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BOARD OF TRUSTEES: THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN THE SUM OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS

William M. Griffin
National-Louis University

NATIONAL LOUIS UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES: THE WHOLE IS GREATER THAN

THE SUM OF THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS

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WILLIAM M. GRIFFIN

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Dissertation Chair: Rebecca S. Lake, EdD

Dissertation Committee: Dennis K. Haynes, PhD

   Paul B. Zavada, PhD

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

Signature   Date

Rebecca Lake   *March 30, 2011*

Dennis K Haynes   *March 30, 2011*

Paul B Zavada   *March 30, 2011*
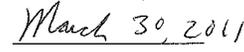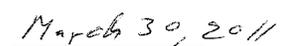
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family, who instilled in me the essence of hard work and the acknowledgment that perseverance can overcome just about anything. I wish to recognize my mother, who has always been there for us and continues to give her unconditional love. Unfortunately, my father is not here to enjoy this wonderful capstone achievement in my educational career. However, I know that he looks down upon this accomplishment and smiles with the recognition that his son did well. To my sister, Debra, and my brother, Steve, I hope that I have made you proud; I have always tried to be a role model for you to follow. This journey would have been very lonely without my dearest Ada and our little ones, Lulu and Rascal. Thank you for giving me your love, support, and encouragement every day to see this journey to the end. To all of you who are such an important part of my life, I am forever grateful.

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ABSTRACT

All eyes are on community and technical colleges as they lead the way through challenging economic times and provide educational opportunities to those in the communities they serve. Regulatory pressures, dwindling resources, calls for improved student outcomes and academic quality, and competition from for-profit institutions speak to the need for high-performing community college boards. Boards must wield their power and goodwill to do everything possible to enhance their ability to shape the institution's strategic directions as a collective whole that performs harmoniously. Trustees are obligated to represent both the community's interest and the welfare of the institution. Being well prepared to engage in debate, dialogue, and discourse regarding the direction of the community college is essential for the institution's long-term success. Little is known about how trustees perceive their roles and responsibilities, and how they learn to be effective trustees.

The purpose of this study was to identify the adequacy and availability of professional development activities that assist 2-year postsecondary trustees in becoming more effective contributors when shaping higher education policy decisions. This qualitative case study was situated in an interpretive paradigm. Eight community and technical colleges' trustees described their roles and responsibilities, how they influenced policy, and the professional development assistance they received.

Findings indicate an ambiguity in response that reflects multiple points of view about trustees' primary roles and responsibilities. Various parts of trustees' duties were mentioned, but not succinctly, which raises questions about trustees' roles and

responsibilities. The participants affirmed they do set policy, but could not explain or describe how and in what ways this policy is accomplished. All of the participants agreed they did not receive adequate preparation to assume their role as trustee. To be most effective, regularly scheduled professional development activities (e.g., held three to four times a year) are needed to deliver content using adult learning principles. Topics should include pertinent information regarding the college, the role and responsibility of trustees, and a continuous focus on group dynamics to enhance the working potential of the board. Without the opportunity to learn the craft of their position, community college trustees are at a disadvantage.

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INTRODUCTION

Overview

Community college trustees serve as stewards of the public trust. With this

statutory responsibility, they are justifiably being held accountable. Trustees have a dual

obligation: to represent the community's interest as well as the welfare of the institutions

they govern. Being well prepared to engage in debate, dialogue, and discourse regarding

the future direction of the community college is essential for the long-term success of the

institution. However, little is known regarding how trustees perceive their roles and

responsibilities and how they learn to be effective trustees.

There is no perfect model for a new or seasoned trustee or board member to

follow as they grapple with the governing of 2-year postsecondary colleges or

universities. This study addresses professional development activities needed by elected

and appointed trustees serving as board members in 2-year postsecondary institutions in

two Midwestern states. However, the findings and implications of the study can be

applied to 2-year postsecondary institutions across the country. Regulatory pressures,

dwindling resources, calls for improved student outcomes and academic quality, along

with competitive forces by the for-profit institutions require an engaged, active, and high-

performing board.

Seasoned and new trustees have agreed to undertake these important posts and

fulfill their stewardship role for the college to their best ability. In these complex and

challenging times for all community and technical colleges, the responsibilities of board

members are diverse. These responsibilities include such areas as monitoring college operations, making sure the college remains true to its mission, and setting policies that guide the institution forward. These individuals operate as a group—the board—and each board member requires skill sets that often test their ability to lead the institution through uncharted waters. Without adequate preparation, the institution can suffer and may not adequately meet the challenges that lay ahead. The professional development activities that serve to prepare and inform seasoned and new board members alike can convey valuable knowledge regarding their roles and responsibilities, the functioning of the college, and an understanding of the group dynamics so crucial to the performance of the board.

Volunteering to serve as a trustee of a 2-year postsecondary institution brings an enormous amount of satisfaction with the knowledge that one's contribution may influence someone's life and perhaps even be life-changing. Boards and their members can and do have tremendous influence in the organizations that they guide and lead. Serving as a board member has an impact on American society, whether the board is attached to an institution of education, religion, or not-for-profit organization.

The board is a structure that is solidly rooted in American culture. People take great pride in giving willingly of their time and efforts. These boards in the American system of organization and management consist primarily of a group of individuals operating together to benefit whatever type of public or private entity they are asked to oversee. The governance of higher education institutions can be traced back to the early beginnings of the American education system and has remained locally controlled ever

since. The boards that govern higher educational institutions are made up of a variety of lay people from many walks of life that bring unique skill sets that enhance the richness and diversity of any given board.

The board must operate as a collective unit, not as individual members. If boards are performing at their peak, it is because each individual member is cognizant of the impact of their experiences and opinions on the board and yet recognizes the need for the concerted effort of all to function as a group. When each member brings his or her best skills to the board table, the board as a whole is truly able to function as an entity that is more successful than the mere combination of individuals; hence the title of this study is "The Whole is Greater than the Sum of the Individual Parts." In this study, the researcher sought to explore the adequacy of professional development activities provided for these trustees to improve their readiness as new board members, and to provide continual learning and growing opportunities for seasoned trustees as they lead their institutions in the 21st century.

Background of the Problem

Individuals serving in the capacity of a governing board member in today's 2-year postsecondary institutions are acutely aware of the limited time available to balance family, work, and other obligations of a busy life. Therefore, deliberate and specific preparation is essential for an effective trustee to help govern these complex institutions. Adequate professional development activities for seasoned and new trustees must integrate the functions of group socialization with an understanding of how adults learn to avoid the menacing and distracting pitfalls of groupthink. The literature reviewed

provided little evidence for trustee development that incorporates the elements of group socialization, adult learning principles, and groupthink as learning benchmarks of professional development activities for the trustee.

Susan Whealler Johnston is executive vice president of the Association of Governing Boards and a trustee of Rollins College. Martha W. Summerville is an executive consultant at Summerville Consulting and board chair of Antioch University. Charlotte Roberts is an executive at Blue Partners. Together, these professionals authored a 2010 article entitled, "The Changing Landscape of Trustee and Board Engagement." In this article, the authors discussed the changes affecting today's trustees. In one of their astute observations, the authors described a high-performing board this way: "An engaged board is a forward-thinking board whose work and meetings are designed around critical issues, with opportunities for meaningful deliberation and development of a creative, collaborative partnership with the president or chancellor" (p. 16).

However, this engaged board must grasp the complexities of working with a wide variety of diverse individuals (both on the board and employees of the institution) to achieve their shared objectives. In these times of economic difficulties, community colleges are being recognized at every local, state, and national level as fundamental, transformational educational agents that are being asked to train workers for new skills in a global society and to educate an ever-increasingly diverse population. As stated by Thomas M. Bennett (2010), former chairman of the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) and Parkland College trustee, "The truth is that while all of us are

feeling the painful effects of the recession, we are also feeling the overwhelming importance of our mission and service to our communities" (p. 1).

There is no doubt that community colleges and their leaders on the boards will be at the leading edge of America's future educational needs. This situation has been particularly highlighted by former Presidents Clinton, Bush, and recently by President Obama. However, meeting these challenges and solving the problems faced by the community and technical colleges requires continuing education of their boards. As described by former University of Chicago professor Cyril O. Houle, "Organizations and associations, like human beings, exist in a volatile world and cannot thrive unless at least some of their board members are constantly engaged in the processes of enlarging their understanding and perfecting their skills" (p. 51). This study was dedicated to the advocacy of a lifelong learning process for board members of community and technical colleges.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for 2-year postsecondary trustees that assist trustees in becoming more effective contributors when shaping higher education policy decisions.

