent. (p. 32)

Measures to attract and retain qualified applicants might include a comprehensive benefit package, salary increases, moving expenses, paid-leave, and retirement options. Boggs (2003) suggests that the future community college leaders will continue to be presented with challenges, limited fiscal resources, and increased measures of accountability, labor management relations concerns, and an increasing litigious society. It will be necessary to provide incentives to attract and retain talented community college professionals.

Succession planning is one measure of securing future leadership for community colleges. It involves assessing the short-term and long-term needs to guarantee leadership-longevity, prosperity, and growth in institutions. Succession planning provides a road map that illustrates how leaders will evolve, be trained, and eventually move into leadership positions.

#### Mentoring and Leadership Development

The literature states that succession planning alone will not allow community colleges to “grow-your-own” leaders (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Ebbers et al., 2000). Organizations must also be proactive about supporting employees and

encouraging the pursuit of purposeful academic training and leadership skills. Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) report a 78% decrease in the number of degrees conferred in community college administration between 1983 and 1997. Mentoring initiatives, both formal and informal, can contribute to the professional growth of individuals aspiring to senior leadership roles, earning advanced degrees, and being retained in the community college system (Molina, 2008).

Piland and Wolf (2003) describe mentoring as a valuable tool used to inspire future leaders. They reported that 57% of college presidents indicated that mentors had helped them achieve their current presidency. Shults (2001) reports that presidents feel mentoring was valuable for helping prepare them for the challenges and obstacles faced daily on their respective campuses.

Leadership development opportunities could arise from a number of sources such as training, workshops, mentors, professors, or coaches. Leadership traits were once considered an innate ability within individuals. However, research suggests that leadership comes through interactions and opportunities presented within one's educational community (Gardner, 1990; Piland & Wolf, 2003). Gardner (1990) defines leaders as individuals who significantly influence the thoughts, behaviors, and/or feelings of others (p. 6).

#### Leadership Training Initiatives and Programs

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2005) has acknowledged that a lack of future leadership could be fiscally damaging to the community college system. In response, the AACC has changed its mission statement to purposely address the importance of leadership development. Further, the AACC has

compiled a comprehensive list of academic programs available that emphasize community college leadership.

Because the AACC recognized the potential for a leadership gap, a comprehensive initiative was developed to provide a network to develop and support future leaders. This initiative is called the *Leading Forward: The Community College Opportunity*.

The *Leading Forward* initiative is supported by a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The purpose of this endeavor is to identify strategies and best practices to ensure that senior positions will be filled by competent leaders. The *Leading Forward* initiative also houses a master database of all leadership development programs across the country (Vincent, 2004).

The *Leading Forward* initiative has led to a mutually shared definition of what constitutes an effective community college leader. Various summits have developed an inventory of leadership development and training opportunities available as well as identified venues for future collaborative efforts. Additionally, an online leadership portfolio tool was developed to provide a “roadmap” for future leaders to chart their own leadership and development. This portfolio is also available to assist community colleges in the process of recruiting leaders.

Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, and Coyan (2000) address the pending leadership crisis and new leadership development programs designed specifically for women and minorities. The Leadership Institute for a New Century (LINC) was created in 1989 by the Iowa State University Higher Education Program to ensure that women and ethnic

minorities have professional development opportunities, networking, and internships to provide career advancement into community college leadership roles.

The issue of leadership development for the advancement of women in leadership roles also suggests a well-thought-out succession plan. Wallin (2006) states that succession planning involves leadership training programs and also asserts that leadership training must be an ongoing endeavor. Leadership development specific to women aspiring to leadership roles involves deliberate professional and personal development planning (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

Furthermore, women seeking senior-level administrative positions in community colleges have tools available to explore strengths and identify gaps to assist in career preparation and advancement. The AAWCC provides a variety of inventories and assessments to help women prepare a development plan that might include further graduate studies. The American Association of Community Colleges has compiled a list of programs with an emphasis on community college leadership (Piland & Wolf, 2003). Bragg (2002) comments on the availability of academic programs that specialize in community college leadership.

Many of these programs are distinguished by unique and innovative approaches to instruction, including learning communities, cohorts, internships, and the use of technology... Perhaps one difference between these graduate programs and secondary leadership graduate programs is the extensive use of cohort models for course and program delivery. Learning communities provide effective learning environments for a select group of students. (p. 50)

If the individual's goal is achieving a presidential position in a community college, research indicates that a terminal degree will be required. While many position descriptions indicate a terminal degree as "desirable" this period of leadership transition



is changing expectations. Senior-level administrative positions—and specifically the role of the president—have evolved. Applicants are expected to have skills and abilities beyond what was previously acceptable (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

Piland and Wolf (2003) suggest that community colleges could take part in the training and development of future leaders. They also recommend that while community colleges should proactively offer opportunities to further developing potential leaders they need not go it alone. However, it is suggested that if community colleges fail to act they should assume some responsibility as institutional sustainability depends on strong leadership. Piland and Wolf (2003) highlight the following actions taken by community colleges in response to the need for further training and development initiatives (p. 96):

1. Formalize a leadership development policy and program to prepare future leaders among faculty, support staff, and administrators. Secure board approval of the policy and support for the program with appropriate resources.
2. Establish a leadership development committee made up of administrator, faculty, and support staff to guide the program. It is highly desirable that the chancellor or president serve on this committee.
3. Institute a formal mentoring program for emerging leaders in the community college.
4. Leaders in community colleges must proactively identify and cultivate future leaders among the faculty, administrators, and support staff in their college.

5. Carefully construct programs that are implemented at the institutional level.
6. Colleges in contiguous geographical regions can form a Leadership Development Consortium to share the experiences and resources required for a more comprehensive leadership development effort.

### Succession Culture

Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005), Rothwell (2005), and Piland and Wolf (2003) discuss the concept of developing the succession culture within an institution to build and implement a succession plan effectively. A succession culture can be built only if senior leadership and the boards of trustees find succession planning mutually beneficial.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) suggest that succession planning and leadership development cannot occur in isolation. The complexity of senior-level administrative positions and specifically the presidency require ongoing training and development of future leaders who intend to seek such positions. In addition to formal education there is a need for participation in professional organizations and leadership academies.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) propose three critical criteria for a presidential leadership development program that includes a shared vision among presidents and governing boards. Second, only seriously aspiring applicants should be selected to participate in any presidential leadership development program. Last, a leadership development program should be comprehensive and extend over a substantial period of time.

The succession culture is cultivated through institutions where presidents and boards of trustees operate as a team. Weisman and Vaughan (2002) suggest that the relationship between presidents and boards of trustees can be powerful if the two are in fact functioning as a team for the betterment of an institution. Furthermore, together this team plays a critical role in defining succession culture.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) also note that community college presidents are hired by boards of trustees; later the campus presidents assist in selecting applicants to go into the pool of successors. Therefore Weisman and Vaughan (2002) question if trustees and presidents should work together to train and develop future community college presidents. Their response to that is both “yes” and “no.” An ideal situation would allow all community colleges to develop a campus-based leadership development program. Certainly that would be cost prohibitive and require fiscal and human resources.

Weisman and Vaughan (2002) state that future leaders would benefit greatly from being “embedded” in the culture of a senior leadership position. This would provide opportunities to learn and apply meaning to situations that they may not otherwise be exposed. Being embedded would require a unique relationship between presidents and boards to allow future leaders to be included in appropriate situations. Weisman and Vaughan comment in the Piland and Wolf (2003) book, *Help Wanted: Preparing Community College Leaders in a New Century*:

Trustees and the president can affirm their commitment to diversity by identifying, cultivating, and educating members of underrepresented groups through the presidential leadership development program. If many colleges establish such programs, they can take major steps toward closing the gap that currently exists between the percentages of white and minority presidents and of male and female presidents. (p. 57)

The benefit of a leadership development program is the cyclical nature of the endeavor. Upon developing an individual's talent they will contribute to the process as future senior leaders invested in a succession culture.

### The Succession Culture and the Role of Senior Leadership

It is suggested that community college succession plans have top-down support from senior leadership, the community college president, and the board of trustees to be operational and effective (Carey, Ogden, & Roland, 2000; Rosse & Levin, 2003; Rothwell, 2005). College presidents and boards must work in partnership for the betterment of the institution and community stakeholders (Rothwell, 2002).

Succession planning challenges often include assisting boards of trustees in developing a firm understanding of the benefits of succession planning in an environment of shared governance. Bowman (2008) suggests that boards of trustees can benefit from utilizing succession planning techniques to plan their future as organizational leaders.

Succession planning for publically elected boards of trustees encompasses many of the same principles as planning for transition in senior leadership teams. The plan does not suggest moving a future leader into a trustee position or senior-level administrative position within community colleges. Succession planning involves being strategically aware of the current and future needs of an institution and proactively assessing and planning.

Boards can utilize succession techniques to visualize their commitment as future leaders and appreciate the advantages of planning for leadership transition (Bowman, 2008). Board members and community college leaders resign, retire, or vacate positions

for various reasons. As a result, there is opportunity to move forward through deliberately assessing needs and planning for change.

Further, it is suggested that boards of trustees can choose to be “conscious.” This suggests that trustees are aware and conscious of the role they play as part of an organization’s leadership framework. Bowman’s (2008) term “conscious board” refers to trustees who recognize their responsibility in investing time to develop and refine their leadership skills.

A conscious board is one that looks forward and strategizes to secure the future. Bowman (2008) suggests that conscious Boards possess the following elements: (a) a clear succession plan, skills analysis, and recruitment process for themselves and their CEO/President, (b) a comprehensive strategic induction program, (c) a Board Charter providing formal guidance on roles of the Board and Board members, and (d) an annual process of Board evaluation that adds value to the Board and stakeholders.

Polonia (2005) notes that formal review processes for Boards are challenging because its members are public figures concerned about the level of public scrutiny. According to Polonia Illinois does allow community college Boards to conduct assessments in executive sessions. This would allow discussion to occur in a private meeting. Polonia (2005) adds the following:

According to Gary W. Davis, a former executive director of the Illinois Community College Trustee Association, that arrangement has helped provide the board with the freedom necessary for frank, open, and engaging discussions on the board’s performance and has also affirmed the board’s responsibility to monitor its own behavior. (p. 5)

Brown and Burke (2007) support the changing role of the community college trustee and acknowledge the difficulties associated with governing an institution within

the communities where they work and live (Polonia, 2005). According to Brown and Burke (2007) trustees must embrace the rapidly changing environment of community colleges and learn to respond to challenges in new and innovative ways. Brown and Burke (2007) state that community college trustees are embarking on a new era of leadership as senior community college leaders are retiring. The leadership transition in community colleges compounds the challenges facing trustees. Brown and Burke (2007) make the following comment:

If trustees are to convince federal and state policymakers of the worthiness of investing more in students and their communities, they cannot afford a leadership deficit at a time when leadership is most important. (p. 446)

Boards of trustees have mechanisms in place for support and training. The Association of Community College Trustees provides opportunities for leadership development and training for all current and new trustees, presidents, and those aspiring to be presidents and CEOs (*ACCT Resources*, 2009). Training includes the Leadership Academy for those aspiring to senior leadership roles. Governance Learning Institutes, Board retreats, and various workshops are also offered to current board members and presidents. The ACCT Center for Effective Governance affirms their role in supporting and developing trustees with the following statement:

ACCT is committed to its mandate of service to trustees and assisting boards to best govern their colleges. The Center for Effective Governance is designed to provide information considered useful to boards and trustees in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. The Center is in constant development, and contains a number of areas intended to guide trustees towards the best possible lay governance. (ACCT Center, 2009)

Polonia (2005) states that despite opportunities for training and development they are underutilized because many trustees are hesitant to use public funds for their development. Polonia (2005) comments as follows:

Many state agencies and community-college associations provide excellent development opportunities, but the Association of Community College Trustees estimates that only 20 percent to 25 percent of trustees take advantage of those programs. That is why community colleges must incorporate specific requirements for each trustee's education and development into his or her job description. (p. 3)

### Implications of Shared Governance for Succession Planning

Boards are concerned about moving institutions forward while monitoring internal and external stakeholder needs. Polonia (2004) states that the relationship of the Board and president is a partnership built to set the stage for effective leadership of the college. Polonia (2004) comments on the relationship between Boards and presidents.

The president helps to articulate and interpret the mission, culture and image of the college and board. The board equips the president with the tools and support to achieve this goal. This partnership is crucial to effective governance and the long-term viability of the institution. (p. 30)

Finkel (2006) supports Polonia's (2004) position regarding the delicate balance between the community college president and the Board of Trustees. Finkel (2006) adds:

For the marriage between president and board to stay happy, the lines on budget and policy must not blur. The board should not begin to act as the CEO. . . . Working out complementary roles among trustees and their president is critical to the community college success. The lines on internal roles such as policy and budget are typically very well defined—trustees paint the broad strokes and presidents implement—but those lines are often more blurry when it comes to external affairs. (p. 11)

The relationship between the president and the Board is critical for succession planning to occur. Shared governance can be viewed as an obstacle in the development of a succession plan. A survey of college and university senior administrators was

conducted to determine best practices and barriers to leadership succession. Researchers received an 8.4% (n=135) response rate (*Succession Planning Gaining Support*, 2008). According to the findings ten themes emerged as result of the succession planning study.

Awareness of the need for succession planning in colleges and universities. The majority of survey respondents (74%) reported that succession planning is occurring in some capacity at their institution (*Succession Planning Gaining Support*, 2008).

Succession planning for presidents and senior-level administrators. The majority of the survey respondents (64%) reported that succession planning occurs at their institutions for presidents and senior-level administrators. Succession planning occurs for chief academic officers and deans at various institutions according to 59% of respondents.

Mentoring and nurturing internal leaders is common for succession practices. Cultivating future leaders was identified as the most common succession planning practice.

Negative perceptions of succession planning. Succession planning is a culture shift for many organizations that rely on national searches to fill vacancies for senior-level positions (Bowman, 2008). One community college presidents adds:

I am not sure that most boards are willing to step out there to change practices and identify individuals who can be publicly identified and groomed to assume specific positions at the colleges. Some are willing to do this but far too many fear that faculty will not support a selection process in which they may little if any input. (p. 2)

Succession planning and a commitment to diversity is a challenge. Succession planning has a negative connotation as respondents were concerned about the perception of “place-based” planning. It is suggested that institutions that do not have diverse faculty



and administrators could further reduce a diverse applicant pool by looking internally (Succession Planning Gaining Support, 2008). This is supported by researchers Pennington, Williams, and Karvonen (2006), who conclude that rural community colleges face diversity challenges in recruiting and hiring senior-level administrative positions.

Shared governance is a challenge to succession planning. The relationship between community college presidents and trustees is essential to cultivate and nurture a trusting relationship that would allow for the development of a succession plan. Legal limitations exist in specifically naming individuals for positions; however, actively identifying current and future needs for the betterment of the institution requires trust. Two university presidents comment on the delicate balance of shared governance and succession planning (Bowman, 2008):

With our system of ‘shared governance,’ in which there are legally prescribed roles for the regents, the system president, the faculty, the non-faculty staff and the students, it’s impossible for any administration to do the sort of succession planning that is common in private organizations,” responds one university president. Another college president indicates that while the institution is making progress to overcome shared governance barriers, the challenges are lack of trust and accountability in the process. (p. 3)

### Succession Planning and Professional Development

The findings suggest that succession planning that is done openly and honestly can be supported in an environment of shared governance. The survey findings shared that one college president was appointed after his 4-month appointment as acting president. This plan provided the Board and stakeholders an opportunity to assess and

evaluate the acting President's performance prior to appointing him to the permanent position. The President made the following comments (Bowman, 2008):

The processes were extraordinarily transparent and open to all constituencies. I have heard nothing but positive feedback about the board's approach to presidential succession, and as the successor, I am quite pleased with the legitimacy of the process. I am now preparing the vice presidents for the next level of responsibility as part of their overall professional development. (p. 3)

Succession planning must be intentional. The findings report that succession planning that is not transparent, open, and intentional causes institutions to lose internal candidates. The findings report the following comment from one university president.

I am committed to succession planning. I have asked each VP to mentor someone within their staff to take their places. I have talked with board leadership about succession planning for the presidency. (p. 3)

Succession planning requires a cultural shift. The findings report succession planning is common in business and industry but higher education has been slow to embrace such a drastic cultural shift. A college president adds the following:

We tend to believe that every leader should come from far away. Succession planning is long overdue in the academy, but we'll have to change culture to be fully integrated in a management/leadership strategy. (p. 4)

### Challenges Facing Rural Community Colleges

The past decade has produced literature regarding the pending community college leadership crisis (Boggs, 2003; Evelyn, 2001; Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughn, 2006). An influx of academic programs emphasizes community college leadership as well as opportunities for leadership and development to advance one's career in community college administration (AACC, 2005). However, for one

classification of community colleges this might not be enough. According to Eddy (2009) rural community colleges face unique challenges.

The American community college system includes a large number of rural institutions within its membership ranks. Eddy (2009) calculates that 60% of all community colleges are classified as rural. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), a rural community college serves a territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, and/or less than or equal to 2.5 miles from an urban cluster. There are also urban and suburban classifications.

The unique challenges facing rural institutions include lower pay for qualified applicants, isolated campuses, and a lack of diverse students and community members. This often compromises attracting and hiring diverse applicants for senior leadership positions (Eddy, 2009). According to Murray (2007) rural communities typically have higher levels of illiteracy, lower levels of individuals who attain education or persist through higher education, and higher rates of unemployment and poverty.