Research and Guiding Questions Arising from Purpose

Research questions arising from the purpose of the study were the following:

1. What are the perceived roles and responsibilities of selected community and technical college boards of trustees' members?

2. How, and in what ways, do community and technical college trustees believe they influence policy decisions in their institutions?

3. What professional development activities are available and are perceived as beneficial and what seems to be lacking when addressing the learning needs of all trustees?

Framework of the Study

To appropriately address the purpose of this study, a theoretical framework consisted of a selection of theories to provide the context to the research. Because members of a board of trustees must work together to perform their duties, the group socialization theory was explored to provide a framework to analyze data regarding how individuals form as members of a team. The adult learning theory was also included and applicable as a fundamental way to examine how board members learn about their role, form a group, and serve as a catalyst for developing appropriate professional development activities. The groupthink theory was investigated as an important tool in understanding the human behavior of groups that are striving for cohesiveness, but because of this unanimity, the individual members of the board may overlook or fail to explore alternative courses of action as decisions are contemplated.

Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland, and Barbara E. Taylor (1993), in their book, *The Effective Board of Trustees*, discussed six competencies needed by governing board members. The following six competencies are outlined in their book: (a) contextual dimension, (b) educational dimension, (c) interpersonal dimension, (d) analytical dimension, (e) political dimension, and (f) strategic dimension. Educational and

interpersonal dimension were selected for this study because of their relevance to trustee development. Both offer an analytical framework to understand how boards can assist the trustees to be well informed and nurture their development as active and contributing board members.

The three theories of group socialization, adult learning, and groupthink were applicable to the relevance of this study as well because the board is made of individuals who come together from diverse backgrounds and must function as a group to achieve their goals and objectives. The five stages of Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) group development, and Moreland and Levine's (1982) group socialization were pertinent to this study because of their theoretical analysis of how groups develop and mature over periods of time. Moreland and Levine's group socialization research provided a context in which to view how workers move into and out of groups over time and how trust is established within these groups. Malcolm Knowles' (1970) theory of androgogy and adult learning principles must be included as a fundamental and imperative design method in any professional development activities for the adult. Social psychologist professor Irving Janis' (1972) theory of groupthink and the vulnerability of decision making by any group, as noted by this professor from Yale University, are essential cautionary signals to be aware of and most applicable to this study. This research will assist the trustees and the 2-year postsecondary institutions they govern to reach high-performing status as an effective and admired board of trustees.

Overview of the Study

This research was a qualitative case study situated in interpretive paradigm that allowed the phenomena to be explored in a natural setting and provided a rich descriptive narrative by the participants. The qualitative research process involves the researcher developing a holistic picture of the issue or problem to be studied. Creswell (2007) suggested that qualitative research is used when we want to understand the problem or issue from a participant's perspective. Because the research seeks to understand the professional development activities needed by trustees from their own perspective, the case study allows for this contemporary phenomenon to be investigated in the natural setting of the participants.

Eight community and technical college trustees described their roles and responsibilities, how they influenced policy, the type of professional development they received, and what was lacking as they prepared to take their seats as governing board members. One group consisted of four seasoned trustees who had served in more than one term; the second group was composed of four new trustees serving in their first term. To allow for maximum variation, the participants and site locations selected were from two different states and geographic locations within two states: Illinois and Wisconsin. Data collection consisted of face-to-face semistructured interviews, surveys, and documents. Patterns and themes were gathered from the rich data to interpret the experiences and obstacles the participants encountered as they assumed their board positions.

Significance to the Field of Community and Technical College Leadership

The right leader at the right time is an ideal mantra for any country, organization, or institution. In the governance of 2-year postsecondary institutions, it is not one leader, but several who must act together as a highly effective entity. Trustees are often elected to boards and given a series of introductory meetings with college departments and a great deal of literature to review. Do these preparatory activities properly initiate trustees to the position they are about to assume? Are trustees being made aware of the process of group socialization? Do they understand the theory of groupthink and its potential impact?

This study explored the community and technical college trustees' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. Special attention was given to evaluating the availability and quality of professional development programs tailored to the needs of new and seasoned trustees. Examination of these questions and the recommendations for improving the content of professional development programs for trustees were the important hallmarks of this study that can have far-reaching effects. Trustees who have been prepared by an education process keyed to their unique positions are better able to serve the colleges they lead.

Many eyes are on the nation's community and technical colleges as they lead the way through economic, pragmatic, and sensible ways to educate a diverse and wide range of students. Boards of trustees must firmly grasp the ultimate power and goodwill that their positions inherently possess and do everything possible to enhance and nurture their

ability to shape the institution's strategic direction not as individuals, but as a collective whole that performs as well as a symphony that is completely in tune.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is a condensed, succinct discussion of the research problem, the purpose of the study, and the guiding questions that defined the boundaries of the study. The outcomes of this study are expected to have far-reaching benefits for the 2-year postsecondary institutions and other higher education institutions, as well as other nonprofit and for-profit boards. Chapter 2 provides an in-depth review of literature relevant to this study. The chapter traces the history of the community and technical college movement in Illinois and Wisconsin and includes a review of the statutory laws that govern these institutions. A model for the competencies needed for trustees is introduced and discussed by Chait *et al*. (1993). In addition, Chapter 2 presents an historical development of the trade associations that support the trustees. It is explored by analyzing the ACCT, Illinois Community College Trustee Association, and the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association to understand their significance in the advocacy and trustee development of its members. The literature review culminates with a discussion to support an understanding of the complexities of groups and the dynamics that surround the development of a board of trustees. The research is presented through the theoretical lens of group socialization, adult learning, and groupthink to help understand the processes that individuals go through as members of a group.

The methodology and procedures used in designing the study presented in Chapter 3 were situated in a qualitative interpretative paradigm that allowed for a rich descriptive narrative under which the phenomenon could be researched and studied in a natural setting. Purposeful sampling with maximum variation was employed; this sampling offered participants from different geographic locations and various student headcounts in the two states of Wisconsin and Illinois. The two states selected have different processes for the selection of individuals to become trustees, providing an appropriate framework for the basis of the study. The multiple sources used in collecting the data were semi-structured interviews, documents, and field notes. An audit trail was methodically developed that allows for transferability and complete transparency.

Chapter 4 contains the data presentation and analysis from the eight participants, along with the background information about the trustees and the 2-year postsecondary institutions selected for this study. A framework for analyzing the data is presented; three a priori themes from the literature review are utilized with the guiding questions to critically examine the richly descriptive narrative given by the participants. A priori themes of group socialization, adult learning, and groupthink are interpreted in a reflective process based on the participants' overall responses to the guiding and research questions. A review of the documents utilized by the major trade associations that provide professional development activities for the trustees is discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter also includes reflective field notes prepared by the researcher.

Chapter 5 provides an overall summary of the research findings and implications for trustees serving as governing board members, as well as the limitations to the study.

Recommendations are offered based on the study findings that are applicable to 2-year

postsecondary institutions across the country. Suggestions for further research are also

included in this final chapter.

CHAPTER 2.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter reviews literature related to U.S. community colleges and technical colleges with specific examination of the role of the trustees. The success of a college is dependent on the personal commitment of a select group, the trustees, individuals who understand and are willing to assume the responsibility of the position. Each trustee is an advocate for the institution and plays an integral role assisting the college to achieve its mission. A focus of this exploratory study is to gain an understanding regarding the ability of postsecondary education boards of trustees' to form a well-functioning group, how this functionality affects their ability to meet their responsibilities, and if the board's professional development activities address this need. In addition, the study seeks to identify how and in what ways the professional development activities can be used to improve the effectiveness of the board of trustees. Because of the study's purpose, no one overarching theory could apply. Nevertheless, a concerted effort has been made to select concepts and theories from a variety of disciplines, which provides a more eclectic perspective relevant to the research.

To establish a situational context for the study, a historical review of legislative acts that formed the postsecondary higher education systems in Wisconsin and Illinois was undertaken. To address the nature and complex dynamic interaction of trustees as a group, group socialization theory and the concept of groupthink from the discipline of sociology was employed. In addition, the theory of adult learning helped explore how the trustees learn of their roles and responsibility that are relevant to institutional governance.

The literature review provides a general framework that assists in the exploration and examination of the study's purpose. It was not the intent of this research to validate these theories and concepts, but rather to use them as a framework to view the research and analyze the findings. Undoubtedly a gap in the literature exists regarding community college boards of trustees. However, a better understanding of what information and professional development activities are required by community college trustees to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations can, in the long run, have a profound impact on their institutions.

History of the Community and Technical College Movement

For the past 100 years, the postsecondary education movement has resulted in the establishment of more than 1,100 community and technical colleges. A combination of education, social, and economic issues served as the movement's impetus, resulting in a continuous momentum for expansion. Leonard Koos (1925), one of the first community college scholars, published the book *The Junior College Movement,* in which he discussed postsecondary education and the establishment of junior colleges in the United States. His description of the origins of 2-year colleges seems to reinforce the view of junior colleges as an extension of high school:

> The conception of the junior college as the culmination of the American secondary school and as the feature of reorganization of our school system which would usher in the real university is not one of recent origin. It has its beginnings at least as far back as the middle of the nineteenth century. Distinctions between the conceptions in its earliest form and that which now characterizes it are that it was not then designated by name it has come to carry in our time, and that it was not as often thought of as a separate two-year unit superimposed upon the unit below or connected in some way with other schools in the system. In its first stages it seems to have been conceived of more nearly as an upward extension of

the secondary school without a line of demarcation between the two levels of training. (Koos, 1925/1970, p. 235)

The first junior college opened in the early 1900s in Joliet, Illinois. It was noted to be more or less a reflection of European school system. A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2003) wrote the following:

William Rainey Harper, the first president of the University of Chicago; Edmund J. James, president of the University of Illinois from 1904 to 1920 ; David Starr Jordan, Stanford University's first president and others suggested emulating the system followed in European universities and secondary schools. (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 6)

Similarity between these two higher education systems continued to grow and flourish throughout the early 20th century. Harper and other scholars strongly suggested the universities should be research-oriented, thereby leaving the general and vocational training to these lower level schools. Illustrating a profound "elitist" educational attitude, "Harper also contended that the weaker four-year colleges might better become junior colleges rather than wasting money by doing superficial work" (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 7). This philosophical leaning expounding an upper and lower division of higher education institutions was not new. A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2003) contended the following:

Proposals that the junior college should relieve the university of the burden of providing general education for young people were made in 1851 by Henry Tappan, president of the University of Michigan; in 1869 by William Mitchell, a University of Georgia trustee; and in 1869 by William Folwell, president of the University of Minnesota. All insisted that the universities would not become true research and professional development centers until they relinquished their lower-division preparatory work. (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 6)

William Degenaro (2001), a professor at the University of Michigan, agreed and suggested that junior colleges were disguised to preserve elitism within the university

system and that the true intent of the early proponents of the junior college system was to establish the universities as research institutions exclusively. Degenaro stated, "William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, supported two-year colleges because they meant the 'amputation of the lower limbs' of the university, which could raise standards" (p. 513).

The initial appearance of junior colleges, beginning in 1910 to 1920, corresponded with the rapid growth of enrollment of kindergartens, junior high schools, and high schools (Baker, 1994). As a direct result of this growth trend that continued over the next 40 years, the number of students graduating from high school increased and the reciprocal demand for college access grew. A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2003) illustrated this striking point by stating, "The percentage of those graduating from high school grew from 30 percent in 1924 to 75 percent by 1960, and 60 percent of the high school graduates entered college in the latter year" (p. 6).

Interestingly, the GI Bill was the first national legislation to have a profound effect on the expansion of 2-year postsecondary institutions. "It has been heralded as one of the most significant pieces of legislation ever produced by the federal government— one that impacted the United States socially, economically and politically. But it almost never came to pass" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, n.d., para. 1). The bill was controversial because some members of Congress believed that colleges and universities were reserved for people of privilege, not soldiers returning from the war front. In addition, another part of the controversy surrounded the idea that paying the unemployed veterans would detract from their desire to seek gainful employment opportunities.

However, the bill passed in Congress; on June 22, 1944. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act legislation, commonly known as the GI Bill. When World War II ended, the numbers of 2-year or junior colleges grew exponentially as soldiers returned home and were granted tuition vouchers under the GI Bill to attend college. The bill's serendipitous effect on higher education in general and 2-year postsecondary institutions specifically, remains unprecedented to this day.

During this time, the concept of providing community services also began to be recognized as a central function of junior colleges. The 1946 President's Commission on Higher Education, commonly referred to as the Truman Commission, specifically focused on the predominant themes of financial support access and recognized the responsibility of colleges to serve the educational needs of local communities. Richard L. Drury (2003), associate professor of management at Northern Virginia Community College, wrote that the Truman Commission called for the expansion of a network of public junior colleges that would (a) charge little or no tuition, (b) serve as cultural centers, (c) be comprehensive in their program offerings with an emphasis on civic responsibilities, and (d) serve the area (community) in which they were located. The Truman Commission also prompted a new and more reflective nomenclature for this type of college, called the *community college*. Jesse R. Bogue continued to encourage this more reflective community college designation; Bogue was the executive secretary of the American Association of Junior Colleges. Bogue's (1950) book, *The Community College*, is acknowledged as the vehicle that popularized the name of these unique institutions (Drury, 2003).

The Higher Education Act of 1965 provided the second federal government watershed event fueling the growth and expansion of community colleges. This act, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, provided financial assistance to community colleges and the students they serve. The legislation is seen as part of President Johnson's Great Society domestic programs. This legislation created a number of student financial assistance programs (e.g., equal-opportunity grants, guaranteed student loans, and college work-study programs). According to Dr. David L. Levinson (2005), president of Norwalk Community College, these programs, "which later fell under the jurisdiction of Title IV financial aid programs and were implemented as part of the act in the 1970s, have had a large role in facilitating growing access to higher education" (p. 16).

Historical events have served to craft a most unique and universal mission for the public 2-year postsecondary institutions (i.e., community and technical colleges). This universal mission is to provide an educational opportunity that is affordable and accessible for all who wish to learn in the local community. Today's community colleges are unlike any other colleges in higher education system in the world. Baker (1994) acknowledges the following:

> [T]he community college, in all its various manifestations, is a truly unique component of American higher education. It provides higher education with a flexibility and adaptiveness to local social needs. It helps a complex industrialized society have a full range of education and training. (Baker, 1994, p. 14)

The 1,177 public, independent, and tribal community colleges in operation as of late 2010 are well positioned to educate students in an ever-changing world. According to A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2003), "Community colleges are indeed untraditional, but they are truly American because at their best, they represent the United States at its best" (p. 36).

A cornerstone of the community college mission centers on an open-access enrollment where the institutions accept all students. This open enrollment policy is often referred to by many as the equal opportunity hallmark in higher education. Because community colleges are open-enrollment institutions, they are continually challenged to offer courses (credit and noncredit), programs, and services to meet their students' needs.

Unfortunately, in light of 21st-century limited financial resources, shifting demographics, and increased demand for services, this universal mission of open-access enrollment is being threatened. Myriad challenges face community and technical colleges. How do college leaders successfully address these institutional challenges? How does the institution fulfill its commitments, meet strategic goals, and yet maintain quality? Dealing with these issues requires a concerted effort from all, including the trustees. The members of the board of trustees must be knowledgeable, appropriately assume their specific responsibilities, and work in tandem with the institution's leadership to tackle these difficult issues.

Governance of Community Colleges

Governance of higher education institutions is the purview of the Board of Trustees. Charles J. Carlson and Robert Burdick, former president and former director of college information and publications, respectively, at Johnson County Community College, provided a historical perspective illuminating the purpose of education institution governing boards. Carlson and Burdick (as cited in Baker, 1994) stated, "Lay governing boards originated in Italy in the thirteenth century, when university faculties petitioned local governments for charters and financial support. With financial support,

however, came a measure of local control through the lay governing board" (p. 258).

However, in the United States, James L. Zwingle, first full-time president of the

Association of Governing Boards, noted a very different purview of a university

governing board. Zwingle (as cited in Baker, 1994) stated, "In 1642 Harvard's overseers

forbade its scholars from traveling to another town without first receiving permission,

fearing they might come in contact with ideas and viewpoints contrary to what overseers

wanted taught at Harvard" (p. 258).