Pennington, Williams, and Karvonen (2006) add that rural community colleges often face challenges not seen in urban and suburban communities. Research has been conducted since the 1970s on the unique challenges and concerns facing institutions located in rural communities (Eddy, 2009; Murray, 2007; Pennington, Williams, & Karvonen, 2006). Pennington, Williams, and Karvonen make the following comments regarding rural community colleges:

In areas with limited cultural, social and recreational services, rural community colleges may be the only source of cultural avocation and personal enrichment in the region... Geographic limitations may also be

problematic in recruiting and retaining faculty who may not be attracted to life in small towns, where housing is in short supply and where their political and cultural values often differ from the local citizens. (p. 642)

### Rural Economic and Social Factors

The economic and social climate of rural communities affects more than hiring and retaining qualified community college leaders. There are serious implications for administering academic programs that are needed in failing economies. Rural communities have experienced a serious decline in the historically lucrative industries such as agriculture, lumbering, automotive, and various other industries (Murray, 2007).

Eddy (2007) states that it is time for a new leadership approach to assist and advance the struggling rural community colleges. The type of leadership necessary is a transformational leader. Eddy questions how rural community leaders lead given their isolated locations.

Given the role rural presidents play in the community college system, the call for new leaders, and the rethinking of leadership itself, the question at the heart of this research asked how rural community college presidents construct their leadership given their rural locales. (p. 272)

### Rural Community College Research

A limited amount of research emphasizes leadership in community colleges according to Eddy (2007); the focus has primarily been 4-year institutions. Research on rural community college leadership practices is limited. Therefore, Eddy (2007) conducted a study investigating the role of rural community college presidents and organizational change. Eddy (2007) explains that the focus of the research design was to understand the essence of rural leadership in both a descriptive and interpretive perspective (p. 274).

Eddy's (2007) findings suggest that leaders of rural community colleges are known among community members. There is little opportunity for anonymity because several districts often require presidents to live in homes specifically designated for the community college president. Eddy's findings also suggest that where a rural community college president lives sends a powerful message to community members.

Eddy (2007) found that perceived gender roles are very common among rural communities. Women in senior leadership roles are expected to exhibit traditional female attributes as noted below:

On a personal note, there's no anonymity for me in the community. This was something that I had not been prepared for in any way. It's not that I need to be anonymous, but you run out in your jeans and sweatshirt to get something for dinner and somebody talks to you about an issue on campus. (p. 276)

Eddy (2007) concluded that rural community college administrators must learn to lead. Participants commented that learning to lead was based on doing and sometimes failing. A critical element in the findings was the reiteration that mentoring was essential in their training and development as campus leaders. It was not always possible to use skills or techniques that worked in urban or suburban locations, so learning how to lead in a rural institution presented new challenges.

Finally, the research concluded that new rural administrators must adapt to their physical location by learning to lead differently, appreciating the often close-knit fabric of rural communities, and accepting their very public image. These expectations are impacted by complex economic and social influences.

Pennington, Williams, and Karvonen (2006) conducted research on problems faced by small rural community colleges in Kansas. Their research notes that Kansas was chosen to gather thick and rich data because it has many rural community colleges—many of which have existed for over 50 years.

Pennington et al. (2006), concentrated on interviews from senior administrators (presidents, vice presidents, or deans of instruction). In total, seven community college presidents, two vice presidents and one dean of instruction were interviewed. Their research describes ten community colleges as having the following characteristics: (a) number of students ranged from 2,000 to 8,700, (b) total population of their service regions ranged from 33,000 to 126, 000, (c) the number of counties served by a participating community college ranged from two to seven and one-half miles, and (d) all of the participating institutions were self-identified as rural community colleges. The researchers asked three questions in the 1-hour interviews:

1. What have been your community college's greatest accomplishments over the past 5 years?
2. Other than budget concerns, what problems do your college need to respond to in the next 5 years?
3. Has the mission of the community college changed during your tenure?

The findings suggested the following five common themes. The common themes include: technology use, importance of grant writing activities, an evolving student population, funding inequities between institutions, and hiring qualified people. The first theme, technology, was considered a priority item to continue to advocate for funding and resources to help connect rural students with resources. The second theme, grant writing, is a problem because rural institutions do not have the luxury of having a staff

person designated to the task. One senior-level administrator interviewed commented on the need for continuity among grant writing initiatives.

We lack a consistent voice at the college for the grants. A couple of us work on institutional grants and each instructor works on their own grants, and it becomes a jumble of repeated and sometimes mutually competitive initiatives. I send out emails on a regular basis to the faculty telling them not to apply for a certain grant since the whole institution needs to apply for it. (p. 648)

The third common theme, evolving student population, addressed the multigenerational student population. Research indicates that the average age of a rural community college student has steadily increased (Pennington et al., 2006). This has created challenges for institutions because they are working to develop new initiatives to support mature learners.

The fourth common theme (Pennington et al., 2006), funding inequities, can be challenging for rural institutions because some campuses, while classified as rural, are situated closer to major cities. Those colleges remain concerned about funding levels based on geography. Many rural institutions note that enrollment figures have impacted funding, and they could not compete with institutions nearer large cities.

The fifth and final common theme articulated by Pennington et al. (2006), finding qualified people to work at rural community colleges, is a common challenge for rural institutions (Eddy, 2007, 2009; Murray 2007). Further, Pennington et al.'s (2007) findings for this theme were not exclusive to recruiting and retaining faculty but employees at all levels. Kansas, like other states, is losing senior faculty members to retirements at an alarming rate.

### Rural Community Colleges as a Labor Market

As suggested by the research (Eddy, 2007, 2009; Murray, 2007; Pennington et al., 2007) rural community colleges comprise 60% of the community college market. Employment opportunities are more abundant for those willing to relocate to small or isolated geographic regions of the country. Many rural institutions are located nearer more populated suburban cities while being classified as rural.

Allen and Cejda (2007) conducted research on rural community colleges as potential labor markets. They explored whether labor markets exist by collecting data regarding the career experiences of chief academic officers at rural public institutions. The research findings suggest that in comparison to other senior-level administrative positions, chief academic officers were often promoted from within their own institutions more frequently. The research suggests this practice is not common in urban and suburban institutions. The findings also suggest that future leaders aspiring to a chief academic officer position should seek employment within a rural community college early in their careers.

### Chapter Summary

Though developing a succession plan may be an arduous task it is designed to promote institutional sustainability and increase the retention of talented staff. It is also an opportunity to lead the twenty-first century community college. The end product is a blueprint to cultivate leaders who can transition into senior-level administrators and sustain and grow an institution. Furthermore, individuals who feel that a deliberate professional and personal development plan is offered are compelled to contribute to the



overall well being of the institution. This is particularly true for women aspiring to senior leadership roles (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

Women continue to advance to senior-level administrative roles at a slightly slower pace than men in higher education (Eddy & Cox, 2008). The American Council on Education (ACE, 2007) reports that in 2006 women held 23% of college presidencies in the United States. This is up from 1996 when women held only 10% of college presidencies. Eagly and Carli (2004) call this career mobility issue a “pipeline problem” because women are not seen as emerging leaders.

Furthermore, Eagly and Carli (2004) suggest that women invest less in themselves. More specifically, women do not pursue training and relevant work experience in the same manner in which men do largely because of familial obligations and domestic responsibilities. Men are more likely to have the opportunity for advanced training, networking, and opportunities that will contribute to their career mobility.

Succession planning or talent management is a comprehensive initiative that involves developing a philosophy about cultivating talent within an organization, agreeing on a process, and looking strategically and broadly at institutions which rapidly grow and evolve (Rothwell, 2005). This is a process that requires the top-down approach to development, implementation, and sustainability because presidents and boards of trustees must support and advocate for the plan (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005). Succession planning is also a leadership philosophy that requires time, attention, and resources to successfully design and implement.

Succession planning alone will not allow community colleges to “grow-their-own” leaders. Community colleges must also be proactive about supporting employees

and encouraging the pursuit of purposeful academic training and leadership skills. Fulton-Calkins and Milling (2005) report a 78% decrease in the number of degrees conferred in community college administration between 1983 and 1997.

Mentoring initiatives, both formal and informal, can contribute to the professional growth of individuals aspiring to senior leadership roles, earning advanced degrees and being retained in the community college system (Molina, 2008). Piland and Wolf (2003) describe mentoring as a valuable tool used to inspire future leaders.

Polonia (2004) states that the relationship of the Board and president is a partnership built to set the stage for effective leadership of the college. Succession planning has challenges and obstacles that only a unified president and Board can overcome. Succession planning in higher education will require a cultural shift in hiring practices. It is imperative that college presidents and boards of trustees have a relationship built on trust that will allow succession planning practices to occur.

Succession planning challenges often include assisting boards of trustees in developing a firm understanding of the benefits of succession planning in an environment of shared governance. Bowman (2008) suggests that boards of trustees can benefit from utilizing succession planning techniques to plan their futures as organizational leaders.

Succession planning for rural community colleges has benefits and challenges. The unique challenges facing rural institutions include lower pay for qualified applicants, isolated campuses, and a lack of diverse students and community members. This often compromises attracting and hiring diverse applicants for senior leadership positions (Eddy, 2009). Research indicates that rural community college leaders must diligently build relationships within the community to strengthen relationships to the institution and

provide programs and services needed to revitalize rural areas. It is critical for the success of the institution and the betterment of the community (Eddy, 2007).

Eddy's (2007) research suggests that leaders of rural community colleges are known among community members. There is little opportunity for anonymity because several districts require the president to live in homes specifically designated for the community college president. New rural administrators must adapt to their physical location by learning to lead differently, appreciating the often close-knit fabric of rural communities, and accepting their very public image. Furthermore, rural institutions often compete for resources and therefore are not in a position to offer competitive compensation.

The next chapter (Chapter 3) highlights the research methodology and provides information germane to (a) the research questions that shaped the design of the study, (b) a detailed discussion of the methods and procedures employed to gather data for the study, (c) the process employed to collect and analyze the data, and (d) the rationale for establishing the study's reliability and validity.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to explore and identify strategies of succession planning that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, and Specialists) for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]). This study focused on the complexity of women's career mobility and the purposeful planning and development of leadership opportunities to enhance or cultivate the skills required of community college leaders.

The goal of this research was two-fold. The first goal was to illustrate how women experience career development and upward mobility despite personal and professional obstacles. Secondly, the research will investigate how succession planning can be used to cultivate and develop women for career advancement in community colleges. This research focused on gender because it impacts leadership as well as career mobility concepts. The research also discusses the advantages of developing a succession plan to ensure the competent leadership of community colleges while emphasizing opportunities for women.

Presidents and vice presidents in rural Illinois community colleges were surveyed and interviewed to explore attitudes and perceptions regarding succession planning. This study examined the career paths, leadership styles, and decision-making factors that

influence one's career journey while also examining opportunities for advancement through community college succession planning.

Chapter 3 illustrates how the research study was conducted. The following sections will provide information germane to (a) the research questions that shaped the design of the study, (b) a detailed discussion of the methods and procedures to be employed in the conduct of the study, (c) the process employed to collect and analyze the data (including participant selection), and (d) the rationale for establishing the study's reliability and validity.

### Research Questions

Several questions were addressed to explore and identify succession planning strategies that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in mid-level administrative positions for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]). The research questions arising from the purpose are as follows:

1. How do community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles?
2. What variables challenge community colleges in ensuring that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?

3. Does a catalyst or critical incident trigger community college leaders to develop a success plan that includes the purposeful development of women?
4. How does the community college's shared governance structure affect or influence succession planning?

The research questions provide the framework to explore career development and leadership cultivation through succession planning. A mixed-method design or concurrent study as described by Creswell (2008) was used to gather both qualitative and quantitative data to provide information regarding successful succession planning for including women in community college leadership positions.

#### Research Design

The purpose of this concurrent mixed-methods study was to explore strategies that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women for leadership roles through succession planning. The concurrent mixed-methods approach employs open-ended questions through interviews and surveys deemed appropriate for the purpose of this study.

According to Creswell (1998) concurrent mixed methods should lead to information from both open-ended and closed-ended questions as well as multiple forms of data and statistical and text analysis. The mixed-method design combines both quantitative or numerical data and qualitative or descriptive information.

This study was conducted in the following three phases: (a) a panel of experts was convened to validate the interview questions and survey instrument, (b) surveys were distributed to rural Illinois community college senior leaders (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers

[CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) to measure their attitudes and perceptions of succession planning specific to the advancement of women into senior administrative roles, and (c) semi-structured interviews with community college presidents and vice presidents were conducted.

A panel of experts (i.e., retired community college Dean of Students, Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Research, Director of Research, and a doctoral student) was convened to review the survey questions prior to the release of the survey instrument to rural community college presidents and vice presidents (see Appendix E). The following changes to the instrument were recommended and applied: (a) the questions were changed to read similarly to ensure clarity (specifically, the word “appear” was removed from each question to omit the possibility of vague or unclear responses based on opinion not fact) and (b) several demographic questions were omitted as redundant.

The semi-structured interviews occurred following the completion of the review of the survey and the interview questions (see Appendix C & D) by the panel of experts. Community college senior leaders (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) were interviewed in a semi-structured format. The purpose of the interviews was to gather thick and rich information generated through personal interactions. Interviews also provide opportunity to witness non-verbal communications, posturing, and reflections that will not be available in the survey portion of the research.

Finally, a survey was administered electronically to rural Illinois community college administrators (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers

[CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]).

The purpose of the survey was to gather attitudes and perceptions regarding succession planning for the development and cultivation of women for senior leadership roles in community colleges. The survey provided an opportunity to gather information from individuals currently employed in senior-level administrative roles in rural Illinois community colleges (see Appendix C).

### Quantitative Phase

The quantitative phase of the study provides a statistical description of how the specific variables under investigation were distributed among populations (Crowl, 1996). For this study quantitative data was collected via survey research. A questionnaire (see Appendix C) asked participants to provide responses to questions using a Likert-type scale. According to Mertens (1998), the use of a Likert-type scale is appropriate to measure both perceptions and attitudes of respondents.

A survey instrument (questionnaire) using a Likert-type scale helped to remove researcher bias and subjective interpretation. A five-point scale was used asking respondents to react to statements using the following responses: strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), or strongly disagree (1). In addition, study survey respondents were asked for basic demographic information as a part of the questionnaire to provide a basis for comparison between the responses and other variables.



### Qualitative Phase

Lincoln and Denzin (2000) state that both quantitative and qualitative methods value the individual's perspectives on a stated topic. However, qualitative research allows one to get closer to the *actor's perspective*. Only through qualitative research can one acquire details through interview and observation (Silverman, 2004).

Focus group. The first phase of the qualitative research was the panel of experts. They helped adjust interview questions that were intended to address the research questions (see Appendix E). The responses gathered from the focus group helped shape the interview questions to better answer the research questions. Specifically, questions were adjusted to ensure clarity by (a) removing the word "appear" allowing the questions to be precise and (b) removing redundant questions in the demographics section.

The second qualitative step in the qualitative phase was conducting semi-structured interviews that included responses from four community college senior-level administrators in rural Illinois community colleges (i.e., Chief Executive Officer [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officer [CAO]; Chief Student Services Officer [CSSO]; and Chief Financial Officer [CFO]); three of these were male and one female. Participants were selected for interviews based on several factors: (a) participation in the quantitative survey, (b) years served in current position (i.e., 0-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-15 years, 16-20 years, and 21 or more years), (c) indicated years until retirement (i.e., 1-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, or 20 or more years), and (d) gender.

Qualitative research provides a non-numeric study of data on social processes that allows information to be gathered and assessed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000):

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research requires an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. (p. 3)

Case study. Case study research provides an in-depth exploration of intricate topics or issues (Yin, 2003). Case study research may support or contribute to an existing body of knowledge through empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 1984, p. 23). This approach has been used across disciplines because it is a “bounded and integrated system with a boundary of working parts” (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Creswell notes further that a bounded system is constrained by time and place; the case being studied is usually a program, event, activity, or individual (p. 61). This research will contribute to knowledge of individuals, community colleges, and the phenomenon of career advancement.

Interpretive paradigm. The emergence of the interpretive paradigm affords social science researchers opportunity to move away from the restrictions of the positivism paradigm. The positivist paradigm suggests that knowledge comes from the affirmation of theory through the scientific method because it is based on the belief of objective reality. This contrasts with the interpretative paradigm because beliefs are based on socially constructed and subjective reality (Stake, 1995). The interpretive paradigm provides thick data; the study was conducted as a social inquiry. Moreover, this paradigm values history and culture.

The interpretation and triangulation of data, interviews, and literature provides greater depth and breadth regarding the research topic than a self-administered questionnaire. For the purpose of this study triangulation is defined as research that involves more than one method, qualitative and quantitative, as a means to gather information to answer the research questions (Yin, 2003). A thick descriptive account provides detailed information regarding the study of women in leadership positions (Creswell, 1998).

The researcher is left to interpret the data and draw conclusions according to Stake (1995). Interpretation is a major function of this design; it is done via a thorough examination of the literature, interviews, and field notes (Stake, 1995). Therefore, the results of this study will be examined through an interpretative lens. The information collected through interviews and surveys combined with literature will help contribute to the research on community college succession planning.

Exploratory research. This study regarding strategies for succession planning for women in community colleges is exploratory in nature. The phenomenon of succession planning for women in community colleges has not been defined clearly. Interviews and field notes including both observational and reflection as well as a literature review was synthesized to develop a broad lens in which the data can be interpreted. Yin (2003) suggests that exploratory research is often intuitive by design. The exploration of literature, data, and documents may draw the researcher to discover a theory or support existing research.

### Research Procedures

The research procedures for the study will be highlighted in this section as well as participant selection as it relates to institution demographics. This study will examine rural Illinois community colleges. Furthermore, this section will articulate how senior-level community college administrators were selected to be interviewed and surveyed.

#### Participants

Participants will include Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs] from rural Illinois community colleges. This study focused on rural community colleges because they represent 37.5% of the total community colleges in the state.

The U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) provides a description of community colleges based on a school's physical address. According to IPEDS the urban-centric local codes are developed by the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Division in 2007. Urban community colleges are defined as having a territory inside an urbanized area and inside a principal city with a population ranging from 100,000 to 250,000. A suburban community college is defined as a territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population ranging from less than 100,000 to 250,000.

Finally, a rural community college is a territory that is less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal 2.5 miles from an urban cluster. These definitions represent only a few of the categories because they are more specific relative to geography (<http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>).

Four senior-level community college administrators (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) were identified and invited to participate in the study. In Phase 1 of the study, the four senior-level community college administrators were interviewed. The study involved senior-level community college administrators in order to gain their perspective on the research subject. This case is bound by time and location; therefore, participants will all be from rural Illinois community colleges. Data will be gathered in spring of 2009.

#### Recruitment of Participants for Survey

Senior-level administrators serving in rural Illinois Community Colleges (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) were identified for the survey portion of the research. They were identified through the Illinois Community College Board directory as current CEOs, COAs, CSSOs, or CFOs. Individuals were refined further based on the institutional degree of urbanization based on IPEDS because the focus of the study is rural institutions. An e-mail was sent to the identified individuals asking for participation in the survey (see Appendix A).

#### Recruitment of Participants for Interviews

Senior-level administrators were selected based on several variables. Responses to the survey provided insight into the administrator's interest in the research. Therefore, 12 individuals were potential interviewees. Participants were further refined based on the institution's degree of urbanization as identified by IPEDS. Therefore, administrators were refined further based on institutional geography because rural

institutions are broadly defined. Finally, each survey participant was researched to ensure broad representation of experiences, work history, and gender.

### Instrumentation and Data Collection

#### Quantitative Phase

The second method of data collection was a survey instrument using a Likert-type scale (see Appendix C). The Likert-type scale is a psychometric scale used in questionnaires and commonly used in survey research. The Likert-type scale has been described as a bipolar scaling method that measures positive or negative responses to a statement (Meyers, Guarino, & Gamst, 2005).

Participants in this study were asked to respond to statements based on their level of agreement to that respective item. According to Meyers et al. (2005), the typical five-point Likert scale is as follows: strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree or disagree, agree, or strongly agree.

#### Qualitative Phase

The primary instrument for data collection and analysis is the researcher. According to Stake (1995), the researcher's role is that of teacher and interpreter. Stake (1995) further asserts that in the role of teacher is the responsibility of the researcher to inform, to sophisticate, to assist the increase of competence and maturity, to socialize, and to liberate (pp. 91-92). In the role of interpreter is the role of the researcher to find new connections and means to make the research finding real and able to be understood by others. The researcher is responsible for determining their respective role while collecting and interpreting data (Stake, 1995, p. 103). Several examples of role choices must be made by the researcher.

- a. How much to participate personally in the activity of the case
- b. How much to pose as an expert; how much comprehension to reveal
- c. Whether to be a neutral observer or evaluative, critical analyst
- d. How much to try to serve the needs of anticipated readers
- e. How much to provide interpretation about the case
- f. How much to advocate a position

For the purpose of this study the researcher will play the role of unbiased interviewer, observer, and interpreter while the findings are being discovered and the story is revealed. According to Creswell (1998) data collection is a series of interrelated activities. The goal of data collection is answering the proposed research questions. The phases of collecting data include: (a) locating a site/individual, (b) gaining access and making rapport, (c) purposefully sampling, (d) collecting data, (e) recording information, (f) resolving field issues, and (g) storing data.

This study was conducted utilizing interviews, field notes including direct observation and reflection, and a thorough collection of data through a survey instrument. The interview responses were then divided among common themes and categories. Coding and themes were used to identify commonalities and emerging themes in responses of the interviewees.

Thick description, experiential understanding, and multiple realities are expected in qualitative case study interviews (Stake, 1995). The semi-structured interview provided flexibility within a bounded framework. Interviews were approximately 1 hour in length. According to Merriam (1988), this format allows the researcher to respond to

the current situation, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic (p. 74).

Upon completion of the interviews a crosscheck was completed using the data, interviews, and literature providing a crosscheck. “Triangulation involves checking information that has been collected from different sources or methods for consistency of evidence across sources of data” (Mertens, 1998, p. 183).

### Trustworthiness and Credibility

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) ensuring credibility and the reliability of the interview data are critical areas for concern. Specifically, the researcher must conduct member checks or host verifications to ensure the accuracy of perceptions from the interviewee and those of the researcher. The method of host verification offered is the opportunity for each interviewee to edit the transcription of the interview. As an ethical consideration interviewees will have the right to change their own material or withdraw from the study at any time (Appendix F). Participants are assured full anonymity and confidentiality. Member checks were completed in July 2009.

Further, it is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that information and data is not misrepresented or misunderstood (Stake, 1995). Triangulation is the second method of verification that provides multiple lenses in which the information can be viewed and interpreted to ensure that the case remains the same over a period of time. Triangulation is a method supported by various researchers to ensure the internal validity or credibility of the research (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Eisner (1991) argues that credibility is a structural corroboration that is the foundation that supports the data through relationships from multiple types of data.



Eisner asserts, “We seek confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and conclusions” (p. 110).

### Data Analysis

#### Quantitative Phase

Data analysis involved in the quantitative research was used to find structure among survey responses. Descriptive statistics provides meaning from the data collected through sums and percentages.

#### Qualitative Phase

The data analysis involved in qualitative research can involve several steps ranging from collection, organization, and then interpretation. For the purpose of this study participant response from interviews was analyzed. As such the researcher is responsible for finding commonalities among responses or interpreting and identifying patterns. This study used the coding and themes method.

Coding and themes was used to analyze the qualitative or interview portion of this study. The interview responses were divided among common themes and categories. Coding and themes was used to identify commonalities and emerging themes in the responses of the interviewees. This will allow the researcher to organize the information in a format that may illustrate commonalities among participant responses. Through the process of coding and themes the researcher sought common threads that lead to answers to the research questions.

### Transferability and Reflexivity

Transferability and reflexivity are terms used in qualitative research acknowledging that the researcher is the tool in the study. There must be recognition that

the researcher will have an active voice in the development and interpretation of the data collected. Reflexivity suggests that readers be cognizant of the researcher's level of involvement, participation, and influence on the research topic.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) external validity in quantitative research is the extent by which the study's findings can be generalized. Generalized findings are also referred to as transferable to another setting. It is suggested that transferability can be a weakness in qualitative research. This study will investigate how succession planning can be used in community colleges to cultivate and develop women for senior-level administrative positions. Stake (1995) challenges the perception that transferability is a weakness as case study research explores patterns, themes, or events that can be duplicated in diverse settings. Stake (1995) asserts that the researcher has an ethical obligation to minimize misrepresentation and misunderstanding when utilizing the case study design (p. 109).

### The Role of the Researcher

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) humans are proficient at being the "instrument" in naturalistic qualitative research because of our ability to connect, adapt, and respond in social settings. This allows us to connect and respond based on social cues to gather and process information. Lincoln and Guba offer four criteria for measuring sound qualitative research as follows: (a) credibility, (b) transferability, (c) dependability, and (d) confirmability.

Qualitative research is only as reliable or credible as the respondent believes it to be. The nature of qualitative research is to offer an understanding or perspective of a

phenomenon through the lens of the participant. Therefore, it was helpful that the researcher was able to establish a rapport with each interviewee.

It is the role of the researcher to provide opportunity for the findings to be transferable by offering a thorough account of the research, literature, and central research questions guiding the inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that transferability is often contextual based on the meaning information is given by the individual.

The researcher is responsible for acknowledging that research is dependable to the extent that information is fluid and contextual. Therefore, the researcher must provide an accurate description of the context in which the data was collected.

Finally, measures that are taken to ensure data and information can be corroborated is confirmability. It is the role of the researcher to document the measures taken to ensure confirmability (i.e., panel of experts, member checks).

#### Ethical Considerations: Protection of Human Subjects

Participants in this study were ensured anonymity as each are currently serving in senior-level administrative positions in Illinois community colleges. A signed consent form was provided prior to each interview. The consent form was approved by the university's Institutional Research Review Board. Participants were given opportunities to ask questions regarding the nature of the study and its dissemination prior to conducting the interviews. Further, the consent form stated that participation in this study was voluntary and that a decision to join the study would not prevent the opportunity to withdraw later.

During the interviews, the researcher protected the anonymity of the participants by recording responses by pseudonym. This discretion allowed the audio tapes to be

transcribed without disclosing individual or institutional names as sensitive information was discussed. The researcher assured participants that audio tapes and transcriptions would not be used outside of this research and materials would be kept in a locked file cabinet.

### Chapter Summary

This study focused on the complexity of women's career mobility and the purposeful planning and development of leadership opportunities to enhance or cultivate the skills required of community college leaders. The leadership crisis at community colleges and the necessity to better plan for transition has been broadly communicated. This study demonstrates the need for further investigation of the concept of "grow-your-own" senior-level administrators.

Participants in the research included Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs] from rural Illinois community colleges. This study focused on rural community colleges because they represent 37.5% of the total community colleges in the state.

Participants were identified through the Illinois Community College Board directory as current CEOs, COAs, CSSOs, or CFOs. Individuals were refined further according to the institutional degree of urbanization based on IPEDS because the focus of the study is rural institutions.

Senior-level administrators were selected as interview participants based on several variables. Responses to the survey provided insight into the administrator's interest in the research. Therefore, 12 individuals were potential interviewees.

Participants were further refined based on the institution's degree of urbanization as identified by IPEDS. Therefore, administrators were refined further based on institutional geography because rural institutions are broadly defined. Finally, each survey participant was researched to ensure broad representation of experiences, work history, and gender.

The research was conducted in three phases. The first phase was the expert panel convened to review and offer feedback and suggestions regarding data collection tools. The second was the quantitative online survey phase of the research. The survey gathered data regarding attitudes and perceptions of succession planning to advance women into senior-level administrative roles. The third and final phase in data collection was the qualitative interviews. Interviews gather thick, rich information that offers insight from senior-level community college administrators regarding succession planning. The qualitative and quantitative design provides thick, rich data to gain insight into the process of succession planning in community colleges.

This study was conducted utilizing interviews, field notes (including direct observation and reflection), and a thorough collection of data through a survey instrument. The interview responses were then divided among common themes and categories. Coding and themes were used to identify commonalities and emerging themes in responses of the interviewees.

Participants in this study were ensured anonymity as each are currently serving in senior-level administrative positions in Illinois community colleges. A signed consent form was provided prior to each interview. Participants were given opportunities to ask questions regarding the nature of the study and its dissemination prior to conducting the

interviews. Further, the consent form stated that participation in this study was voluntary and that a decision to join the study would not prevent the opportunity to withdraw later.

It is the researcher's goal to provide insights that will assist women in developing a course of action for career mobility in community college leadership roles. Finally, the findings provide information for community colleges considering developing a formal succession plan to ensure quality leadership for future generations. The next chapter, Chapter 4, highlights the research findings from the survey and interviews.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

#### Introduction

This study explored the perceptions of rural Illinois community college leaders related to succession planning as a strategy to advance women into senior-level administrative roles. A mixed-methods design, which combines quantitative (statistical) and qualitative (descriptive) survey and interview methods, was applied to address the study's research questions. This chapter includes a review of the research questions, the quantitative (survey) data findings (by research question), the qualitative data findings (by participating institution), a summary of the emergent themes from the interviews, and concludes with a chapter summary.

#### Research Questions

The research questions detailed below were developed for the study. The four questions are as follows:

1. In what ways do community college administrators (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) plan for the effective succession of women in senior administrative positions?
2. What are the challenges faced by community colleges to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?
3. Is there a catalyst or critical incident that triggers community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women?

4. In what ways does the community college's shared governance structure impact or influence succession planning?

#### Quantitative Data Findings

In February 2009, rural Illinois community college leaders (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) were identified from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System ("Sciences," n.d.). The rural Illinois community college senior leaders identified received an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey portion of the study (Appendix A). The college senior leaders invited to participate in the qualitative portion of the study were identified based on responses to the online survey. The participant's level of interest in the research, the total number of years serving as a community college administrator, and the size of the community college in which they were currently employed determined who received an invitation to participate in the qualitative interview portion of the research (Appendix B). Administrators with a range of experience currently serving in a senior-level administrative position in rural Illinois community colleges were identified to participate in the study ("Sciences," n.d.).

#### Online Survey

An online survey was distributed to 18 rural Illinois Community College CEOs, CAOs, CSSOs, and CFOs to explore attitudes and perceptions regarding succession planning for the advancement of women into senior administrative positions among rural Illinois community college presidents and vice presidents (see Appendix C). The survey sought responses to questions employing (a) a Likert-type scale, (b) open-ended



comments, and (c) multiple-choice selections. The survey remained open for one month in February 2009 and generated 12 responses resulting in a response rate of 24%.

#### Findings: Demographic Information

The survey was designed with two distinct sections (see Appendix C). The first section sought to address participant demographics related to the background and employment history of the respondents. The second section addressed institutional hiring practices (i.e., training, advancement, and perceptions regarding succession planning.

Over half (54.5%) of the respondents held an earned doctorate and were 51 years of age or older (see Tables 1 & 2). Further, 72.7% of the respondents were male (see Table 3). Just over 45% of the respondents were employed at their current institution for 11 years or longer and indicated that they had been with the Illinois community college system for 21 years or longer.

According to the Illinois Community College Board's report *Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System (2008)* there are currently more women (n=742) serving in administrative positions than men (n=565). This data is not representative of senior-level administrative roles exclusively (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]).

Table 1

*Demographics: Age*

	President	VPAA	VPBA	VPSA	Other	%
36-40 years	0	0	1	1	0	18.2
41-45 years	0	1	0	0	0	9.1
50 years	0	0	0	0	2	18.2
51+	3	2	0	1	0	54.5

Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) suggest that academic preparedness and training will be a critical concern (see Table 2). According to an ICCB report there are 51 community college presidents in Illinois. Of those presidents 13 are women. Further, of the 13 there are 10 female presidents who have earned a doctorate degree. Finally, three of the women currently serving in presidential roles are interims (ICCB, 2009).

Table 2

*Demographics: Highest Degree Earned*

	<i>n</i>	%
Doctoral	6	54.5
Master's	4	36.4
Bachelor's	1	9.1

Survey respondents were predominantly male (see Table 3) supporting *a priori* data that suggests women hold fewer senior-level administrative positions in community colleges (Eddy & Cox, 2008).

Table 3

*Demographics: Gender*

	President	VPAA	VPBA	VPSA	Other	%
Male	2	3	1	2	0	72.7
Female	1	0	0	0	2	27.3

The final question in the demographic section indicated that well over half (63.6%) of respondents intend to retire in 5 to 9 years (see Table 4). These findings are consistent with Fulton-Calkins and Milling's (2005) research, which states that 50% of community college leaders will retire within 3 to 7 years.

Table 4

*Demographics: Retirement Plans*

	President	VPAA	VPBA	VPSA	Other	%
1-4 years	0	0	0	0	1	9.1
5-9 years	3	3	1	1	0	63.6
10-14 years	0	0	0	0	0	0
15-19 years	0	0	0	0	0	0
20+	0	0	0	1	1	18.2

Further, just over a quarter (27.3%) of the respondents indicated an aspiration to serve as a community college president; whereas, over a third (36.4%) of the respondents indicated no desire to serve as a community college president (see Table 5).

Table 5

*Demographics: Goal to Achieve Community College Presidency*

	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	3	27.3
No	4	36.4
Undecided	2	18.2
Current president	2	18.2

### Findings: Institutional Hiring Practices

The second section of the survey was related to institutional hiring practices (i.e., training, advancement, and perceptions regarding succession planning). The data collected from the online survey was cross tabulated to explore responses by gender.

### Findings: Succession Planning Practices

Survey questions 11, 12, 15, 22, and 24 (see Appendix C) related to the first research question, which sought to determine how community college administrators plan for the effective succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) to provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles.

Question 11 (see Appendix C) asked if the respondent's community college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators. Fewer than half of the respondents (36.4%; n=4), indicated that their community college seeks out-of-state candidates (see Table 6). They were all males. Only one female respondent strongly agreed that her college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators. The remaining respondents (36.4%; n=4) were unsure and 18.2% (n=2) disagreed that their institutions sought out-of-state candidates.

Table 6

*Survey Item 11: My community college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	1	9.1
Agree	4	0	36.4
Not sure	3	1	36.4
Disagree	1	1	18.2
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Question 12 (see Appendix C) asked if the respondent's community college provides opportunities for advancement to current employees. The majority (72.7%; n=8) agreed that their institutions provide opportunity for advancement (see Table 7).

Table 7

*Survey Item 12: My community college provides opportunities for advancement to current employees.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	6	2	72.7
Not sure	1	0	9.1
Disagree	0	1	9.1
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Question 15 (see Appendix C) sought to determine whether the respondent's community college identifies in-house individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance their leadership opportunities. The majority (63.6%; n=7) agreed, and one individual strongly agreed that their community college identifies in-house individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance their leadership opportunities.

Table 8

*Survey Item 15: My community college identifies and provides opportunities to employees to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance leadership opportunities.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	6	1	63.6
Not sure	0	0	0
Disagree	1	1	18.2
Strongly disagree	0	1	9.1

Question 22 (see Appendix C) sought to determine if the respondent's community college system valued succession planning as a means to cultivate leaders for the Illinois Community College System. Those agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement made up 27.3% (n=3) of responses (see Table 9).

Table 9

*Survey Item 22: My community college values succession planning in order to cultivate leaders for the Illinois Community College System.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	1	9.1
Agree	2	0	18.2
Not Sure	3	1	36.4
Disagree	2	2	36.4
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Finally, question 24 (see Appendix C) asked if succession planning is part of the community colleges goals to prepare future leaders. Of the respondents 45.5% (n=5) disagreed with the statement; five were male and one female. Four other respondents agreed with the statement; two were male and two female (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Survey Item 24: Succession planning is part of my community colleges goals to prepare future leaders.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0
Agree	2	2	36.4
Not sure	2	0	18.2
Disagree	4	1	45.5
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

### Findings: Challenges to Succession Planning

Survey questions 17, 18, 19, and 21 (see Appendix C) are related to the second research question that sought to identify the challenges faced by Community College administrators to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool.