As colonial America began to grow as a nation, likewise the development of

higher education slowly began. At the advent of the Revolutionary War in 1775, only

nine colleges were in operation throughout the colonies. Because of the widespread

Puritan influence on daily life, religion, politics, and education in America at this time,

these few higher education institutions were church-sponsored and dominated by church

elders. These elders governed what was taught and by whom in the institutions; they also

controlled the governance structure of the universities. Over time, as the United States

grew and the milieu changed, American colleges and universities also matured. The

governance board's primary involvement shifted from guiding the college's day-to-day

operation and turned instead to more of a long-term strategic focus of supporting the

mission of the institution.

In the 21st century in the United States, nonproprietary, public postsecondary

institutions are governed by lay citizens (trustees), whereas in European nations, these

institutions are controlled by ministries of education. According to Ingram (1995), "We

enjoy a form of institutional governance whereby the American people entrust control of

their academic institutions to citizen boards rather than to elected legislators, governors, or bureaucracies" (p. 3). It is expected that this trust granted by the American people to trustees of colleges and universities will not be misplaced. However, to be in compliance and responsive to this bestowed trust, members of the boards must understand their role and be knowledgeable regarding their responsibilities. Trustees of community and technical colleges must have the skill sets and knowledge required to be good stewards to guide the advancement of their institutions. The functionality and specific purpose of community and technical colleges may vary to some degree, but the opportunities the institutions offer students must be relevant and timely. It is the responsibility of the board of trustees to make sure the policy decisions made are responsive to the needs of the students and the communities they serve.

As society turns to the community and technical colleges to solve the complex educational needs of students and retraining of America's workforce in the 21st century, the task of governing these institutions will present unique challenges. The governance structure within postsecondary education institutions will require collaboration among administrators, stakeholders, and particularly trustees to solve difficult and complex problems.

In general, higher education trustees serve as the institution's stewards. However, good stewardship is not an easy task because the challenges facing colleges are many and complex. Darla J. Twale, a professor at University of Dayton, and Joanne E. Burley, former chief campus officer at Pennsylvania State University, contended, "As public

institutions of higher education grow larger and more complex, governing them internally and externally becomes ever more cumbersome" (Twale & Burley, 2007, para. 2).

Anne D. Neal (2009), president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, commented on a report by the Association of Governing Boards (AGB) entitled *American Higher Education Governing Boards.* The survey participants included 693 presidents, presidential/executive assistants, and senior administrators; however, trustees were not interviewed. Neal's interpretation of the report concluded that higher education administrations are the governance structure. Richard D. Legon (2010), president of AGB, disagreed with Neal's premises; however, the survey did discuss the subject of governance in higher education. In reaction to the report, Neal wrote an article entitled "The Potty-Trained Trustee," and stated the following:

> As it turns out, the report says little about what's on the mind of trustees and nothing about how they understand their role, but it does unwittingly reveal a philosophy, espoused by the AGB and shared by many at our colleges and universities, that underscores why there is a governance problem in higher education. (Neal, 2009, para. 2)

As illustrated in the AGB report (Legon, 2010), perhaps a gap exists in the understanding of the governance structure between the administration and an institution's governing board. According to Charles J. Carlsen (former president of Johnson County Community College) and Robert Burdick (former director of college information and publications at Johnson County Community College) (as cited in Baker, 1994), "There is general agreement that boards should operate in the realm of policy, and presidents in the realm of administration" (p. 259). However, differences do exist in approaching the

governance structure of institutions. Neal (2009) emphasized, "If the Enron debacle taught us one thing, it is that boards must be independent of management" (para. 5).

Boards of trustees must be willing to act to take appropriate steps to ensure that the institution is being accountable to its stakeholders. Neal (2009) contended that a governance problem exists in higher education and it rests with the higher education administrators thinking they operate in the governance structure without much input from the trustees. Neal encouraged trustees in these difficult times to not be tentative in overseeing the academic and financial health of their institutions, but to utilize the financial acumen that many of them have learned from the real world to oversee the financial health of the institution. Even though their positions are transitory in nature, as they are elected by the voters in their communities or appointed, trustees have the statutory duty to govern the institution. The process of becoming a trustee does vary by state, but the general obligation and responsibility for governance remains constant.

However, trustees may seem hesitant in meeting their obligations because they are unsure of just what these obligations entail. Benjamin E. Hermalin (2004), a professor at University of California, suggested some reasons trustees may be hesitant to exercise their full authority. As he explained, "One reason that boards cannot possess all the power is that they don't possess the necessary knowledge, incentive, and time" (Hermalin, 2004, p. 40). Hermalin suggested that most trustees do not possess a background in academics, have only limited free time available, or are not receiving the right information to make decisions; a governance vacuum can naturally occur, and the vacuum is filled by the community college president. This shifting or ceding governance

power, as described by Hermalin, can lead to less oversight of the administration and management of the institution.

To prevent this shifting of power, effective governance structure must exist at the institution; the board must be fully engaged and actively involved in the process. Otherwise, according to researchers Richard P. Chait, Thomas P. Holland, and Barbara E. Taylor, "Boards that do not participate actively in making significant policy decisions lack the strategic institutional perspective necessary to true stewardship and thus depend by default on the president alone for this purpose" (Chait *et al.,* 1993, p. 116).

Statutory Laws in Illinois and Wisconsin

In the United States, the state and territorial governments are granted oversight of education. Oversight includes the political, administrative, and fiscal functions, the degree to which depends on their constitutions and statutes. The legislation that created the technical college's movement in Wisconsin, as in Illinois, has led to a remarkable success story for these truly unique American systems of education. The state legislative acts creating the community and technical colleges in Illinois and Wisconsin differ. However, the outcomes of these acts and subsequent state statutes remain quite similar.

Illinois 2-year postsecondary system. The state of Illinois was at the forefront during the early 2-year postsecondary education movement. Illinois now boasts 48 community colleges, along with two multi-community college districts serving citizens in 39 community college districts. Highlights of the historical development of this movement and the establishment of these community colleges in the state of Illinois are

presented in Table 1; information for this table was derived from the work of Tollefson,

Garrett, and Ingram (1999).

Table 1. *History of Community Colleges in Illinois*

Year	Event
1931	Illinois adopted its first junior college legislation, which permitted the Board of Education of Chicago to establish, manage, and provide for the maintenance of one junior college offering 2 years of college work beyond the high school as part of the public school system.
1937	The first Illinois Junior College Act became law.
1943	Legislation was adopted to hold referenda to set separate tax rates for both education and building funds to support junior college operations.
1951	The Illinois General Assembly enacted legislation setting forth standards and procedures for establishing junior colleges.
1955	State funding for junior colleges was established.
1959	Separate junior college districts were authorized that allowed any compact and contiguous territory to be organized as a junior college district with an elected board of education having authority to maintain and operate the college and levy taxes for operation.
1961	Legislation was adopted that created the Illinois Board of Higher Education, which gave powers to junior colleges.
1965	The Junior College Act was passed by the Illinois General Assembly, which provided the foundation for a system of public community colleges in Illinois.
1973	The term "junior" was changed to "community" in statutes.

Established by the Illinois General Assembly in 1965, the Higher Education that

was subsequently amended as the Illinois Public Community College Act (110 ILCS 805,

2009) defined the structure and governance for community colleges in Illinois. As a result

of the Public Community College Act, the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB)

was created and became the state coordinating board for community colleges. The ICCB

has 11 governor-appointed members. The Public Community College Act defines

community colleges as follows:

> Public community colleges existing in community college districts organized under this Act, or public community colleges which prior to October 1, 1973, were organized as public junior colleges under this Act, or public community college districts under this Act which districts have a population of not less than 30,000 inhabitants or consist of at least 3 counties or that a portion of 3 counties not included in a community college district and an assessed valuation of not less than $75,000,000 and which districts levy a tax for community college purposes. (Illinois Public Community College Act, 2009, Ch. 122, para. 101-2)

The legislation that created Illinois community colleges has led to great strides in

providing Illinois citizens with education opportunities. The following are examples of

standings as a result of the Illinois Community College Act:

- Illinois is the third- largest community college system in the nation.