Leadership training. When asked in question 17 (see Appendix C) if participants felt their institution provided adequate opportunity for leadership training, 72.7% (n=8) indicated that their institution did encourage employees to participate in leadership development training on campus (see Table 11).

Table 11

*Survey Item 17: My community college encourages employees to participate in leadership development training on campus.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	3	0	27.3
Agree	5	3	72.7
Not sure	0	0	0
Disagree	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Leadership training off-campus. Question 18 (see Appendix C) sought to determine if participants felt their community college encourages all employees to participate in leadership development training off-campus. The majority of respondents, 72.7% (n=8), agreed that their institutions support off-campus training opportunities (see Table 12).

Professional development opportunities. Question 19 (see Appendix C) asked whether there were opportunities for staff to engage in new opportunities and challenges within their respective role. Ten (90.9%) of the respondents agreed that their institutions provided such opportunities (see Table 13).

Table 12

*Survey Item 18: My community college encourages employees to participate in leadership development training off campus.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	6	2	72.7
Not sure	1	0	9.1
Disagree	0	1	9.1
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Table 13

*Survey Item 19: My community college provides opportunities for staff to accept new challenges within their current position.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0
Agree	7	3	90.9
Not sure	1	0	9.1
Disagree	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Mentoring. Question 21 (see Appendix C) sought to determine if community colleges value mentoring relationships to cultivate individuals with leadership potential. The majority of respondents felt that mentoring was important at their institution to develop future leaders (see Table 14).



### Findings: Catalysts for Succession Planning

The third research question asks if there is a catalyst or critical incident that triggers community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women. Survey questions 13, 14, 16, and 21 addressed the research question.

Table 14

*Survey Item 21: My community college values mentoring relationships to cultivate individuals with leadership potential.*

	Male ( <i>n</i> )	Female ( <i>n</i> )	%
Strongly agree	1	0	10.0
Agree	3	3	60.0
Not sure	2	0	20.0
Disagree	1	0	10.0
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Advancing women. Question 13 (see Appendix C) sought to determine if the respondent's community college advances women equally to men. Of the respondents, 81.8% (*n*=9) agreed or strongly agreed women are advanced equally to men at their community college (see Table 15).

Table 15

*Survey Item 13: My community college advances women equally to men.*

	Male ( <i>n</i> )	Female ( <i>n</i> )	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	6	2	72.7
Not sure	1	0	9.1
Disagree	0	0	0
Strongly disagree	0	1	9.1

Women as potential leaders. Question 16 (see Appendix C) asked if the respondent's community colleges regard women as potential future leaders equally to men. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed (72.8%; n=8) that their respective community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men. Of those disagreeing with the statement there were no males and two females (see Table 16).

Table 16

<i>Survey Item 16: My community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men.</i>			
	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	3	0	27.3
Agree	4	1	45.5
Not sure	1	0	9.1
Disagree	0	2	18.2
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

### Findings: Shared Governance and Succession Planning

Survey questions 20, 23, 25, and 26 (see Appendix C) relate to the fourth research question, which asks how does the community college's shared governance structure affect or influence succession planning.

Exposure to new experiences. Question 20 (see Appendix C) seeks to understand if community colleges value exposing individuals to new experiences to provide insight into higher levels of administration. Nine respondents (81.8%) strongly agreed or agreed that their institutions supported individuals seeking exposure to new and higher level administrative duties (see Table 17).

Table 17

*Survey Item 20: My community college values exposing individuals to new experiences to provide insight into higher levels of administration.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	6	2	72.7
Not sure	0	0	0
Disagree	1	1	18.2
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Preparing individuals for advancement. Question 23 (see Appendix C) asked respondents if their community college attempts to prepare individuals for advancement. Four respondents (36.4%) agreed and four respondents (36.4%) disagreed that individuals are prepared for advancement (see Table 18).

Table 18

*Survey Item 23: My community college attempts to prepare individuals for advancement.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	1	0	9.1
Agree	4	0	36.4
Not sure	1	1	18.2
Disagree	2	2	36.4
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Hiring from within. Question 25 (see Appendix C) asked respondents if their community college generally hires from within as positions become vacant or newly created. More than half of the participants (72.8%; n=8) were unsure or disagreed that their institutions hire from within as positions have become vacant or newly created (see Table 19).

Table 19

*Survey Item 25: My community college generally hires from within as positions have become vacant or newly created.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0
Agree	2	1	27.3
Not sure	2	2	36.4
Disagree	4	0	36.4
Strongly disagree	0	0	0

Filling vacant positions. The final survey question, (see Appendix C) Question 26, asked if the respondent were to leave his/her current position, would there be a process in place at his/her community college to help identify an internal candidate with the requisite skills and specific job abilities. Over half of the respondents (63.6%; n=7) disagreed or strongly disagreed that if they were to leave their current position there would be an internal candidate with the requisite skills and abilities to fill the vacancy (see Table 20).

Table 20

*Survey Item 26: If I were to leave my current position, there is a process in place at my community college to help identify an internal candidate with the requisite skills and specific job abilities.*

	Male (n)	Female (n)	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0
Agree	4	0	36.4
Not sure	0	0	0
Disagree	4	2	54.5
Strongly disagree	0	1	9.1

### Quantitative Data Findings Summary

The survey results, although modest in number, appear to support much of the literature regarding the representation of women in community college leadership roles

(Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Piland & Wolf, 2003). Of the 49 surveys distributed to senior-level administrators only 10 were women. Of those 10 women 4 responded to the survey. The number of women in senior-level administrative roles in rural Illinois community colleges was limited.

The second section of the survey sought to gather information regarding attitudes and perceptions of succession planning for the advancement of women into senior-level administrative positions in community colleges. Participants were asked to respond to a series of statements that best describe their experience and knowledge of succession planning and leadership development.

#### Survey Findings by Research Question

Succession planning of women. The first research questions sought to determine in what ways community college administrators (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) plan for the effective succession of women in senior administrative positions.

According to the survey, when asked if their community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men, women were less likely to agree with that statement. Further, when asked if their community college values succession planning in order to cultivate leaders for the Illinois Community College System women were again less likely to agree with that statement. The responses from men were also more favorable when asked if their respective community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men (see Tables 9, 15, & 16).

Challenges of succession planning. The second research question sought to explore the challenges faced by community colleges to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool.

Of the respondents, 81.8% (n=9) agreed or strongly agreed women are advanced equally to men at their community college. One respondent, 33.3%, strongly disagreed that her community college advances women equally to men (see Table 15). Further, when respondents were asked if their community colleges regard women as potential future leaders equally to men 72.8% (n=8) agreed or strongly agreed. Of the participants disagreeing with that statement there were no males and two females (see Table 16).

Catalysts for developing a succession plan. The third research question asked whether there is a catalyst or critical incident that triggers community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women. Women were less likely to agree that a system is in place to identify internal candidates for advancement into one of the senior-level administrative roles (see Table 20).

Shared governance impact on succession planning. The fourth research question explored ways by which the community college's shared governance structure influenced the succession planning process. The majority of respondents, 81.8% (n=9), strongly agreed that their community college supported individuals seeking exposure to new and higher level administrative duties (see Table 17). Respondents were given the opportunity to elaborate on their answers. One rural Illinois community college leader stated that college leadership values succession planning, but the respondent does not believe that the trustees hold the same value. Others shared that leadership development has recently been incorporated in the college's vision or strategic plan.

### Qualitative Data Findings

This concurrent mixed-methods study included four interviews, an online survey, and field notes. Participants interviewed for this study were referred to by pseudonym only to ensure confidentiality.

The four participants included senior-level administrators (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) from four rural Illinois community colleges. Participants included new senior-level administrators with less than 5 years of experience to more seasoned administrators having served 35 years or more in that capacity. The participants include one woman and three men.

The four senior-level community college administrators selected for face-to-face interviews were identified based on invitations (see Appendix B) extended to online survey respondents. A diverse representation of community college administrators with varied levels of expertise and time in their respective positions was sought to explore perceptions and attitudes regarding succession planning (see Table 21).

One-hour appointments were scheduled in advance. The researcher asked a series of open-ended questions (see Appendix D) supplemented with various follow-up questions and prompts as needed. The interview questions were sent to the participants in advance of the scheduled interview to provide adequate time for contemplation. Interviews were audio recorded (supported by field notes) and transcribed with the participant's permission (see Appendix F).

The interview responses were consistent with the responses to the survey. Overall, each senior-level administrator interviewed was aware of such emerging issues as (a) the

pending leadership crisis (some even using the term “mass exodus” of leaders), (b) the concept of “growing-your-own” talent, and (c) the challenges facing rural institutions in implementing succession plans.

### Participant Profiles

Four senior-level community college administrators were interviewed regarding succession planning for the advancement of women to senior-level positions in

Table 21

*Demographics: Interview Participants (n=4)*

	President	VPAA	VPBA	VPSA
<b>Gender</b>				
Male	0	1	1	1
Female	1	0	0	0
<b>Age</b>				
36-40 years	0	0	0	1
41-45 years	0	1	0	0
46-50 years	0	0	1	0
51+	1	1	0	1
<b>Retirement plan</b>				
5-9 years	1	1	0	0
10-14 years	0	0	1	0
15-19 years	0	0	0	0
20+	0	0	0	1
Earned Doctorate	1	1	0	0
<b>Total years in the Illinois Community College System</b>				
0-5 years	1	0	0	1
6-10 years	0	0	0	0
11-15 years	0	1	0	0
16-20 years	0	0	1	0
<b>Total years at current institution</b>				
Less than 1 year	0	0	0	0
1-3 years	0	0	0	1
4-6 years	1	0	0	0
7-10 years	0	0	0	0
11+	0	1	1	0



community colleges. Participants (n=4) contributed unique perspectives and perceptions regarding succession planning to build a community college talent pool.

The President of Clark Community College (CCC) was the only woman among the participants (n=4). She came to her current rural Illinois community college bringing with her over 25 years of experience in higher education leadership. Her willingness to be mobile allowed her to move around the country to continue her pursuit of a community college presidency. She has served in a variety of senior-level positions in several states in the mid-west and east coast. Her leadership style is direct and transparent; she credits her success to mentoring and job coaching received from a former community college president early in her career.

The Vice President for Business and Finance (CFO) for Addison Community College (ACC) has been a community college administrator for 22 years at the same institution. His work experience in business and industry provided new ideas for ACC in terms of meshing the “bottom-line budget” orientation of business with the college’s budgetary focus. The CFO was not mentored or cultivated through the community college system; however, his background and training provides the tools needed for the position.

The Vice President of Academic Affairs for Parks Community College (PCC) has served in a variety of senior-level administrative roles with his career spanning 37 years. The VPAA was the eldest senior-level administrator interviewed. He credits his extensive background teaching physical sciences for his ability to lead faculty as an administrator. He plans to retire sooner than the others.

The Vice President for Student Affairs at Shields Community College has been a community college leader for nearly 15 years. This is his first position as a senior-level administrator. He credits his success to personal and professional mentoring and coaching. He firmly believes in the power of cultivating the talents of others for their growth as well as the benefits received by community colleges. When seeking a senior administrative position it was critical that he find a leader who shared this philosophy. Therefore, when he was given an opportunity he did not hesitate to move out-of-state to work for this president who shared a vision that would further develop the VPSA's skills.

Interview Findings: President, Clark Community College (CCC)

The President of Clark Community College, a rural Illinois institution, spoke specifically about challenges and potential obstacles that may occur when developing a succession planning process or model. There was firm acknowledgment that cultivating an internal talent pool is in the best interest of the institution. Change can occur rapidly and call for individuals with specific talents to fill voids as interims or permanent replacements.

This interview provided insight into the career path of women from a woman's perspective. While the other three interviews touched on the career path of women this administrator provided more detail and examples related to her own journey. However, responses from the President of Clark Community College speak to the career path women take in advancing to senior-level roles from a personal perspective.

Succession planning. Succession planning is an ideal concept; however, developing and implementing such a plan has obstacles and challenges. According to the President of Clark Community College succession planning must be fully developed as a

plan and presented to the Board of Trustees before any action is taken. A plan that involves the hiring practices of individuals must be formally adopted and supported by the Board of Trustees to ensure its sustainability and credibility. Succession planning as a concept can be agreed upon; however, there must be a process in writing and supported by the Board of Trustees, president and senior leadership to be effective and remove the potential for politically motivated or questionable advancements.

The president suggested that institutions heavy in collective bargaining units will experience unique challenges. Staff considered classified by collective bargaining units may not support a college-wide initiative to advance individuals based on criteria set by internal stakeholders. Unions, often lead by an internal union representative, may not find succession planning equitable or in the best interest of everyone involved.

Succession planning used as a tool to ensure the opportunity for women to advance to senior-level administrative positions was addressed through the context of leadership style. According to the president, an institution is more likely to adopt a formal procedure for the benefit of a specific group of employees (e.g., middle-management), not specifically gender related.

Mentoring future leaders. There is recognition of the potential benefit for women on a more personal level. Specifically some community college leaders find cultivating other's talents valuable to the individual and the institution. The president's example of mentoring and coaching early in her career was a form of talent management. A former president of a community college (in which the respondent served as Associate Dean) suggested new opportunities for involvement and supported professional association membership as well as internal and external leadership opportunities. The president's

passion for succession planning was fueled by a professional relationship and mentoring from a former president. She remarks:

He just didn't do it for [me], out of his institutions, there must be 40 people who have left and there are at least five of us who are now presidents and a few vice presidents. So, when I look at what he did, I recognize that is was succession planning and it had to start at the top... So having had that experience as a young woman working with him, it has engrained in me every place I have gone whether it has been faculty to move them ahead, deans to move them ahead or currently looking at the people here at the institution that I am hoping to see move ahead. It is embedded in me and engrained because a leader started that.

When asked if women are motivated differently than men to seek senior-level positions the President of Clark Community College had an interesting response that demonstrated a difference in the way men and women are encouraged to seek such positions. She commented:

I do not think current presidents, males and females, reach out specifically to women. They reach out typically to the men because the men are coaches, the men are in associations and clubs that get more recognition than female groups...

Boards of trustees support. Community college leaders and boards of trustees have different visions concerning administrators and a leadership practice. The President of Clark Community College suggests that boards of trustees see their role as governing and policy making, but do not always understand their responsibility to the president and the institution to help leaders succeed.

Additionally, the president highlights the success of another small rural Illinois community college in working collaboratively as senior leaders and trustees in developing a presidential succession plan. Through collaboration and mutual respect the institution has worked in the best interest of stakeholders to ensure a smooth presidential

transition. This president adds that succession planning starts at the top, and this is a prime example.

There are opportunities for orientation and training through the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT). The President of Clark Community College suggests that all new trustees attend an orientation session.

Challenges related to succession planning. One of the major challenges faced by community colleges related to succession planning is the geography of an institution. Rural community colleges face different and unique challenges than suburban and urban community colleges. Specifically, finding and retaining talent in rural districts can be a challenge for leadership. The President of Clark Community College offered a unique perspective regarding the location and size of an institution. She suggests that it may be a lesser concern for women seeking positions that will broaden their knowledge base and network. She suggested that women must be flexible and mobile in their careers to achieve senior leadership positions; taking positions in rural communities are a source of broad experiences on a smaller scale. The president comments:

In all seriousness, to be a younger person looking up you have to be willing to make sacrifices, and the sacrifices involve moving the family with you and bringing the children with you. It is not an easy road and it isn't for everybody. When you are young you have to think, I am going to have a tough skin and I am going to get in there and you cannot push the gender button.

Loneliness in leadership. Finally, the president adds that women seeking senior leadership roles must be aware of the obstacles and challenges once you have arrived. She states that as women we like to discuss situations and share with other women; however, a president cannot do this. She comments, "...if I get that job someday, as

president, am I going to be happy being by myself and alone? Because it is pretty lonely... We really are by ourselves.”

In closing the interview the president added a few remarks regarding her observations of community college presidents as she sought senior administrative positions. This president’s early goal was a community college presidency; therefore, she carefully observed others. The president comments:

Presidents can and should be measured by where he or she is seen or by what he or she does. As I changed positions and navigated into senior leadership roles I was aware of the events, meetings, and circumstances in which I physically saw presidents. A community college president should be out among students and community and be known and not for the sake of selfish motivation, but as a measure of good steward and serving stakeholders.

The president’s remarks were strikingly similar to those made by Shirley Pippins, Suffolk County Community College President, when she reflected on how women can remain balanced and be good leaders. Pippins (2008) suggested ways in which women can lead effectively, yet find the support necessary to prevent feelings of isolation.

Interview Findings: Vice President for Business and Finance (CFO), Addison Community College (ACC)

The CFO’s initial remarks regarding his philosophy regarding community college succession planning speak to the first of the emergent themes. Succession planning is an ideal concept; however, developing and implementing such a plan has obstacles and challenges.

Succession planning. His philosophy regarding the benefits of succession planning is similar to that of the President of Clark Community College. However,

outweighing the benefit of developing individuals for senior leadership roles is the fiscal responsibility community colleges have to its stakeholders. The CFO comments:

The reality is it is very difficult to do because I think it comes back to budget and time...we are in the public sector and we are working down to the last nickel, you do not really have a program in place that addresses succession planning...at least in the comprehensive nature that I think it needs to be done.

Mentoring future leaders. The role of the CFO is unique within any institution and is often broad in scope of duties. He states that with the amount of work and the many hats worn by community college CFOs there is little time and resources to consider cultivating others. Further, in smaller rural institutions those who might consider pursuing senior leadership positions are often those who could not take additional tasks or opportunities as they are also serving multiple roles.

The dilemma that I see is how do they have time to do their job and then learn these other pieces? We are pushing everybody to work 50 hours a week anyway...It becomes a dilemma to be able to resolve how do you get these other experiences and you have to create other opportunities to do that and be very intentional about it. I don't know that we have that kind of luxury.

Boards of trustees support. The CFO of Addison Community College discussed the relationship among senior leaders and boards of trustees. Community college leaders and boards of trustees have different visions concerning administrators and leadership practices. He reiterates the responsibility of the CFO is to monitor the resources of the institution. Addison Community College has a solid relationship with faculty members and devotes resources to developing their talents. The board's priority has been retaining faculty; therefore, succession planning efforts are a low-level priority when it concerns other staff members.

Challenges related to succession planning. The CFO of Addison Community College spoke specifically to the challenges of succession planning as a rural community college. The President of Clark Community College addressed the benefits for women specifically to seek roles in rural institutions because of the opportunities to grow as a professional. The CFO of Addison Community College felt differently about implementing succession planning and cultivating talent in a rural institution. This speaks to the previously identified theme that rural community colleges face different and unique challenges than suburban and urban community colleges.

The concern stated was that a rural institution that did purposeful succession planning would lose valuable employees to other institutions. Instead the CFO suggested searching for individuals with less experience to fill vacancies so rural institutions can retain them. He also spoke of the transient nature of community college leadership as senior leaders often do not stay in one place. The CFO commented:

So how do you plan to grow somebody when the top leadership is a moving target? Do you groom somebody to take your spot at your institution or do you groom somebody that has the skills and abilities and the perspective to do the job regardless of the institution?

Based on the CFO's experience at Addison Community College individuals employed at rural institutions often stay because the community is their home. He shared that one senior-level administrator just celebrated 35 years with the institution and that is not unique at this college. He added, "It is important to our trustees that the focus is on faculty retention." Part of this institution's low-level strategic plan is succession planning; however, the focus is on faculty and some leadership training for other staff'.



Physically geography for those living and working in a rural community has career path challenges because some might be place bound. As suggested by the President of Clark Community College to earn a senior-level position one must be mobile and flexible. However, the CFO at Addison Community College suggests that individuals who intend to stay in their rural community have career paths that are less clear because opportunities are fewer.

This also creates challenges when recruiting for vacancies or new positions. Those with the skills and talent sought must be willing to relocate to a rural area. The CFO adds, “Unless you have ties to a rural community it isn’t a place you really want to come to...and couple that with trying to recruit diverse populations makes it even harder.”

Finally, the CFO discussed his views regarding women in leadership roles. Specifically, are women motivated differently than men in terms of leadership and career paths? He commented, “Absolutely what motivates a woman is different than what motivates a guy...I think woman have to be tougher.” In terms of his experience with women in leadership roles he has found women to be more direct with expectations and firm with deadlines.

Interview Findings: Vice President for Academic Affairs, Parks  
Community College (PCC)

He joined the staff of this institution because of a personal relationship with the president. As a fledging institution the president sought the support of seasoned administrators to join his small staff and called him directly.

Succession planning. Immediately, the interview discussion regarding succession planning pointed to the small-town philosophy related to the rural location of the campus. The institution's goal was not to grow quickly, but to provide leadership and continuity to the community and the employees of the institution. Therefore, as Parks Community College grew in enrollment and programs the institution was cautious about expanding administration without careful consideration for those who had been with the institution and done exemplary work.

There was no formal succession plan; however, as a young institution it was expected and acceptable to move individuals into higher positions as needed. He states that as the campus community grew there was a need to seek additional faculty and staff and a process needed to be in place. The institution experienced some administrative turnover and needed to fill vacancies. He recalls some growing pains because there had been no discussion regarding the plan for filling vacancies.

Regarding one specific search the CAO was not willing to compromise what he was looking for in terms of skills and knowledge to ensure a person of certain race or gender would get the position. His goal was to find an individual most suited for the position. This was new to an institution that traditionally had sought internal candidates. However, growth precluded this from being an option.

Mentoring future leaders. The CAO considered the challenges of a formal succession plan. He suggested a plan could be implemented only if measures were taken that would minimize the potential for problems if individuals who were in a leadership pipeline did not get selected for other position. The CAO comments:

For example, so we set up something which identifies a couple of people in each of the major academic areas as members of this cohort of emerging leaders. What kind of commitment do we seem like we are making to them if a position became available and they didn't get one? What kind of problems would that lead to? Or, we invite two or three people to join this and what about the people who might have been interested but were not selected?

The CAO of Parks Community College addressed mentoring futures specifically. His philosophy regarding mentoring is similar to those of the VPSA of Shields Community College. The CAO comments:

...I think that is an important part of what I try to do, not only them but others that I work with directly. I don't deliberately go out and sit someone down and say I'm going to mentor you, but I will often offer a suggestion on how someone might go about something or try to model a kind of behavior I think we should exhibit.

Boards of trustees support. Further, the CAO then spoke to the relationship between boards of trustees and senior leaders regarding a vision for succession planning. He acknowledged that if his institution were to develop a model for succession planning it should be supported by the college president first and then the Board of Trustees. He reflected on his own retirement and made the following comments regarding filling his vacancy as CAO:

One of the most important things we can do is to have, if not a mechanism in place, at least be thoughtful about this sort of thing. If I were suddenly to be out of here, I would look to the associate dean, I would expect that the college would look to among the associate deans and or other senior administrators in the general academic area for a successor.

Challenges related to succession planning. The CAO of Parks Community College acknowledges the challenges to formal succession planning. At this institution, he states:

It has been our experience that people have moved up into positions from within fairly often. The need for a formal plan has not been part of the Parks Community College goals. The institution, like many others, is facing the retirement of key

senior leaders in 2010 and currently having discussion about how to seek replacements. There has also been discussions regarding specific individuals currently employed at Parks to fill those roles in an interim capacity and possibly permanently.

He paused for a short time during the dialogue regarding succession planning. He was pensive and then acknowledged the potential for such a plan to work; however, it would need the support of the Board of Trustees. Then the CAO made the following comment:

My thoughts automatically turn to how succession might be handled in my own case, for example. I have not given . . . I haven't tapped anyone on the shoulder and said, "You're it." In fact, it isn't up to me to make that decision; it will be up to the president. If I were to leave this role and go on to retirement or to a faculty job or move away, whatever, I would certainly think that bringing in someone who is currently part of our administrative structure would be an automatic advantage because they know the institution; they know the people; and they know the policies. It would be far less of a learning curve.

In the CAO's final remarks he added that it was his observation that men and women are not motivated differently when choosing to seek senior-level administrative roles in community colleges. He added that there is a fairly even representation of men and women at his current and former institution.

Interview Findings: Vice President for Student Affairs, Shields Community College (SCC)

The president of the VPSA's current institution made a firm commitment to dedicate time and resources to further cultivate his talents and "groom" him for a community college presidency. The VPSA left family and friends to move to the Midwest for the opportunity to work for a president who shared his vision. The VPSA commented on the importance of a shared vision in order to meet the needs of the campus community and work effectively as part of the leadership team.

This institution offered me a wonderful opportunity to bring my vision, which fit the institution's vision for the new student services division. This was a brand new division. My philosophy is really trying to invest in those folks who are here and make them more knowledgeable so if I walked away tomorrow they will be able to pick up and move on. It's about an investment. Finding people with those skills and making the investment.

Succession planning. The VPSA shared a view of community college succession planning that was similar to that of the CFO from Addison Community College. As a concept it is ideal; however, he can see the challenges for a rural institution. The VPSA cited two specific obstacles for his current institution: limited staff and time. Having been employed by a large community college that enjoyed the luxury of a larger staff, the VPSA adds, that is not the case for a small rural institution. Individuals are doing several jobs and often working more hours than prescribed. That is a necessity at a small rural institution.

However, he adds that even small institutions have an obligation to help individuals cultivate new skills with the expectation that people could succeed him or leave the institution to seek new professional opportunities. He adds the following statement:

You have to give people the opportunity to grow. If there are people within your institution who have the desire, skills, and knowledge base that fits your institution's vision or mission those are the people I want to invest in.

Mentoring future leaders. The VPSA spoke firmly about mentoring as an obligation of senior leaders who wish to strengthen community colleges. He recalled his career path and credited specific individuals for allowing him the opportunities to learn and the opportunities to fail. The VPSA felt that failure was an opportunity to grow and learn; therefore, leadership that allows one to fail trusts in their subordinates' ability to

learn from the challenges and move forward. A mentor, according to the VPSA, must be genuine and self-disclosing and be prepared to help pull you through the good and the challenging times. He adds the following:

My mentor, who is a president of another community college, taught me that if you don't pull the next person through you are doing a disservice to the population you are serving. You need to pull the next person through. I also learned from another senior leader who is female that if you don't share your true life experiences you are not benefiting yourself or other people.

The opportunity to be mentored and groomed provided the VPSA an opportunity to see succession planning in practice. His skills were cultivated by a leader who recognized his potential; as a result he was able to achieve a position with greater responsibility. After serving in that role for almost 10 years he recognized a glass-ceiling as the institution did not have an administrative structure that would allow him to advance. However, he commented on the experience of being groomed and the pool of potential successors available to community colleges who are currently working in their respective institutions. The VPSA commented:

When they invested in me there was a director ahead of me that I learned everything from. So I got a chance to see and be a part of what it is to invest in your own from the ground up and then see what happens when you don't invest in people. What I see happening in many institutions is they don't invest in that middle of group of people who have served anywhere from 6 to 15 years. They are your pool of people you should be grooming. You will lose some of those people to attrition. They will, like me, venture out because of the glass ceiling and find other places to go.

Boards of trustees support. The VPSA sees the relationship of the president and the boards of trustees at his current institution as collaborative. There is a trust that allows the Board to be involved in planning for the college's future while not micro-managing the president. The VPSA comments on the symbiotic relationship at his current

institution that allows the vice presidents to be groomed and benefit from the experience of the president. He commented:

Boards can be very different. At my previous institution the Board was all business. At this institution you can see a Board member on any given day or time. They are very, very involved and invested. I believe it is the history of the institution. We have gone through turmoil and growing pains. Does the Board help us? Absolutely. Do they look at us from the perspective of vice presidents and grooming? They are very much a part of that. They do give their input and we accept that very graciously.

Further, the VPSA states that leadership is a commitment to people and the institution. Leadership is seen in one's actions as well as heard in the spoken word. To illustrate the commitment to the institution he comments on how the current president invests resources to cultivate every member of the campus community and provide opportunity for development.

The president has also made this commitment through his Leadership Academy for faculty, staff, and administrators. So we are in a leadership program and you might be sitting next to a custodian, a faculty member, or a Ph.D. or whomever but at that Leadership Academy everybody is equal and brings something to the table. So for me, everything the president teaches has so much value because there is nothing that he would tell you that he has not already put into effect or already doing. So from my perspective, yes there is succession planning. He is grooming middle managers and he is grooming us, vice presidents, to groom middle managers. We are taking his philosophy and sharing that with our staff.

Finally, the VPSA discussed his views regarding the advancement of women to senior leadership roles through succession planning. He did not see the process different for men and women; however, he did acknowledge that gender might influence one's desire or motivation to seek senior administrative positions.

Yes, I think women are motivated differently. Not only women, but for men, but sometimes people seek roles like this not for the benefit of the institution or student but for power. Women might get the cliché that they are power hungry...

Furthermore, he acknowledged that men and women might have different journeys that create dissimilar paths toward senior administrative positions. This is supported by early research conducted by Schein (1984) that states that gender impacts the career paths of many women. Factors include personal demands such as families, children, and ageing parents. There are also professional factors influencing this dynamic such as society and market demands and gender inequities in the workplace. The culmination of both personal and professional factors often creates inevitable career detours or pathways.

Challenges related to succession planning. The VPSA at Shields Community College supports the concept of succession planning and strongly endorses mentoring to cultivate future leaders. However, since earning a senior leadership role in small rural institution he acknowledges that formal succession planning has challenges as individuals do not have the luxury of time, resources, or staff to develop a succession plan.

### Qualitative Data Findings Summary

#### Emergent Themes

Research indicates a “mass exodus” of senior community college leaders is pending as retirements are nearing (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Evelyn, 2004; Leubsdorf, 2006; Shults, 2001; Vaughan, 2001). According to the 2001 AACC study nearly 80% of community college presidents was planning on retiring within 10 years. Further studies have suggested a need for succession plan from within community colleges to ensure the vitality and commitment of future administrators (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005, Vaughan, 2001). This section will summarize themes that emerged from the interviews.



### Theme #1: Succession Planning Challenges

According to the interview findings there was some agreement that succession planning would be advantageous for the professional growth of an individual employee as well as the benefit to the community college system. Succession planning, under the best of conditions, would allow an institution to have a plan developed and supported by a Board of Trustees that could serve as a template to fill vacancies. This is not to suggest that all vacancies should be treated equally; rather a plan could be utilized to identify the strengths and talents of staff members with the potential skills and abilities to fill vacancies.

Dialogue regarding equity and the sense of “fair-play” are inevitable as individuals consider a succession plan. Therefore, in its development the language must speak to the over-arching goals of cultivating a talent pool who will contribute to not only the institution but also the community college system.

Research conducted on succession planning acknowledges challenges associated with developing and implementing formal succession plans. Wallin (2006) states that leadership development is an on-going process that requires specific leadership training opportunities. Further, opportunities for women to be supported through formal succession plans have challenges. Piland and Wolf (2003) suggest that women would benefit from deliberate professional and personal development planning to enhance their career journey. Their research suggests similar career detours noted by Shein (1984), which includes familial obligations as well as society influences and market trends in the workplace impacting women’s advancement.

## Theme #2: Community College Leaders and Boards of Trustees

### Differing Visions among Campus Leaders

It is suggested that boards of trustees need to be educated regarding the benefits of developing a leadership plan through succession. It cannot be assumed that publically elected Boards all come with same knowledge and background; therefore, it is critical that opportunities for training and trustee orientation be encouraged. It is not likely a Board will support an endeavor in which they are unfamiliar.

Research acknowledges that boards of trustees are operating at a deficit as succession planning and cultivating a talent pool might not be part of their training. However, researchers Fulton-Calkins, and Milling (2005) state that succession planning requires top-down support to be achieved. Therefore, boards of trustees must first share in the philosophy of succession planning and have the tools to assist in developing the organizations plan.

## Theme #3: Unique Challenges Facing Rural Community Colleges

Often employees in rural institutions are “wearing many hats.” It is necessary that individuals have multiple roles and extremely limited time and resources. Succession planning might be an ideal concept but some leaders did not fully support implementing it as it would take time away from the essential daily tasks. Further, cultivating talent may encourage staff to leave the rural institution. Recruitment and retention of skilled senior-level administrators is a challenge for some rural institutions. Location may detour qualified individuals from applying.

Theme #4: Mentoring or Coaching an Essential Part of Cultivating Talent  
for Succession Planning

Mentoring and coaching appear to be part of what each senior administrator values. This occurs in a variety of ways but each shared a story of their experience as a mentee early in their career. This was particularly true for the president and Chief Student Affairs Officer who credit being mentored for their success.

Mentoring might be valuable for women seeking senior-level administrative roles as research suggests women often experience detours in career development due to familial obligations (Schein, 1984). Research suggests that mentoring is a strategy to develop future leaders (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000; Fulton-Calkins and Milling, 2005; Molina, 2008) and strengthen the numbers within an organization's talent pool.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 reports the findings from the qualitative and quantitative data collected for this study. The purpose of this study explored how rural Illinois community colleges perceive succession planning to advance women into senior-level administrative roles.

The findings report four themes based on interviews with four senior-level administrators from rural Illinois community colleges. Those themes are (1) succession planning provides opportunity to create a pipeline of trained individuals capable of filling vacancies; however, obstacles exist in developing succession plans, (2) there must be a shared philosophy regarding succession planning among community college presidents, senior administrators, and the Board of Trustees, (3) rural institutions face unique challenges that make succession planning difficult, and (4) mentoring or coaching is an

essential part of cultivating talent for succession planning. Chapter 5 offers a discussion of the quantitative and qualitative data findings and presents conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from a mixed-method study of rural Illinois community colleges' senior-level administrators and their attitudes and perceptions regarding succession planning. The research revealed four themes: (a) conclusions that succession planning in rural community colleges faces unique challenges, (b) the confirmation that community college presidents and boards of trustees must share a unified vision for succession planning to occur, (c) confirmation that succession planning challenges occur as a result of shared governance, and (d) mentoring is an essential component to nurture and develop the skills of future leaders.

The community college system will be greatly affected as senior leaders approach retirement. Weisman and Vaughn (2006) project that retirement of community college leaders will reach 84% by 2016. The loss of individuals will be noticed as institutions transition. However, in addition to the human element there will be additional loss. This loss is institutional memory that is created, cultivated, and carried by those who have served in senior administrative positions. Institutional memory is a powerful tool because it often reflects the humanistic side of an institution. It also speaks to an institution's history and community. New leaders will bring vast skill and ability to positions but often institutional memory is lost in transition.

### Discussion

Community colleges are facing a period of change as senior leaders retire or choose other paths. This period of change could bring opportunity for institutions to reexamine traditional replacement methods and consider a more holistic approach that would support institutional sustainability through leadership development.

There are transitional measures community colleges can take as they embark on an era of new leadership. Vacancies in senior-level administrative positions are an opportunity for institutions to look broadly at current and future needs and align positions and skill sets with institutional goals, mission, and vision. Hiring can be deliberate and systemic. It is certain that challenges will be present during this ongoing period of leadership transition.

### Succession Planning in Community Colleges

This period of transition has been referred to as a crisis and mass exodus of leadership (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Leubsdorf, 2006). Often change generates concern or apprehension and that is a common response when balance is disrupted. However, researchers have focused on the opportunity to plan and strengthen community colleges through the purposeful cultivation of future leaders thus lessening cause for concern.