- There are 39 community college districts, which contain 48 community colleges statewide; these colleges serve the diverse needs of Illinois' adult population.

- The average tuition for a full-time student is $2,350.00 per year.

- Sixty percent of the career and technical program graduates are employed where they were educated and trained. They make positive contributions to the regional economy.

- Illinois community colleges account for nearly two thirds of all students enrolled in Illinois public higher education. (ICCB, n.d.b)

Wisconsin 2-year postsecondary system. The state's laws passed in 1907 and

1911 began Wisconsin's progressive educational agenda. The laws passed in 1907

established trade schools for persons age 16 or older and were the precursors of

Wisconsin's technical college system. In 1911, the Wisconsin legislature introduced and

passed the first comprehensive continuation school legislation in the country. The intent

of the legislation was to provide continuation schools for boys and girls, ages 14 to 16,

who had quit high school, and were either working or not working. Charles McCarthy,

first director of the present-day Wisconsin Legislative Reference Bureau, emphasized

general cultural and vocational education (Wisconsin Technical College System [WTCS],

n.d.b). Interestingly, "[d]ue in part to the efforts of McCarthy and modeled after

Wisconsin's vocational training programs, the U.S. Congress passed the Smith-Hughes

Act in 1917" (WTCS, n.d.b, para. 3). Partly as a result of Wisconsin's efforts in

vocational education, the Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 promoted vocational education and

provided for some financial assistance to the states.

As of 2010, the WTCS consisted of 16 technical colleges. "The board of the

WTCS establishes statewide policies and standards for the educational programs and

services provided by the 16 technical college districts that cover the state" (WTCS, n.d.c,

para. 1). The WTCS board is the coordinating agency for the state's 16 technical colleges

and has 13 members. All of these members are appointed by the governor, except the

state superintendent of public instruction or a designee, the president of the University of

Wisconsin system or a designee, and the secretary of the Wisconsin Department of

Workforce Development or a designee.

Highlights of the historical development of WTCS (Tollefson et al., 1999; WTCS,

n.d.b) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *History of Wisconsin Technical Colleges*

Year	Event
1907	Laws passed that permitted cities to operate trade schools for persons age 16 or older as part of the public school system and allowed them to establish technical schools or colleges under the control of either the school board or a special board. Wisconsin was the first state to establish a system of state support for vocational, technical, and adult education. The State Board of Industrial Education was created.
1911	Legislation passed to provide (a) continuation schools for boys and girls, ages 14 to 16 who had left high school without a diploma, (b) trade schools, (c) evening schools for adults, and (d) schools to provide related instruction for apprentices.
1917	Congress passed Smith-Hughes Act to promote vocational training modeled after Wisconsin's program. Changed the State Board of Industrial Education to the State Board of Vocational Education.
1937	Renamed the State Board of Vocational Education to State Board of Vocational and Adult Education. Vocational school in Milwaukee began to offer college transfer courses.
1960s	Transformed the Wisconsin vocational-technical system into the postsecondary system that it is today.
1961	Allowed the boards to offer associate degrees for 2-year technical courses.
1965	Legislation passed requiring a system of vocational, technical and adult (VTAE) districts covering the entire state by 1970 and changed the board's name to the State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.
1993	Wisconsin Act was renamed the VTAE system, changing it to the Technical College System, and designated the state board as the Technical College System Board. District VTAE schools became "technical colleges."

The WTCS provides unique opportunities for the 460,000 students that it serves

annually:

- Wisconsin's 16 technical colleges have an impact on the state's economy by educating approximately 1 in 10 state residents, and spending more than $1 billion dollars annually.

- In 2005-2006, approximately 1 in 11 residents age 16 or older took advantage of the technical college programs.

- The average age for all students enrolled by WTCS was 34.8 years.

- When the economic impact of 2005-2006 technical college spending is combined with the effects of the earnings gains from current and past graduates, the annual total impact from the colleges was $6.91 billion. That figure was 3.4% of all of Wisconsin's earnings. (Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association [WTCDBA], n.d.)

Illinois and Wisconsin state statutes do have some differences; however, many commonalities exist relative to these postsecondary institutions, including the following:

- Comparable generic missions;

- Comparable student faculty and staff demographics;

- Similar curricular offerings of academic transfer programs, career and technical programs and certificates, business and industry training, developmental courses, and continuing education courses;

- Responsive to needs of the community in which it is located;

- Governed by a community board of trustees; and

- Neither requires trustees to attend professional development activities.

Competencies for Trustees

Richard P. Chait (a professor at Harvard University), Thomas P. Holland (a professor at the University of Georgia) and Barbara E. Taylor (senior consultant with the Academic Search Consultation Service) wrote *The Effective Board of Trustees* (Chait *et al.*, 1993). The authors interviewed more than 100 trustees and presidents on 22 independent college campuses to determine what makes one board more effective than another. Chait *et al.* (1993) concluded as follows:

> First, the vast majority of trustees are not systematically prepared for the role prior to their appointment to a governing board. . . . Second, not many trustees have benefit of a through orientation or ongoing board-development programs after joining the board. (Chait *et al.*, 1993, p. 8)

In other words, trustees come to the table expecting to make far-reaching higher education policy decisions and are often vastly unprepared for the challenges that lay ahead. Trustees interviewed for the study provided enlightening perspectives regarding their preparedness to assume board membership. Chait *et al.* (1993) reported, "'It's a bit like parenthood,' one trustee told us, 'one day it just happens, and while you can draw on your experiences to date, nothing in life to that point quite prepares for you this role'" (p. 8). Findings showed that although many trustees are accustomed to participating in decision-making roles whether in the not-for-profit or the business world the nuisances of the governance system of higher education present a different challenge.

Implications of the findings of the research by Chait *et al.* (1993) for the boards of nonprofit organizations resulted in the development of six competency dimensions. The researchers stipulated that these six competency dimensions must be met for college and university boards to be effective. Table 3 presents the six competency dimensions with

which boards should be knowledgeable and comfortable as they work cohesively and

collaboratively on behalf of the institution.

Table 3. S*ix Competency Dimensions Needed for Effective College/University Boards*

Dimension	Requirement
Contextual	The board understands and considers the culture and norms of the organization it governs.
Educational	The board takes the necessary steps to ensure that trustees are well informed about the institution, the profession, and the board's roles, responsibilities, and performance.
Interpersonal	The board nurtures the development of trustees as a group, attends to the board's collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness.
Analytical	The board recognizes complexities and subtleties in the issues it faces and draws upon multiple perspectives to dissect complex problems and to synthesize appropriate responses.
Political	The board accepts as one of its priorities the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships among key constituencies.
Strategic	The board helps envision and shape institutional direction and helps ensure a strategic approach to the organization's future.

Many trustees are accustomed to a more direct role in decision making rather than

acting collaboratively as a group. The collegial nature of the governance system of higher

education institutions, along with the internal structure and organization, present trustees

with many challenges to understanding how the institution's various departments and

employee groups operate within the system. The governance system itself requires a great

deal of understanding for the novice board member. From the findings of this study, it

appears that a common element that could be offered to all board members was a robust,

ongoing, and active professional development program.

Throughout the United States, a few organizations and individuals do offer professional development activities for trustees. These organizations are commonly called trade associations that offer specific services to their members. These limited trustee professional development programs are offered in a variety of ways, but are not well attended by the majority of those serving as trustees.

Association of Community College Trustees

The ACCT is the umbrella trade association for community and technical college trustees. The incorporation of this group in August 1972 was an outgrowth of two national organizations: the Association of Governing Boards of Colleges and Universities (AGB) and the National School Boards Association (NSBA). The AGB's main focus is to strengthen and protect the governance of public and private higher education institutions, and the NSBA's primary leadership responsibility is to the nation's elementary and secondary schools. Because community and technical colleges were growing at rapid rates during the 1960s and 1970s, many dedicated trustees worked tirelessly to establish an organization to advocate on behalf of these 2-year institutions and the students they serve. William H. Meardy, a former administrator at Shasta College, became the secretary of the Council of Community College Boards for NSBA, headquartered in Evanston, Illinois. Meardy later became the ACCT's first president.

The first annual convention of what was to become the ACCT was held in Chicago in 1970; present at the convention were approximately 160 trustees from around the country (Meardy, 1995). The theme for the convention was "The Community College: A National Trust." By 1972, the ACCT was firmly seen as the national voice of

community and technical colleges, with trustees opening offices in Washington, DC,
thereby establishing a permanent presence as a leading voice for 2-year postsecondary
institutions.