Succession planning is one measure of securing future leadership for community colleges. It involves assessing the short-term and long-term needs to guarantee an institution's leadership-longevity, prosperity, and growth. Succession planning provides a road map that illustrates how leaders will evolve, be trained, and eventually move into leadership positions. Drucker (1999) responds to the pending leadership crisis by

affirming the benefits of succession planning to train individuals with the requisite skills, abilities, and academic training to fill future voids.

Community colleges might embark on a new way of planning for change and developing new strategies to fill vacancies. However, succession planning and leadership development cannot occur in isolation. Community colleges must develop a succession culture that involves unity among college presidents, boards of trustees, and senior-level administrators (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002).

#### Differing Visions among Campus Leaders

Literature supports that succession planning in community colleges has challenges. Rosse and Levin (2003) acknowledge the complex cultural differences between the boardroom and the college campus when considering how to develop a succession plan. Differing leadership visions create challenges when considering succession planning. College presidents and boards of trustees must find a unified voice to move forward with the development and implementation of a succession plan. This would involve dialogues regarding long and short leadership goals of the institution, forecasting growth and transition, and strategically aligning leadership initiatives with other planning documents.

Campus leadership might agree that despite the philosophical obstacles of developing a succession plan there are some undisputable economic benefits. Succession planning generates options for institutions during periods of leadership transition. Succession planning provides a pool of candidates to fill short-term and long-term vacancies. It also provides resources for other institutions seeking qualified individuals to fill vacancies during transitional periods. Succession planning is not

myopic in that the benefits of developing talent can be felt throughout the community college system.

It is necessary that community college succession plans have top-down support from senior leadership for the community college president and the board of trustees to be operational and effective (Carey, Ogden, & Roland , 2000; Rosse & Levin, 2003; Rothwell, 2005). Campus leaders will need to envision a new strategy that will maximize opportunities to recruit and hire qualified candidates. Furthermore, succession planning must have its place among other institutional priorities.

One rural Illinois community college leader stated that college leadership values succession planning; however, he does not believe that the trustees hold the same value. Others shared that leadership development has recently been incorporated in the college's vision or strategic plan. Though, there is no evidence to suggest that of the four rural Illinois community colleges represented in the study any formal plan exists to cultivate leaders specifically for advancement within the community college system.

The final survey question asked if the respondent were to leave his/her current position, would there be a process in place at his/her community college to help identify an internal candidate with the requisite skills and specific job abilities. Over half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that if they were to leave their current position there would be an internal candidate with the requisite skills and abilities to fill the vacancy.

These findings support the implications for a leadership crisis as suggested by current literature. Lack of forecasting future leadership needs could be a detriment to community colleges. This is particularly true in rural settings because attracting and



retaining talent is significantly more difficult. Therefore, community college leaders must set a new course to attract and retain talent for senior-level administrative positions. Rural community colleges might consider repackaging or rebranding themselves to highlight the opportunities for professional development that might be challenging in an urban or suburban setting.

#### Implications of Shared Governance for Succession Planning

Public community colleges are legally prohibited from naming successors for specific positions. Employment practices and hiring is a judicious process. Bowman (2008) states that succession planning can occur in institutions of shared governance. It is the responsibility of senior leadership and presidents to help boards of trustees understand the benefits of succession planning. Succession planning involves being strategically aware of current and future needs of an institution and proactively assessing and planning. The mystique of succession planning along with the negative connotations must be reframed to help boards and stakeholders understand the process, purpose, and benefit.

Community college's shared governance structure influences the succession planning process. The majority of respondents to the survey strongly agreed that their community college supported individuals seeking exposure to new and higher level administrative duties. However, while respondents agreed that institutions provided opportunities to learn new skills shared governance does not permit naming an individual to fill a specific vacancy. There appears to be a disconnect between institutions allowing individuals to be exposed to higher levels of administrative duties and specific and purposeful planning to further cultivate their talent for senior-level administrative roles.

This disconnect is not uncommon because the research and literature supports that succession planning is not connected to institutional goals or planning.

### Mentoring Future Leaders

The research indicates that formal mentoring or coaching is essential for continued growth and development of future leaders (Fulton-Calkins & Millings, 2005; Molina, 2008; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Shults, 2001). Mentoring initiatives, both formal and informal, can contribute to the professional growth of individuals aspiring to senior leadership roles, earning advanced degrees and being retained in the community college system (Molina, 2008).

The majority of respondents felt that mentoring was important at their institution to develop future leaders. Furthermore, nine respondents strongly agreed or agreed that their institutions supported individuals seeking exposure to new and higher level administrative duties.

The survey findings and literature are also supported by interview findings regarding the powerful connection between mentoring and career mobility. The VP/SA at Shields Community College spoke firmly about mentoring as an obligation of senior leaders who wish to strengthen community colleges. The president at Clark Community College adds that she is a product of a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring initiatives have been proven to be an effective tool in the development of future leaders. However, there is evidence to suggest that mentoring is often a product of a certain type of leader and is not part of a larger plan to develop talent. Mentoring can be incorporated as part of the formal succession plan. While

mentoring itself does not need to be a formal process it is suggested that it be part of a comprehensive strategy to nurture future leaders.

### Leadership Opportunities in Rural Community Colleges

Community colleges are categorized by geography. Rural community colleges often face unique challenges in hiring and retaining qualified individuals. They comprise 60% of the community college market in the United States (Eddy 2007, 2009; Murray, 2007; Pennington et al., 2007).

Research (Allen & Cejda, 2007; Eddy, 2007; Rothwell, 2002) indicates that individuals seeking advancement into senior-level administrative roles might consider rural community colleges. Upward career mobility in rural community colleges occurs more frequently when compared to urban and suburban institutions. In rural community colleges chief academic officers were often promoted from within their own institutions more frequently. Further, employment and leadership opportunities are abundant for those willing to relocate to small or isolated geographic regions of the country. Current research suggests that rural community colleges have potential as labor markets (Allen & Cejda, 2007).

The economic and social climate of rural communities affects more than hiring and retaining qualified community college leaders. For rural community colleges to prosper and attract transformational leaders it takes time to embrace change (Eddy, 2007). Change might occur with leaders who will transform how rural institutions are measured in the market place. New procedures to attract and retain qualified applicants could be necessary. They might include a comprehensive benefit package, salary increases, moving expenses, and paid-leave and retirement options (Rothwell, 2002).

### Succession Planning Challenges for Rural Community Colleges

Participants revealed that leadership development was done on an individual basis or was the result of personal relationships with campus leaders. The findings suggest that rural Illinois community colleges have not connected succession planning, for women or men, to a strategic leadership development initiative. Furthermore, rural institutions not unlike urban and suburban community colleges are facing a potential leadership crisis as senior-level administrators retire.

These findings are congruent with current literature regarding succession planning practices in community colleges. Rothwell (2005) states that succession planning is often confused with replacement planning, which is a strategy used to quickly fill vacancies. Succession planning is a comprehensive initiative that involves developing a philosophy about cultivating talent within an organization, agreeing on a process, and looking strategically and broadly at institutional needs now and in the future. The research findings were similar to the literature regarding the usage of succession planning to cultivate talent.

The research findings suggest that among rural Illinois community college leaders surveyed few agreed that their institution valued succession planning as a means to cultivate leaders for the Illinois community college system. Further, of the respondents less than half agreed that succession planning is part of their institutions goals to prepare future leaders. Findings are supported by literature suggesting that higher education has not yet adopted a succession culture (Fulton-Calkins & Millings, 2005; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Rothwell, 2005). A succession culture can only be built if senior leadership and the boards of trustees find succession planning mutually

beneficial. These findings are critical as rural institutions face unique challenges when looking to replace senior leaders. Currently, most rural community colleges are not cultivating internal talent or developing a plan to systemically fill vacancies.

The survey findings and literature review are also supported by interview findings from four rural Illinois community college senior-level administrators. All four participants commented on the complex nature of succession planning related to geographic challenges, resource inequities among community colleges, and issues of shared governance.

The CFO for Addison Community College remarks that succession planning in rural institutions faces several major obstacles. Rural community colleges often do not have the luxury of time, staff, or resources beyond the demands of individual's current roles. The CFO expressed concern about developing employees, which might result in attrition. Further, many rural institutions do not draw large number of applicants for senior-level positions due to geography, economy, and social implications of living and working in a rural community. The CFO suggested searching for individuals with less experience to fill vacancies so rural institutions can retain them. He also spoke of the transient nature of community college leadership as senior leaders often do not stay in one place.

The CFO for Addison Community College suggested that employment in rural community colleges is often not a career stepping-stone; many live in these communities, and they are unwilling to move. He shared that one senior-level administrator just celebrated 35 years with the institution and that is not unique at this college.

The CFO of Addison Community Colleges views employment in rural institutions differently than the president of Clark Community College. The president suggested that in order to earn a senior-level position one must be mobile and flexible. However, the CFO at Addison Community College suggests that individuals who intend to stay in their rural communities have career paths that are less clear because opportunities are fewer.

These differing perspectives suggest further consideration is needed for deliberately cultivating future leaders. There are few qualified individuals to fill senior-level administrative vacancies; potentially fewer individuals are willing to relocate to rural communities. The CFO of Addison Community College reports that few senior leaders will leave their institutions because they live in these communities. However, leadership is fluid and change could occur that forces rural institutions to reorganize or restructure. Therefore, it is important to have valuable seasoned administrators, but also have a plan that would allow institutions to draw upon well-qualified and trained individuals to fill voids.

Succession planning would allow for both scenarios to occur seamlessly and prevent prolonged and costly searches to fill vacancies. The leaders of Addison and Clark Community Colleges both recognize the necessity of experienced senior-level administrators. While one philosophy suggests that leaders settle in rural institutions for many years the other philosophy suggests that rural institutions must have the ability to reach externally for talent. Succession planning would allow for both to occur and increase the number of candidates available for senior-level positions.

The second research question posed for this study asked what variables community colleges are challenged with to ensure that women and other traditionally

underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool. The research indicates that women and other underrepresented populations seeking senior-level administrator positions might benefit from seeking positions in rural community colleges.

The rural community college system is seen as a potential labor market and the research indicates that opportunities are available for those willing to relocate to rural communities and accept that rural institutions often offer fewer incentives in terms of compensation (Eddy, 2007, 2009; Murray, 2007; Pennington et al., 2007). However, rural institutions do provide opportunities for women to grow professionally and receive guidance from other senior-level administrators in the rural system. Allen and Cejda's (2007) research concluded that future leaders aspiring to senior-level administrative positions should consider the rural community college system early in their careers.

#### Women in Community College Administration

This transitional period in community college leadership might also provide opportunities for more women to advance into senior leadership roles. Women continue to occupy one-third less senior-level administrative positions than men in the American community college system (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Career mobility for women can be different than men for a number of reasons. Conflicting research suggests that the career mobility of women into senior-level administrative roles could be due in part to personal choice. Lockwood (2004) states that women have the ability to earn the top-seats but some choose not to pursue them.

Galbraith (2008) suggests that challenges presented by familial obligations interfere with career mobility more so than external barriers. Further, according to

Lockwood, women experience a subconscious glass ceiling that can be as damaging as actual or perceived external barriers.

For women who intend to pursue senior-level administrative positions in community colleges there are opportunities for training and development. Piland and Wolf (2003) suggest mentoring to be an invaluable tool to support and encourage future leaders. Mentoring initiatives, both formal and informal, can contribute to the professional growth of women aspiring to senior leadership roles (Molina, 2008). According to Piland and Wolf (2003) a 2001 AACCC survey reported that 57% of college presidents reported that mentors had helped them achieve their current presidency.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACCC, 2005) recognizes that a lack of future leaders could be damaging to the community college system. They have proactively developed programs and initiatives to address the leadership shortage in the American community college system. The AACCC has compiled a comprehensive list of academic programs available that have an emphasis on community college leadership. Further, there are also resources and tools available specifically supporting career mobility and upward advancement for women in community college leadership roles.

#### Succession Planning for Women

Fulton-Calkins and Millings' (2005) research suggests a process for developing a community college succession plan that involves identifying interested and potentially successful candidates who exist within the present organization while looking for a diverse population. Purposeful planning and identification of internal candidates could support leadership cultivation of women and other diverse populations. Furthermore,



leadership development specific to women aspiring to leadership roles involves deliberate professional and personal development planning (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

The findings from the research state that among respondents surveyed the majority agreed that their community college identifies in-house individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance their leadership opportunities. When asked if the respondent's community college provides opportunities for advancement to current employees the majority agreed that their institutions provide opportunity for advancement.

Suggesting that among respondent's surveyed and interviewed rural Illinois community colleges are providing opportunity for training and development. However, this is not a strategic initiative done for the purpose of cultivating talent for advancement into senior-level positions. The research suggests that training and development be purposeful and connect with the institution's overarching goals.

When asked if the respondent's community college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators, fewer than half of the respondents indicated that their community college seeks out-of-state candidates. Only one female respondent strongly agreed that her college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators. The remaining respondents were unsure or disagreed that their institutions sought out-of-state candidates.

The third research question posed for this study asked if a catalyst or critical incident occurs that triggers community college leaders to develop a success plan that includes the purposeful development of women. The results of this study indicate that while there are catalysts for succession planning few pertain to the purposeful

advancement of women. There is evidence to suggest that the community college system is simply overburdened by pending retirements and transitional leadership to focus specifically on advancing women. There is research to support this as there is conflicting research regarding the career mobility of women in leadership roles.

Women are not seen as emerging leaders according to Eagly and Carli (2004). This career mobility issue is a “pipeline problem” according to their research. However, conflicting research related to the upward mobility of women in the workplace offers an opposing view. Lockwood (2004) suggests that women have the ability to earn senior-level positions on their own merit, but some choose not to pursue higher positions. According to Lockwood (2004), women experience a subconscious glass ceiling that can be as damaging as actual or perceived external barriers. Galbraith’s (2008) study indicates that challenges presented by familial obligations interfere with career mobility more so than external barriers.

According to the survey, women were less likely to agree that a system is in place to identify internal candidates for advancement into one of the senior-level administrative roles. However, the survey also found that the majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed women are advanced equally to men at their community college. One respondent strongly disagreed that her community college advances women equally to men. Further, when respondents were asked if their community colleges regard women as potential future leaders equally to men three-quarters of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed. Of the participants disagreeing with that statement there were no males and two females. This suggests that men and women continue to view career mobility and advancement differently.

The survey findings and literature review are further supported by interview findings that support both views of career mobility related to women. Eagly and Carli (2004) suggest that women are not part of a leadership pipeline. Lockwood (2004) states that women have choices about upward mobility but some choose a different path. The president of Clark Community College offered this response regarding the way men and women are encouraged to seek senior-level administrative positions. She commented:

I do not think current presidents, males and females, reach out specifically to women. They reach out typically to the men because the men are coaches, the men are in associations and clubs that get more recognition than female groups...

The other three interview respondents also acknowledged that career mobility for women is different than men. The CFO at Addison Community College asserted that men and women are very much motivated by different things and women must be tougher to climb the career ladder. The VPSA at Shield Community College acknowledged that men and women might have different journeys that create dissimilar paths toward senior administrative positions. This is supported by early research conducted by Schein (1984) that states that gender impacts the career paths of many women.

The findings indicated that succession planning for the advancement of women or other underrepresented groups must be part of a broad strategic goal. Institutions must first adopt a philosophy about succession planning and further define the variables. Among those variables is the advancement of women. The plans variables would be developed and fully articulated when institutions agree that strategic succession planning is operationally defined. Articulating the advancement of women in the plan would be part of the institutions defining characteristics.

It is recommended that institutions articulate why specific variables are in place as succession planning initiatives are communicated to the campus community. This would demystify the plan and help stakeholders understand why institutions are seeking to cultivate a diverse pool of future leaders.

The fourth research question posed in this study asked how the community college's shared governance structure affected or influenced succession planning. The research points to a clear division among community college presidents and boards of trustees related to succession planning. This division appears to be less about shared governance issues and more about a lack of understanding on the common goal and purpose of succession planning. While issues and concerns of shared governance are genuine there are facets of succession planning that directly respond to those concerns.

### Conclusions

This study was conducted to explore the perceptions of rural Illinois community college leaders related to succession planning as a strategy to advance women into senior-level administrative roles. The following research questions were posed addressing how succession planning can cultivate women for leadership roles. These research questions also asked how specific variables impact succession planning and cultivating a talent pool. The research questions are as follows.

1. How do community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles?

2. What variables do community colleges face to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?
3. Does a catalyst or critical incident exist to trigger community college leaders to develop a success plan that includes the purposeful development of women?
4. How does the community college's shared governance structure affect or influence succession planning?

The following section discusses the conclusions related to each of the research questions posed for this study.

#### Research Question 1

The first research question asked how community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles.

The research suggests that while rural Illinois community college leaders understand the potential for succession planning to cultivate future leaders there are variables and challenges that often prohibit development and implementation. There is evidence that among the community colleges surveyed and interviewed there are leadership development opportunities offered. However, at this time leadership development for the purpose of developing future leaders is generally not connected to strategic planning.

The unique challenges of rural community colleges also impede succession planning for senior-level administrators and certainly succession planning specially for the advancement of women. The unique challenges include lower pay for qualified applicants, isolated campuses, and a lack of diverse students and community members. This often compromises attracting and hiring diverse applicants for senior leadership positions (Eddy, 2009).

As a result of the research it is recommended that rural community colleges considering succession planning to fill senior-level administrative positions (a) develop an institutional philosophy, (b) articulate how and why the purposeful development of future leaders is critical, and (c) develop an operational definition of succession planning that demystifies the plan.

Develop an institutional philosophy about succession planning. It is clear that before a community college can embark on succession planning there must be a fully developed and articulated operational definition. Developing a philosophy will require top-down leadership and the involvement with boards of trustees because these are the individuals who will set the tone for the plan.

Articulate how and why succession planning benefits the institution. Community colleges might consider how developing future leaders would look at their institutions. They will also need to articulate why they are developing future leaders. If institutions can articulate why developing future leaders is critical then the planning process will likely earn institutional “buy-in” from stake holders.

Develop an operational definition of succession planning. The operational definition is critical because this will largely shape an institutions philosophy. Things to

consider when developing an operation definition include: (a) what is a succession plan, (b) who would “own” the plan within the institution and be responsible for its oversight, (c) how would future leaders be selected (e.g., mid-level staff, women, underrepresented groups), (d) what model will be used in developing the succession plan (e.g., competency-based model), (e) how will resources be allocated for developing a succession plan, and (f) how will the institution communicate the benefits of succession planning to stakeholders.

### Research Question 2

The second research question sought to identify what variables community colleges face to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool. As a result of this research it appears that pending retirements and leadership transitions have taken precedence over the specific development of women for the purpose of advancement into senior-level administrative roles. There is evidence to suggest that it can occur but institutions must plan deliberately for this to happen. Succession planning for the advancement of women must be embedded in the plan and connected with over arching strategic goals of the institutions to be operational (Wallin, 2006).

Wallin (2006) further states that succession planning involves leadership training programs and also asserts that such training must be an ongoing endeavor. Leadership development specific to women aspiring to leadership roles involves deliberate professional and personal development planning (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

This research also concludes that women aspiring senior-level administrative roles must also proactively seek opportunities, training, and coaching if it is not readily

offered as part of an institutional plan. There are organizations that provide services specifically to cultivate women for advancement (Bragg, 2002; Piland & Wolf, 2003).

### Research Question 3

The third research question sought to identify whether a catalyst or critical incident existed to trigger community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women. As a result of this research it is clear that a succession plan would allow more women and diverse population's opportunities for advancement within the overall community college system. Succession planning can benefit multiple community colleges if it occurs on many campuses as future leaders are being cultivated. The system will benefit from a well-trained and diverse applicant pool.

A catalyst or critical incident that might trigger community colleges to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women would reduce incidents of hiring of individuals that were not diverse. The research indicates that diversity in hiring for community college leadership roles does not always occur without purposeful planning. Therefore, it must become a specific objective within a succession plan and connected to other defining documents of an institution such as the strategic plan.

Piland and Wolf (2003) state that a major issue surrounding seeking leadership from within the ranks were the predominance of white men in leadership positions. Women and people of color were less likely to gain promotion through the ranks, and those in charge naturally looked for replacements that looked like them (p. 66).

The evidence suggests that one critical incident or specific catalyst does not generate the development of a succession plan in community colleges. This does not



occur until there is recognition of gaps in leadership. Gaps might include a lack of qualified individuals to serve in interim capacities when vacancies occur. There are also incidents that cause institutions to pause and reexamine recruitment and hiring practices when applicants do not represent a diverse pool. It could be any number of small incidents that lead organizations to decide that a strategic and deliberate plan is needed.

#### Research Question 4

The final research question asked how the community college's shared governance structure impact or influence succession planning. Publicly funded community colleges would be hesitant to engage in a planning exercise for the purpose of naming successors for any specific positions. This practice has been prohibited to ensure equality among hiring practices. However, succession planning is one measure of securing future leadership for community colleges. It provides a road map that illustrates how leaders will evolve, be trained, and eventually move into leadership positions.

This research concludes that even publically funded community colleges can move forward with the development and implementation of a succession plan if the following two things occur: (a) community college leaders must present a unified vision of the succession plan and (b) provide opportunity for feedback and accept criticism graciously. While there are skeptics and critics there are also supporters of the community college system that would embrace the purposeful development of future leaders.

Present a unified vision of the succession plan for stakeholders. If an institution is able to articulate why succession planning is critical and can express an institutional philosophy it will be more likely to be embraced. First, senior leaders will need to fully

embrace boards of trustees as partners in this process and share a leadership vision for the institution. Second, institutional leaders will need to unveil a plan with one unified voice. Stakeholders should feel confident that the new succession planning process is not about politics but cultivating talent to meet institutional needs now and in the future.

Provide opportunity for feedback and accept criticism graciously. New initiatives can evoke negative responses or criticisms. Such reactions are often due to a series of failed attempts on earlier initiatives or come purely from skeptics challenging anything new. Community colleges could accomplish more by involving individuals in the planning process. This could be done through workshops or “town-hall” meetings, but opportunity for individuals to raise questions and provide input will provide a sense of security and involvement. It will also allow senior leaders to demystify the succession plan and allow individuals to think about institutional needs from both a micro and macro perspective. Finally, negative views and criticisms can be debunked when individuals understand how and why new processes are connected to institutions’ long-term and short-term plans.

### Implications

The results of this study suggest several implications for professional development and training opportunities as well as overall hiring practices in public community colleges. It also suggests that community college leaders will need to build and sustain trust in order to develop and implement a fruitful succession plan. This section will address the implications of the study as they pertain to each of the research questions.

### Implications Related to Research Question 1

The first research question sought to identify how community colleges plan for the succession of senior administrators. This research concluded that few rural Illinois community colleges were able demonstrate a deliberate and systematic effort to cultivate leadership.

Rural community colleges face unique challenges related to effectively planning for the succession of senior administrators. This study explored succession planning in rural institutions and the findings indicate that specific barriers exist related to attracting and retaining talent of both men and women.

As rural institutions look to the future of leadership on their respective campuses, the scope of succession planning is broad as geography and lesser incentives are barriers to the recruitment of future leaders. As a result, higher education must consider forecasting leadership needs for short-term and long-term planning. To achieve this, community colleges must look broadly at current and future needs. They must anticipate changes using trend data and other sources to proactively plan for institutional sustainability. The research indicates that community college leadership is changing so deliberate and systemic planning will ensure a skilled applicant pool to fill future vacancies.

The survey results support the leadership transition suggested by the literature. According to the survey completed for this research study well over half (63.6%) of respondents intend to retire in 5 to 9 years (see Table 4). These findings are consistent with Fulton-Calkins and Milling's (2005) research, which states that 50% of community college leaders will retire within 3 to 7 years.

Community college leaders must adapt new way of thinking and planning for institutional sustainability. Retirements and leadership transition might be seen an opportunity to effectively plan for change and increase a diverse applicant pool of successors for the community college system.

Succession planning for one institution could be valuable; however, if leaders concur that succession planning is advantageous consider the implications of statewide or regional succession planning. The pool of well-trained community college leaders could grow exponentially.

The research indicates that many rural community colleges do not actively engage in processes to cultivate future leaders. Certainly, as rural institutions comprise nearly 60% of all community colleges nationwide, a strategic plan to attract, engage, and retain talent is necessary (Eddy, 2009).

Further, it is necessary that community colleges specifically articulate how a succession plan works. Institutions might provide professional development opportunities that are not strategically connected to a succession plan but offer opportunities for leadership training and development.

According to the survey there appeared to be some disconnect for respondents regarding specific opportunities for advancement and succession planning. Question 22 (see Appendix C) sought to determine if the respondent's community college system valued succession planning as a means to cultivate leaders for the Illinois Community College System. Those agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement comprised 27.3% (n=3) of responses (see Table 9). This finding indicates that less than one-third of respondents felt that their institutions value succession planning.

However, when respondents were asked if their institution identify in-house individuals for leadership and development opportunities there was agreement. Question 15 (see Appendix C) sought to determine whether the respondent's community college identifies in-house individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance their leadership opportunities. The majority (63.6%; n=7) agreed, and one individual strongly agreed that their community college identifies in-house individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance their leadership opportunities.

This disconnect suggests that community colleges have an opportunity to repackage leadership and professional development opportunities to make them more meaningful to employees. While succession planning is not explicit there is evidence that community colleges are providing some activities to bolster support for cultivating future leaders.

### Implications Related to Research Question 2

The second research question sought to identify variables community colleges are challenged with to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool. This research concluded that while there is conflicting literature regarding why women face different career mobility challenges than men, the data concludes that men continue to occupy more senior leadership roles than women.

The American Council on Education (ACE, 2008) reports that in 2006 women held 23% of college presidencies in the United States. This is up from 1996 when women held only 10% of college presidencies. Women advance to senior-level administrative

roles slower than men in higher education (Eddy & Cox, 2008). Eagly and Carli (2004) call this career mobility issue a “pipeline problem” because women are not seen as emerging leaders.

According to Eagly and Carli (2004) women invest less in themselves and do not pursue training and relevant work experience in the same manner in which men do. This occurs, in part, because of familial obligations and domestic responsibilities. Men are more likely to have the opportunity for advanced training, networking, and opportunities that will contribute to their career mobility.

As a result, higher education must include a specific portion of the plan looking at cultivating the talent of women in middle management positions. This would not change the scope of the plan; however, specific language should be included regarding the development of women and possibly other underrepresented groups. This would accomplish two important things. Firstly, this would send a message that community colleges value diversity and seek to broaden the applicant pool. Secondly, it ensures that women will have opportunities and training specifically available to increase their opportunities to earn senior-level administrative positions.

There must also be accountability by women in middle-management positions seeking senior-level administrative positions in community colleges. Specifically, women and underrepresented groups should actively and deliberately plan for advancement. If succession planning practices are not part of their respective institutions then deliberate measures should be taken to seek further training and development.

### Implications Related to Research Question 3

The third research question sought to identify a catalyst or critical incident that triggers community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women. This research concluded that succession plans and their specific components can be philosophical in nature. As institutions dialogue regarding addressing a component of the plan that supports the purposeful development of women there must be an understanding that resistance may occur.

Question 16 (see Appendix C) of the research survey asked if the respondents' community colleges regard women as potential future leaders equally to men. Respondents agreed or strongly agreed (72.8%; n=8) that their respective community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men. Of those disagreeing with the statement there were no males and two females (see Table 16).

As a result, higher education might include establishing training goals that align professional development opportunities with specific leadership outcomes. This is part of creating a succession culture that involves planning and forecasting future needs. The plan can reduce gender biases if it continues to speak to institutional competencies needed for future leaders.

To accomplish this, community colleges will need to develop and articulate a succession philosophy and cultivate a success culture at their respective campuses. Campus leaders need to create a vision of leadership, define leader competencies operationally and commit to achieving leadership outcomes through deliberate training.

Succession planning requires a significant commitment on behalf of the community college. Institutions can start with identifying current professional

development practices and refining them to reflect the leadership vision for the institution. This would require that community college leader's development and articulate a succession plan and retool institutional processes to provide specific training and development opportunities.

The commitment also requires that campus leaders engage current employees to determine levels of interest, skills, and abilities among current employees. Campus leaders who actively engage middle-level staff and specifically women and underrepresented groups can identify potential future leaders and recommend specific activities or training opportunities that might bolster their experience. Furthermore, this will allow campus leaders to look externally and conduct bench-marking to see what other campuses determine are necessary competencies for current or future leaders.

#### Implications Related to Research Question 4

The fourth research question sought to identify how shared governance affects or influences succession planning. This research concluded that succession planning requires a new dynamic between community college presidents and boards of trustees.

As a result, community college leaders and boards of trustees will need to share a leadership vision and strategy. Rothwell (2005) clearly states that board involvement is vital for the success of a succession plan.

Succession planning requires trust and commitment to the process. It also requires communications and advocacy for the sustainability of the plan that can only occur from the top-down. Therefore, it is essential that community college presidents, senior-level administrators, and boards of trustees work in the spirit of improving their college and sustaining future leaders.



The emphasis must be on building a sustainable future for the betterment of the community college system. Succession planning is not designed to name a specific successor for a position but provide a pool of talented administrators capable of accepting new opportunities and challenges. Succession planning is strategic and deliberate while replacement planning is about immediacy to fill vacancies (Rothwell, 2005).

Support from both community colleges leaders and boards of trustees will provide the necessary foundation to fully integrate the succession plan into the fabric of the institution. This would include alignment in the strategic planning process and allocated resources to integrate the plan into human resource planning and development.

#### Recommendations

The research findings, both qualitative and quantitative, and the literature review support five recommendations for succession planning to cultivate future leaders. The recommendations support identified *a priori* and emerging themes.

The recommendations include (a) cultivating a leadership culture among boards of trustees, presidents, and senior-level administrators that share a leadership vision that will foster top-down support for succession planning, (b) cultivating a succession culture that is connected to over arching institutional goals, mission, vision, and strategic plan, (c) aligning professional development and leadership activities with strategically defined organizational competencies to develop a competency-based succession plan that is supported by purposeful training opportunities, (d) developing a process that allows institutions to reevaluate the succession planning process to determine if it still fits with the organization's goals, mission, vision, and strategic plan, and (e) considering how

women and other underrepresented employees might benefit from specific training, development, and mentoring opportunities.

#### Recommendations for Improvement of Practice

Six recommendations for improvement of succession planning practice emerged as follows: (a) cultivating a leadership culture in institutions of shared governance, (b) developing a shared vision among community college presidents and the boards of trustees, (c) developing a succession culture with the senior administrators, (d) supporting boards of trustees with adequate training on succession planning, (e) exploring competency-based succession planning, and (f) developing a succession plan evaluation process.

#### Cultivating a leadership culture and the implications of shared governance.

Cultivating a leadership culture on campus is not necessarily impeded by shared governance. It will require a shift in thinking that suggests succession planning is not only about individuals but institutional sustainability. Rothwell (2005) and Rosse and Levin (2003) acknowledge the complex cultural differences between the boardroom and the college campus when considering how to develop a succession plan; however, reaffirm the potential for access to a number of skilled individuals in the community college system.

As a result of this research it is recommended that institutions begin the process of developing a succession plan among senior leadership. The dialogue must include frank discussion about developing a leadership culture and what that means to the campus. A leadership culture is an investment in fiscal and human resources.

Senior leadership should decide the basic parameters of the plan. This would include (a) who is involved in the planning and discussion stage, (b) who or what area is responsible for oversight of the plan and its budget, (c) which groups of employees will be included as resources will be needed to put the plan into operation, and (d) finally, developing a strategy to involve boards of trustees.

Succession plans can be complex involving multiple layers of professionals (e.g., Deans, Directors, Coordinators, Managers, and Specialists). Further institutions can also choose a succession planning model that includes faculty as some might be interested in administrative career paths.

Therefore, these conversations must occur in initial stages to adequately develop a plan and determine the necessary budget, but also be able to speak to the decisions made about the plans specifics. This can certainly be accomplished if institutions focus on positions, review the necessary competencies needed now and in the future, and strategically align the succession plan with other defining documents at the institution.

As recommendation from the research institutions will benefit if they distinguish that succession planning is designed to prepare future leaders. It is not a means to advance individuals into specific positions because that is not in the spirit of shared governance.

Succession planning is a tool to train individuals for future challenges and ensure the sustainability of community college leadership. Among the survey respondents 81.8% (n=9) strongly agreed or agreed that their institutions supported individuals seeking exposure to new and higher level administrative duties (see Table 17). Conversely, when respondents were asked if their community college attempts to prepare individuals for

advancement, four respondents (36.4%) agreed and four respondents (36.4%) disagreed that individuals are prepared for advancement (see Table 18).

This suggests a level of appreciation for cultivating new leaders; however, this again clearly reiterates a lack of an operational definition for succession planning that is part of an institution's lexicon. There appears to be some disconnection that must be addressed as institutions move forward. Institutional goals and priorities must speak to the spirit of cultivating leaders and be addressed in defining documents. Through clear communication, a transparent succession plan, and support from leaders a succession culture will emerge.

Shared vision among presidents and boards of trustees. Research indicates that succession plans are successful only when supported from the top-down. This requires unity among community college presidents and boards of trustees through a shared vision for campus leadership. This might require a paradigm shift as boards of trustees and presidents have different priorities. This was noted in the survey findings when one rural community college presidents commented that college leadership might value succession planning; however, boards of trustees might not place the same value on it.

The attributes associated with transformational leadership match the demands of top-down leadership for institutions looking to develop and implement a succession plan. Transformational leaders are characterized by their willingness to see change through to the end with unwavering dedication and enthusiasm. According to Cashman (1998), Gardner (1990), and Greenleaf (1970), the transformational leader can be defined as an individual that successfully facilitates the change in composition, structure, character, or condition of an organization such as the culture and climate.

As a result of this research it is recommended that prior to senior leaders seeking board approval they develop a plan, determine a preliminary budget, have trend data available to refer to, and present a unified philosophy regarding succession planning and cultivating talent.

This will allow boards of trustees to have a basic infrastructure in mind before moving forward. At this point boards of trustees that support the philosophy would be more inclined to contribute to the succession culture of the campus. There are of course boards of trustees who might not see value in succession planning; however, this creates an opportunity for senior leaders to engage them in future dialogue regarding the rapidly changing climate of senior leadership at community colleges. The goal is to involve boards of trustees and help them create a vision and philosophy of leadership.

A succession culture requires unity among senior leadership. Community college leaders interested in cultivating a succession culture must work together to articulate a succession planning philosophy, develop a process, and pursue opportunities for dialogue to occur. Fulton-Calkins and Millings (2005), Rothwell (2005), and Piland and Wolf (2003) affirm that developing a succession culture within an institution is essential to effectively develop a succession plan. Weisman and Vaughan (2002) state that the relationship between presidents and boards of trustees is powerful when they work in unity.

It is recommended that senior leadership invest time discussing what their respective campuses will need both in the short- and long- term specific to campus leadership. They will likely discuss positions that will evolve, change, be added, or omitted as the environment changes.

This dialogue could include resources such as community trend data and growth, environmental scans, as well as institutional planning documents. It will also be necessary to scan the internal talent pool and identify sources of training needs.

Perhaps institutions might align professional development opportunities more specifically to develop talent or offer tuition incentives to encourage employees to seek higher levels of education. This is particularly important as fewer than 2% of community college administrators have completed a degree in community college leadership and administration (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002).

The survey findings reflect what the literature suggests regarding low numbers of senior-level community college administrators with terminal degrees. Of those surveyed, just over half (54.5%) of the respondents held an earned doctorate and were 51 years of age or older. The next generation of future community college leaders will need to invest in training and development.