The ACCT represents "more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who
govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and
beyond" (ACCT, n.d., para. 1). ACCT offers a variety of services to its members. Some
of those services are the following: (a) to promote the community colleges; (b) to serve as
an advocate in the federal political arena; (c) to offer educational and training programs;
(d) to recruit, help select, and retain chief executive officers for the institution. In
addition, ACCT organizes two major networking events for its members each year: the
leadership congress and the national legislative summit. These events serve as a forum
for offering updates on higher education issues by educational leaders and acts in the role
of a catalyst to help formulate and advocate public policy positions.

The primary professional development activities for trustees offered by ACCT are
the ACCT Governance Leadership Institute and the New Trustee Academy. ACCT's
Governance Leadership Institute is primarily for trustees who are destined for leadership
positions with the boards of their respective institutions. The New Trustees Academy is
tailored for new trustees or those who have served only a few years. The focus of these
annual professional development programs revolves around the fundamentals of
governance, emerging community college issues, desired leadership characteristics for
trustees, and the fiduciary responsibility of a trustee. However, the Governance
Leadership Institute and the New Trustees Academy cannot and do not provide all

needed professional development activities critical for the large number of community college trustees in the United States.

In presenting a local forum on relevant 2-year postsecondary institution issues, states also have organized trustee associations. The Illinois and Wisconsin trustee associations provide a state focus affecting their postsecondary institutions. These institutions in all 50 states face many common problems, issues, and challenges; yet they meet these challenges with tailored strategies. In general, these state organizations offer opportunities for trustees to communicate among members, advocate to the state legislature on behalf of 2-year postsecondary institutions, and to foster discussion and awareness of significant academic, program, and system issues.

Illinois Community College Trustees Association

Since 1970, the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (ICCTA), (n.d.b) has offered training and development opportunities for its members. There are 38 single-campus community college districts and two multi-campus community colleges districts in Illinois. These single-campus community colleges each have a board of trustees with seven members for a total of 273 trustees serving single campuses in Illinois. The two multicampus districts are the City Colleges of Chicago with seven campuses and Illinois Eastern with four; each district is served by one board. The City Colleges of Chicago trustees are the only Illinois community college board whose trustees are appointed by the mayor as opposed to being elected.

The mission of ICCTA is twofold: to provide community college advocacy and to provide trustee development opportunities to the board members of the state's public

community colleges. The focus of the professional activities offered by ICCTA revolves around the trustee's role and responsibilities as an elected public official and emphasizes state statues and laws pertinent to public community colleges. Although professional development activities are held several times a year in the form of seminars and an annual convention, these activities primarily cover what trustees need to know; they do not necessarily address the "why" or "how," or the concept of the board as a group. Seldom do these state or national professional development activities address elements of group socialization or groupthink and their influence. Understanding how group dynamics can positively and adversely affect the functioning of a board of trustees does not appear to be a high priority for their professional development. However, it is critical for the effective functioning of a governing board.

The ICCTA also produces a couple of handbooks for new trustees and publishes a variety of literature on the duties and responsibilities of trustees. These generic ICCTA (n.d.a) handbooks are entitled *Trusteeship: Leadership That Makes a Difference and Welcome to the Board: A Handbook for New Trustees.* These handbooks cover the following topics: (a) issues concerning trustee elections, (b) how to become a trustee, (c) leadership that makes a difference, (d) what is a community college trustee, (e) what does a trustee do, (f) what are a trustee's commitments, and (g) the volunteer attributes of serving as a trustee. This handbook serves more as a compilation of "do's and don'ts" for the newer trustees or those investigating serving in this capacity.

The ICCTA works closely with organizations in the state such as ICCB, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and

others, to positively affect legislative issues in Springfield. The ICCTA is also an activist

lobbying arm for trustees in both Springfield, Illinois, and Washington, DC. Providing an

advocacy function locally and nationally is common for state community colleges

trustees associations.

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

The WTCDBA began in the 1970s as a volunteer organization and grew into a

statewide voice for technical and vocational education issues. As the association evolved,

a permanent location was established in Madison, Wisconsin, the state capital

(WTCDBA, n.d.). Legislative issues and the forming of coalitions in support of

vocational and technical issues became priorities for the association during these years.

As of 2010, the WTCDBA membership consisted of 144 district board members

from Wisconsin's 16 technical college districts. The primary functions of WTCDBA

today are very similar to ICCTA: The association acts as one voice for the technical

colleges' board members in the area of advocacy to members of legislature in Wisconsin

and provides education and development for its members. Interestingly, unlike the

ICCTA, the WTCDBA developed a set of competencies for trustees, which they

incorporated in their professional development literature. The competencies are as

follows:

- Act within legal and ethical parameters.

- Establish policies.

- Hire the president.

- Evaluate the president.

- Establish strategic direction.

- Address the needs of multiple constituencies.

- Monitor the college's performance.

- Allocate resources.

- Contribute to the effectiveness of the board.

- Serve as a board officer.

- Advocate for the college and the WTCS (WTCDBA, n.d.).

Each competency has an associated task assigned to it that provides detailed action items to assist in achieving the competency. These competency levels were first established in 1999 and reapproved in 2008. They serve as guiding principles for trustees and are the expectations for how to perform effectively as a technical college trustee.

The WTCDBA holds quarterly meetings throughout the state that provide a forum for professional development activity and update its members on significant issues affecting technical colleges. These meetings serve as a forum for WTCDBA to provide information to its members, thereby allowing them to do the following:

- Create a statewide voice in support of technical, vocational, and adult education;

- Provide a forum for board member education and development;

- Share best practices and new ideas between board members;

- Promote and realize state and federal legislative agendas in the best interest of technical colleges and our customers;

- Learn about trends, new practices, and leading edge innovation occurring across the system; and

- Share best practices from trends in human resources and collective bargaining to new program offerings and emerging customer needs (WTCDBA, n.d.).

The association also works closely with the WTCS, the state coordinating agency for the 16 technical colleges.

The ACCT, ICCTA, and WTCDBA perform similar functions and act as catalysts to advocate at the national level and in their individual states. However, it is apparent the intention of the development of offerings plus the printed and Web materials provided by these associations is primarily to provide specific information to the new trustees as to their policy and oversight authority. This study argues that this is not enough. Additional information provided in an appropriate venue is necessary to facilitate the building and support of trustee characteristics and abilities that can assist in the effective functions of the board and are beneficial to the institution.

Socialization of Groups Including Culture and Group Dynamics

Group Development and Group Socialization Theory

The board of trustees operates legally as a unit or as a collective whole. In the framework of this research, understanding the complexities of group and the literature surrounding group dynamics is essential to understanding the performance of the board of trustees. It is this understanding that leads to endeavors to build and maintain the robustness of the board, thereby improving its performance. In addition, recognizing how

groups form and what processes they encounter as they develop into a socially

constructed and efficient working group are fundamental to this research.

A *group* is defined by Oxford American Dictionary (Ehrlich & Flexner, 1980) as

"a number of persons or things gathered, placed, or classed together, or working together

for some purpose" (p. 287). A college board of trustees can be classified as a group that

operates under statutes established by a state for the purpose of having the ultimate

responsibility of governance of the institution of higher education. However, review of

the literature regarding postsecondary institution boards of trustees finds little attention or

even mention on this body as a group or on its ensuing group dynamics. Therefore, a

sizeable gap in the literature exists.

When a board of trustees is seated, community members are suddenly thrust

together to govern the higher education institutions. An understanding of how groups

evolve and make decisions can enhance the board of trustees' performance as it is

charged with the ultimate responsibility of governing the institution. To assist the new

and seasoned trustee professional development activities designed around the theories of

group socialization, adult learning, and groupthink could enhance their ability to govern.

As described by Cyril O. Houle (1989), a professor at the University of Chicago, "The

deepest basis for learning of each trustee rests on his capacity to draw lessons from the

continuing stimuli of the board experience, but he should also be ready to respond to

formal education activities of many sorts" (p. 51). That capacity would include an

understanding of how groups form and operate as they coalesce, which can later lead to

more effective decision making of the group. Consistency and contextual professional

development activities that include elements of group socialization and group development can provide long-term beneficial results for even a board that is considered high performing. The contention is that "[o]rganizations and associations, like human beings, exist in a volatile world and cannot thrive unless at least some of their board members are constantly engaged in the processes of enlarging their understanding and perfecting their skills" (Houle, 1989, p. 51).