Essentially, it is the responsibility of current administrators to forecast needs and plan accordingly. Through this arduous process campus leaders begin to develop a succession culture.

Training for boards of trustees. To help cultivate succession culture community college administrators might provide opportunities for boards of trustees to gain a better understanding of the benefits of succession planning in an environment of shared governance. Bowman (2008) suggests that boards could begin by utilizing succession techniques to visualize their commitment as future leaders and appreciate the advantages of proactively planning for leadership transition among board members.

The Association of Community College Trustees provides opportunities for leadership development and training for all current and new trustees, presidents, and those aspiring to be presidents and CEOs (*ACCT Resources*, 2009). Training includes the Leadership Academy for those aspiring to senior leadership roles. Governance Learning Institutes, board retreats, and various workshops are also offered to current board members and presidents.

Finally, it is the responsibility of senior leadership to help boards of trustees appreciate the complexity of community college leadership, succession planning, and talent management. While they are not alone in this endeavor senior leaders will indicate the conversations regarding the development and implementation of a campus succession plan. The Association of Community College Trustees provides opportunities for training and can be called upon to help facilitate opportunities that might be viewed as uncharted territory. Therefore it is recommended that boards of trustees support opportunities to engage in training opportunities to advance the succession culture.

#### Competency-based Succession Planning

According to Rothwell (2005) succession planning is about forecasting needs. This includes investigating individual positions as they relate to the institution's strategic vision for the college. Competency-based succession planning is based on the identification of key competencies for a position. Once the competencies have been identified then a model of competency can be developed. This allows those working on an institutional succession plan a framework in which they can examine and define specific knowledge, skills, and abilities sought in future leaders. A competency model is

a foundation for which everything is built upon. This process allows institutions to remove the potential for bias because the plan is built around positions and future needs.

As a result of this research it is recommended that institutions assess and forecast future needs and then identify specific knowledge, skills, and abilities before discussion related to specific positions are identified. Once institutions have determined the necessary competencies needed in future leaders a self study of current employees can occur. This will further allow competencies to be discussed in terms of current employees who might be in the leadership pipeline.

Competency-based succession planning removes the potential for individual bias as the plan is specific to the current and future needs of the institution. This model lends itself to institutions with shared governance. The process of developing the plan removes individual employees from the discussion and allows institutions to discuss the necessary skills and abilities needed from future leaders. The competency-based succession plan eases the urgency of replacing individuals as vacancies occur.

#### Succession Planning Evaluation Process

Succession planning must be intentional, ongoing, and regularly evaluated in order to be purposeful and embraced by stakeholders. Just as strategic plans, missions, visions, and goals are evaluated a succession plan must also be evaluated to ensure that it continues to forecast and monitor future needs.

It is recommended based on the results of this research that institutions develop a comprehensive evaluation plan. The evaluation process will further allow institutions to continue to examine the internal pipeline that will continue to define future needs. This provides a snapshot of existing competencies and potential organizational gaps. The



examination of the internal employees will reveal individuals with leadership potential and signal training needs to cultivate others.

#### Recommendations for Dissemination of the Research

The competition for recruiting and hiring talented community college administrators will gradually increase as senior-level administrators retire. Succession planning is a valuable tool that can assist institutions articulate the specific leadership needs now and in the future. Recommendations for the dissemination of this research include: (a) generate a dissemination plan, (b) offer findings to study participants, and (c) share research findings with professional organizations.

This research is important to continue generating talented individuals with a desire to work in community college leadership. The research is only valuable if it is shared. Therefore, the researcher will develop a dissemination plan to include academic journals, conference presentations, and various other publications that will research community college leaders.

The survey participants, senior-level community college administrators, are valuable tools for the dissemination of the research findings. Participants indicated their level of interest in the research by requesting the findings. The researcher will provide findings and information regarding access to the completed study.

Professional organizations house information and resources electronically. The researcher will share the completed study with professional organizations in which the researcher is affiliated and offer it to other professional organizations.

### Recommendations for Future Research

The study of community college leadership and cultivating future leaders is critical for institutional sustainability. As senior leaders retire the community college system will be losing valuable individuals as well as wealth of institutional memories. According to Weisman and Vaughn (2006), the projected percentage of retirements of community college leaders will reach 84% by 2016. Shults (2001) reports strikingly similar findings stating that 800 of the 1,150 community college presidents will need to be replaced by 2017. This data could support valuable research in the area of community college leadership and career mobility.

This study was intended to study explore and identify strategies of succession planning that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, and Specialists) for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]).

Further research should include broadening institutional geography explored to include differences among urban, suburban, and rural institutions in Illinois. Certainly, as the leadership crisis is occurring nation-wide further research could explore other states, regions, or other more inclusive demographics to further add to the existing body of knowledge regarding cultivating future leaders.

However, the research suggests that over 60% of the nation's communities colleges are classified as rural providing opportunity for further exploration (Eddy, 2009). The leadership crisis in the American community college system has been

documented for over 10 years. Future studies might include trend data illustrating the leadership change over time and the career mobility of women and underrepresented groups as a result of the turnover in senior-level administrative positions. Insights gained from this research might provide insight regarding the lack of succession planning in rural community colleges.

Certainly, research on the impact boards of trustees have on developing and implementing succession plans would contribute to existing community college leadership literature. A study could gather information regarding boards of trustees' participation, attitudes, and insights in developing succession plans for community colleges. Further, this research might address the philosophical implications of developing transparent institutional succession plans in community colleges.

Finally, a study regarding the career mobility of women in community college leadership roles would add to the existing body of literature available. Perhaps research expounding on the literature that suggests career mobility for some women is about personal choices and perceived barriers.

#### Chapter Summary

Institutional sustainability is about generating resources to uphold an institution's mission and vision. Community colleges have the unique distinction among institutions of higher learning of having a pool of senior leadership who will soon retire. Certainly, during this period of economic difficulties some may persist and continue to work. However, the reality is that institutions and the entire community college system could be forecasting future needs and strategizing how they will generate resources. The most valuable resource a community college can generate is future leaders.

Succession planning is a philosophy. It requires fortitude to build a culture that might accept its possibilities through systemic and deliberate planning. Further, it requires resources to train individuals who will develop, implement, and sustain a plan. There is little evidence to support that community colleges are doing specific and deliberate leadership training. There are pockets of programs and activities to support leadership initiatives, but few strategic plans connected to institutions' over arching goals.

Succession planning even at its earliest inception could generate new dialogue among senior leaders regarding and boards of trustees regarding what the institution might need now and in the future. Succession planning is a mechanism to examine the leadership structure as it is and possibly in the future. This is a unique opportunity to forecast leadership needs based on current data and trends.

Several recommendations have been made for the improvement of practice and dissemination of a succession plan. As a result of this research it is recommended that community colleges develop a succession culture among senior leaders. This involves developing an institutional philosophy regarding cultivating talent to earn senior-level administrative positions. It is imperative that senior leaders, presidents, and boards of trustees share a unified vision of leadership development and communicate that with stakeholders.

It is also recommended that training be available to ensure that senior leaders, presidents, and boards of trustees have access to the same information regarding succession planning. There is no one way of developing and implementing a succession plan. There are a variety of sources with information and tools that will assist with the

ongoing conversation. It would be precarious to assume that everyone has the same basic information about succession planning. Training (particularly training from professional organizations that work with public institutions) could demystify succession planning in an environment of shared governance.

There is sufficient evidence to support that community college leadership is evolving. It is time for a paradigm shift as we enter into this new era of leadership. Proactive and purposeful planning will allow community colleges to shape their future. Specific initiatives can be undertaken to develop talent from within for the purpose of expanding the pool of well qualified and diverse applicants to fill vacancies across the country.

Change can be intimidating and the loss of key administrators might send a ripple of uncertainty across campuses. Therefore, this is an opportunity to generate continued enthusiasm for those aspiring to lead these great institutions. Succession planning might not solve all of the challenges facing community college leaders. It will, however, provide assurance that capable people with a passion of leadership are ready to take the reins.

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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Angela Kaysen Luzbetak is currently the Transfer Articulation Coordinator for Joliet Junior College. She began her community college career revitalizing a grant-funded program that supported transfer opportunities for underrepresented students. That first position allowed her to directly impact the lives of students through advising and mentoring. It also provided valuable experience in grant-writing and creative partnerships to support and grow the program.

That position, and the mentoring received by a visionary Dean of Student Development, solidified her commitment to a career in community college leadership. Having served over 10 years in various capacities in the Division of Student Development she intends to continue along the administrative path to further support the mission and vision of community colleges.

## Appendix A

Invitation: Online Survey Participation

Dear [insert name],

As a professional staff member at a community college in Illinois, and a doctoral student at National Louis University in Chicago, I am interested in the future succession planning of the Illinois Community College System. The purpose of this communication is to ask for your participation in an online survey related to community college succession planning. Succession planning is defined as the identification and preparation of future leaders through developmental job opportunities, mentoring and leadership opportunities (Rothwell, 2005).

The future of community college leadership is reaching a pivotal turning point. Research suggests there is a need to address the shortage of competent and trained leaders. Community college administrators will be retiring at an alarming rate over the next few years (Leubsdorf, 2006). This survey will gather data that will assist in exploring how succession planning can advance women into senior level administrative positions in the Illinois Community College System. This survey will be sent to Illinois community college presidents and vice presidents of Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, and Business Affairs.

Participant's identification and survey responses will be kept confidential. It will take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete. You can complete the survey by clicking the following link:

**[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=JHOHW8\\_2fLNrNK\\_2fwVIH3UomA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=JHOHW8_2fLNrNK_2fwVIH3UomA_3d_3d)**

Upon completion of the survey press the submit button and responses will be collected and kept confidential in a database. There will be no means of identification unless you self identify at the end of the survey. Submitting the survey indicates that you have voluntarily given your consent to participate.

Thank you for your time and contribution to the study. If you would be interested in a copy of the survey results kindly let me know.

Sincerely,  
Angela Kaysen Luzbetak

## Appendix B

Invitation: Interview Participation

Dear [insert name],

I would like to thank you for your participation in the online survey related to community college succession planning. The purpose of this communication is to ask for your continued support by allowing me a brief interview. Certainly, your time is valuable and I will gladly be available when it is most convenient for you.

The audio-taped interview will last 1 to 1½ hours in length with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 1 to 1½ hours in length. I will provide you a copy of the transcribed interview at which time you may clarify information. Further, I am working closely with my dissertation chair, Dr. Martin Parks, to ensure your complete anonymity throughout the research discussion.

Enclosed you will find copies of the Informed Consent form that describes your rights and protection as a participant as well as the interview questions. I look forward to speaking with you. Please contact me via e-mail, [akaysen@jjc.edu](mailto:akaysen@jjc.edu), or telephone, (815) 280-6779. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Angela K. Luzbetak

Enc.

## Appendix C

Online Survey

1. Demographics: Indicate which title best describes your present position.
  - a. President
  - b. Vice President of Academic Affairs
  - c. Vice President of Business Affairs
  - d. Vice President of Student Affairs
  - e. Other
  
2. Demographics: Indicate your highest degree earned.
  - a. Doctoral
  - b. Masters
  - c. Bachelors
  - d. Other
  
3. Demographics: Indicate your age at the time of the survey.
  - a. 29 and under
  - b. 30-35 years of age
  - c. 36-40 years of age
  - d. 41-45 years of age
  - e. 46-50 years of age
  - f. 51+
  
4. Demographics: Gender
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  
5. Demographics: How long have you been in your current position?
  - a. 0-5 years
  - b. 6-10 years
  - c. 11-15 years
  - d. 16-20 years
  - e. 21+
  
6. Demographics: How long have you been employed with your current institution?
  - a. Less than one year
  - b. 1-3 years
  - c. 4-6 years
  - d. 7-10 years
  - e. 11+

7. Demographics: How many years have you been employed full-time in the Illinois Community College System?
  - a. 0-5 years
  - b. 6-10 years
  - c. 11-15 years
  - d. 16-20 years
  - e. 21+
  
8. Demographics: Indicate your intended retirement plan.
  - a. In the next 1-4 years
  - b. In the next 5-9 years
  - c. In the next 10-14 years
  - d. In the next 15-19 years
  - e. 20 years or more
  
9. Demographics: Is your goal to achieve a Presidency in a community college?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Undecided
  - d. I am currently a community college President.
  
10. At which Illinois community college are you employed?
  
11. My community college seeks out-of-state candidates when hiring senior administrators.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  
12. My community college provides opportunities for advancement to current employees.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
  
13. My community college advances women equally to men.
  - Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree



14. My community college recruits women who appear to have potential to develop into leadership roles.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
15. My community college identifies individuals and provides opportunities to gain additional skills and experiences to help advance leadership opportunities.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
16. My community college regards women as potential future leaders equally to men.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
17. My community college encourages employees to participate in leadership development training on campus.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
18. My community college encourages all employees to participate in leadership development training off campus.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

19. My community college provides opportunities for staff to accept new challenges within their current positions.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
20. My community college values exposing individuals to new experiences to provide insight into higher levels of administration.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
21. My community college values mentoring relationships to cultivate individuals with leadership potential.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
22. My community college values succession planning in order to cultivate leaders for the Illinois Community College System.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree
23. My community college attempts to prepare individuals for advancement.
- Strongly agree
  - Agree
  - Not sure
  - Disagree
  - Strongly disagree

24. Succession planning is part of my community college's goals to prepare future leaders.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

25. My community college generally hires from within as positions have become vacant or newly created.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

26. If I were to leave my current position, there is a process in place at my community college to help identify an internal candidate with the requisite skills and specific job abilities.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Not sure
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Appendix D

Interview Schedule

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
<p>1. How do community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (e.g., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Academic Officers [CAO's]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFO's] that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles?</p>	<p>As a community college president or vice president, please describe your personal philosophy regarding community college succession planning, or the "grow-your-own" concept, to fill vacancies in key senior-level administrative positions.</p> <p>How do you feel community college boards and presidents effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions?</p> <p>Is this a function of the president and the board, undertaking succession planning for senior administrative positions?</p> <p>Based on your experience do you feel that community college trustees are aware of the concept and benefits of succession planning?</p> <p>If your community college were to develop a succession plan who or what department would lead the charge?</p>
<p>2. What variables challenge community colleges in ensuring that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?</p>	<p>Does your institution undertake any type of succession planning? If so, how is this done?</p> <p>Has anyone advanced their position at your institution using any type of succession plan?</p> <p>What advice would you give women who are now middle community college administrators who are either trying to decide if to pursue higher leadership positions, or to those who are actively pursuing a path towards senior-level administrative positions?</p>

Research Question	Interview Question
<p>3. Does a catalyst or critical incident trigger community college leaders to develop a succession plan that includes the purposeful development of women?</p>	<p>Would you describe the general factors that you feel motivates women to make the decision to pursue community college senior administrative leadership positions?</p> <p>What do you feel is the catalyst or critical incident which triggers women to take the definitive step to actively pursue community college administrative leadership positions?</p> <p>At your institution, do senior-level administrators engage in any type of coaching or serve as a mentor to others to advance internal personnel? Do you have any examples?</p>
<p>4. How does the community college's shared governance structure impact or influence succession planning?</p>	<p>How does shared governance influence succession planning?</p> <p>In your opinion, does succession planning work in the community college environment?</p> <p>What do you believe would prohibit community colleges from developing succession plans on their respective campuses?</p>

## Appendix E

Invitation: Panel of Experts

Dear [insert name],

You are receiving this e-mail because I would like to ask each of you to serve on my panel of experts. As you know, I am a doctoral student at National-Louis University in the Community College Leadership program. I would like to ask that you review the attached letter and survey instrument. Your feedback regarding content and layout would be valuable as I continue refining both documents.

I am conducting a mixed-methods study to explore and identify strategies of succession planning that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women currently employed in middle-level administrative positions (e.g., Directors, Coordinators, and Specialists) for advancement into senior leadership roles (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and, Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]). This study focused on the complexity of women's career mobility and the purposeful planning and development of leadership opportunities to enhance or cultivate the skills required of community college leaders.

My goal is to distribute the online survey in the next two weeks. Thank you for your time and continued support.

Sincerely,

Angie Kaysen Luzbetak

## Appendix F

### Informed Consent

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from September 2008 to January 2010. 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 Angela Kaysen Luzbetak, a doctoral student at National-Louis University located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled *Community College Succession Planning: Preparing the Next Generation of Women for Leadership Roles*. The purpose of this mixed methods study is to explore strategies that will allow community colleges to develop and cultivate women for leadership roles through succession planning.

The driving questions arising from the purpose are:

1. How do community colleges effectively plan for the succession of senior administrative positions (i.e., Chief Executive Officers [CEOs]; Chief Academic Officers [CAOs]; Chief Student Services Officers [CSSOs]; and Chief Financial Officers [CFOs]) that will provide opportunities for women to advance in those roles?
2. What variables do community colleges face to ensure that women and other traditionally underrepresented populations are part of the succession planning pool?
3. Does a catalyst or critical incident exist to trigger community college leaders to develop a success plan that includes the purposeful development of women?
4. How does the community college's shared governance structure affect or influence succession planning?

I understand that my participation will consist of audio-taped interviews lasting 1 to 1½ hours in length with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 1 to 1½ hours in length. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview at which time I may clarify information.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time until the completion of the dissertation.

I understand that only the researcher, Angela Kaysen Luzbetak, will have access to a secured file cabinet in which will be kept all transcripts, taped recordings, and field notes from the interview(s) in which I participated.

I understand that the results of this study may be published or otherwise reported to scientific bodies, but my identity will in no way be revealed. Also, the name of the participant's employers (school) will not be published.

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 develop future community college leaders.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher: Angela Kaysen Luzbetak via email at akaysen@jjc.edu.

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 Dissertation Chair: Dr. Martin Parks, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60603. Phone (312) 261-3019 or E-mail: martin.parks@nl.edu

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_