As a body of the whole, the trustees act as the legal agent of the institution, holding the authority and responsibility to ensure the fulfillment of an institution's mission. Responsibilities of the boards of trustees of higher education institutions are varied, governed by documents, guided by history, tradition, and needs of the institution. The board of trustees' governing role is typically limited to appointing, supporting, and evaluating the president, clarifying the mission, and setting policy to ensure adequate financial resources for the institution. Day-to-day operations and management of the institution remains vested in and the purview of the president.

Rensis Likert is a former director of the Institute for Social Research, a professor of psychology and sociology at The University of Michigan, and a noted organizational psychologist. Likert conducted research on human behavior and its effect on working groups within organizations. Likert (1967) contended, "Group members need skill in leadership and in membership interaction processes in order to build and maintain a group efficient both in solving problems and in coping with conflict and differences" (p. 162). Although many trustees may have been or are concurrently in leadership roles

outside of the higher education setting, they must function with their fellow board members as a group.

Elizabeth Bulette (2010) is a member of the Maryville College Board of Directors and a senior consultant for the Center for Public Leadership at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government. Bultette articulated that board members, particularly new members, must understand the academic culture in institutions to be effective in their roles. The inability of the board of trustees to operate effectively as a group may, at times, be related to a lack of understanding the culture of the governance structure of higher education institutions. As Chait et al. (1993) described regarding groups in higher education institutions, "However self-evident that may seem, most previous treatments of governing boards, strangely enough, overlooked group dynamics and group process" (p. 4).

For groups to be effective, Likert's (1961) research can also be helpful. Likert described a number of characteristics that are needed: (a) trust and confidence in each member, (b) the group has been together long enough to have established a comfortable working environment, and (c) the group members are motivated to be successful and the group as whole is committed to achieving its objectives. Johnston *et al*. (2010) acknowledged, "Trust, an essential element of engagement, is a byproduct of understanding one another's values, learning from one another, holding each other accountable for decisions, and completing meaningful work together" (para. 10). Building trust among the trustees increases the potential of having an effective board. As argued by Chait *et al.* (1993), "A group cannot easily develop or sustain unity if even a

small minority of its members chronically feel that they are excluded from some inner circle or kept in the dark while others are always 'in the know'" (p. 44). Johnston *et al.* (2010) concurred with this inclusive premise related to trust: "The combination of trusting relationships, relevant work, and attention to results yields better governance" (para. 12).

Statements by Chait *et al.* (1993) and Johnson *et al.* (2010), as well as Likert's (1961) sentiments highlight some of the elements needed for groups to operate in an efficient and efficient manner. But how do the trustees who have been appointed or elected to these positions of authority and responsibility comprehend the concepts of what makes an effective group operating in what may be, for many, a totally foreign environment? Without continual and consistent professional development sessions for all, the trustee may be forced to operate and react using a pattern of responses learned over time, which may not be effective in this type of setting. Boards of trustees must recognize characteristics of effective groups and continue to model their behavior to strive for optimal performance in the boardroom for the benefit of the institution.

Dr. Bruce W. Tuckman, a professor of educational psychology in the School of Educational Policy and Leadership of the College of Education at The Ohio State University, researched the behavior of small groups. Tuckman first published his seminal research in 1965; this research discussed how groups develop and described four stages of group development. Although Tuckman's (1965) original work included only four stages of group development, 10 years after his original work, he added a fifth stage (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). Because groups develop and change over time, an

understanding of Tuckman's stages of group development both for new and seasoned

trustees is relevant for professional development activities for trustees. Cindra J. Smith

(2000), former director of education services for the Community College League of

California, asserted as follows: "Every time a new person takes a seat on the board or

there is a new CEO, the team re-forms and the dynamics change" (p. 186). Even after a

difficult and contentious issue has been resolved by the board, the dynamics of the group

may need to be recalibrated or re-formed. A continual understanding and reflection of

group development should not be a one-time occurrence, but a permanent part of the

curriculum for trustee professional development.

Tuckman and Jensen's (1977) five stages of group development are pertinent to a

board of trustee's maturation process. An example illustrating these five stages of group

dynamics is presented in Figure 1. Of particular importance is the forming of and

continuation of the group dynamics. There is no concluding point, but a continuous or

circular evolving process that evolves by any individual becoming part of a group.
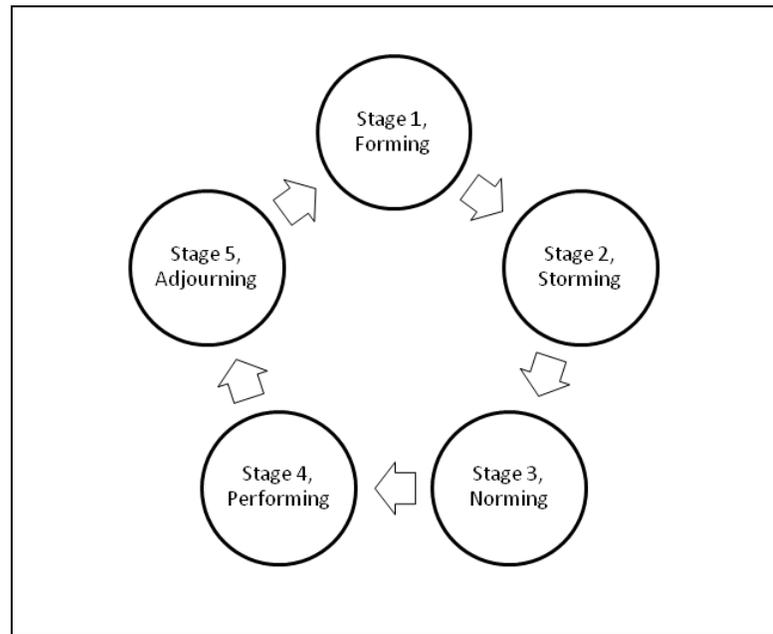
Figure 1. Five stages of group dynamics. Adapted from "Stages of Small Group Development," by B. W. Tuckman and M. A. C. Jensen, 1977. Group and Organization Studies. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

The stages are described as follows:

Stage 1: The forming stage is characterized by the individual wanting to be accepted. The group strives to organize itself with the busy work of scheduling meetings and deciding the structure of the group. In addition, conflict is avoided; however members begin to feel each other out and to think about the task at hand. At this stage the group is relatively comfortable with each other; however, the hard work of making decisions is not being accomplished.

Stage 2: The storming stage is characterized by changing dynamics in the group. Conflict begins to creep in because important issues are surfacing and must be addressed. The impatience of some group members becomes evident and others are more

comfortable remaining in Stage 1, which is considered a safe harbor. Because conflict

begins to occur, some members strive for a way to prevent the conflict from escalating.

Stage 3: The norming stage can be described as a point at which the group has had

arguments that help members to understand and appreciate the other members' opinions.

The group members become more supportive of each other. Their roles and

responsibilities are clearer and agreement is reached on the task at hand. This stage is also

a point at which the group members become better listeners and more tolerant of the

other members' points of view and appreciate and respect their fellow group members.

Stage 4: The performing stage occurs when the thrust of energy by the group is

now directed toward the goal and objectives of the group. Group members, for the most

part, are comfortable with each other; however, not all members of the group reach this

point. Group identity is established and loyalty to the group becomes obvious. The group

realizes the interdependent nature of their work and trusts each other enough to begin to

tackle the issues at hand.

Stage 5: The adjourning stage is the point at which the completion of the task

occurs and members are proud of their accomplishments. An atmosphere of having

achieved the goal permeates the group; however, some apprehension may result among

some members as they realize the work of the group has been terminated and a loss of

camaraderie may pervade (Tuckman, 1977).

When trustees engage in their governing duties and responsibilities as a

functioning board, Tuckman's (1977) model can play a part in understanding and

building collaborative working arrangements within the group. Collaboration is necessary

for groups to work together; however, before a collaborative understanding of the issue is reached or debated, the governance structure must be appreciated and understood. Smith (2000) stated, "Maintaining the strength of the team requires ongoing attention to group dynamics" (p. 186). Development activities encompassing an appreciation of these group stages and assistance with the active process of moving through each stage supports the ultimate goal of an efficient and productive board.

<div align="center">**Group Socialization**</div>

John M. Levine and Richard L. Moreland, both professors of psychology at the University of Pittsburgh, have researched and written extensively on group socialization. They described in their writing, "Group Socialization: Theory and Research," an exploration of the changes individuals experience as they become members of a group (Levine & Moreland, 1994). The findings are relevant to this research in understanding how becoming a member of a group (board of trustees) and group dynamics can and does affect individuals' decision making, either positively or negatively. For example, inevitably and continually, membership of the board changes as new members are seated and seasoned members exit. With this revolving door of group members, it is imperative that board of trustees include group socialization as part of the criteria of their professional development activities.

Moreland and Levine's (1982) research explored the ecology of group socialization. They developed a model of group socialization, which focuses on the passage of individuals through groups. The model explores and seeks to describe and explain the affective, cognitive, and behavioral changes that groups and individuals

produce in each other over the course of their relationship. "The model assumes that the

relationship between the group and the individual changes in systematic ways over time

and views both parties as potential influence agents" (Kruglanski & Higgins, 2003, p.

535). Tuckman's (1965) model differs from that of Moreland and Levine in that

Tuckman studied the group as a whole over time or what he called group development,

whereas Moreland and Levine's research focused on the relationship between a group

and its members, and how that relationship changes over time. Moreland and Levine's

group socialization model includes three elements in the role that individuals play in

relationship to the group; the central elements to understanding this process are depicted

in Figure 2.
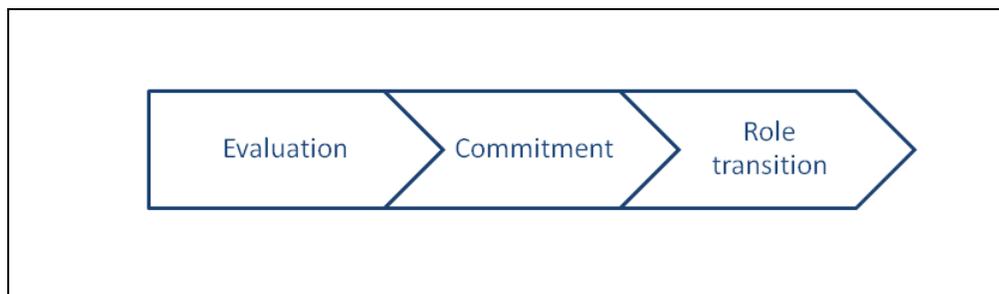
Figure 2. Three elements of the group socialization model. Adapted from "Socialization in Small Groups: Temporal Changes in Individual-Group Relations," by R. L. Moreland and J. M. Levine, *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, 15,* pp. 139-146. Copyright 1982 by Academic Press.

The three elements of the group socialization model interact as follows:

1. Evaluation involves both the individual and the group assessment of the

   rewards of their contributions. The group evaluates the individual's

contributions to the group's goals. The individual engages in a process to determine how well the group satisfies his or her personal needs.

2. Commitment depends on the outcome of the evaluation process, and it is based on the group's and the individual's beliefs about their own and alternative relationships. When an individual feels strong commitment toward a group, the person is likely to accept the group's goals and values, feel positive affect toward group members, work hard to fulfill group expectations and attain group goals, and seek to gain or maintain membership in the group.

3. Role transitions occur when commitment reaches a critical level (decision criterion), which involves relabeling the individual's relationship to the group, and thereby changing how the two parties evaluate one another. Role transitions often involve special ceremonies (i.e., rites of passages) designed to clarify that an important change has taken place (Moreland & Levine, 1982).

Moreland and Levine's (1982) research indicated that individuals' and groups' commitment levels do evolve over time; moreover, individuals go through different phases in the group socialization model. For successful socialization for the individual and the group both the individual and the group must benefit. When a new trustee joins the board, he or she seeks to fulfill a personal need such as wanting to be part of the group; the group desires the individual to contribute in the attainment of the group's goals and objectives. If the desires of the individual meet those of the group at some acceptable level, then a transition occurs. Moreland and Levine described this event as a role

transition whereby the individual is accepted into the group and assimilation occurs for the individual. Following a role transition, an individual passes through the five phases of group socialization and demonstrates how individuals and groups change over time. The five phases of the group socialization model are represented in Table 4.

Table 4. *Group Socialization Model Phases*

Phase	Process
Investigation	The individual is a prospective member that explores groups that might contribute to his or her satisfaction of personal needs. The group actively recruits looking for people who might contribute to the attainment of group goals. If the commitment levels of both parties rise to their respective entrance criteria, then the role transition of entry occurs and the individual becomes a new member.
Socialization	The group attempts to change the individual so that he or she can contribute more to the attainment of the group goals. If the group is successful, the individual undergoes assimilation. At the same time, the individual attempts to change the group so that it can contribute more to the satisfaction of personal needs. If the individual is successful, the group undergoes accommodation. If the commitment levels of both parties rise to their respective acceptance criteria, the role transition of acceptance occurs and the individual becomes a full member.
Maintenance	Both the group and the individual engage in role negotiation. The group attempts to find a specialized role for the individual that maximizes his or her contributions to the attainment of group goals, while the individual attempts to find a specialized role that maximizes the satisfaction of his or her personal needs. If this role negotiation succeeds, then the commitment levels of both parties remain high. However, if role negotiation fails and the commitment levels of both parties fall to their respective divergence criteria, then the role transition of divergence occurs and the individual becomes a marginal member.
Resocialization	The group tries to restore the individual's contributions to the attainment of group goals, and the individual tries to restore the group's contributions to the satisfaction of personal needs. If successful, assimilation, and accommodation again occur. If the group's and the individual's commitment levels rise to their respective divergence criteria, then the individual is returned to full membership.

Moreland and Levine (1982) discussed that group socialization includes two important elements: assimilation and accommodation. "Socialization can be viewed as a struggle between the individual and the group regarding the type and amount of assimilation and accommodation that will take place" (Moreland & Levine, as cited in Resnick, Levine, & Teasley, 1991, p. 266), whereas Moreland and Levine viewed this process as an individual's acceptance back into the group and the satisfaction of the member being part of the group over time.

According to Tuckman's (1977) stages of group development or the group socialization model developed by Moreland and Levine (1982), failure of knowledge to be continually received and understood can leave the new and or the seasoned trustee at a clear disadvantage in functioning as an effective group member. The trustee does not know how individuals and groups interact over time. An understanding of the theories of group development and group socialization can help lead to significant improvement in decision making for the board of trustees.

Understanding how groups form and interact is even more important today because the composition of the members is changing in many ways as new and younger individuals take their seats as board of trustees. Susan Whealler Johnston (executive vice president of the AGB and a trustee of Rollins College), Martha W. Summerville (an executive consultant at Summerville Consulting and board chair of Antioch University), and Charlotte Roberts (an executive at Blue Partners and a board of governors member at Antioch University) wrote an article titled "The Changing Landscape of Trustee and Board Engagement." In this article, Johnston *et al.* (2010) discuss the changing dynamics

for boards of trustees, "The governance dynamic is being changed by younger trustees and those who have found success as entrepreneurs and in reinvented corporations" (para. 5).

Understanding the dynamics of how groups form and work is critical to the effectiveness of any board of trustees, but even more so with a new type of trustee taking a seat at the table of governance. For example, Johnston *et al*. (2010) noted the following about the new type of trustee: "These individuals, who understand creativity, innovation, and change, are impatient with board meetings defined more by Robert's Rules of Order than by serious deliberations of critical issues" (para. 5). Understanding of group socialization or group development with the new type of trustee adds to the importance that these theories play in the professional development activities for the governing board. Johnston et al. (2010) stated, "Said one young trustee, dismayed over what she felt was 'business as usual' despite 'a new normal' for her college: 'I didn't sign up for this kind of board'" (para. 5).

Group development and group socialization should be considered an integral part of any professional development curriculum for the simple fact that boards of trustees must and are required by statute to operate as a whole—that is, a group. No one single member of the board can make a decision without the majority of the board of trustees voting the same way. It is inevitable that rigorous debate will occur as boards of trustees contemplate action on an item; however, the additional professional development activity that can be provided by acknowledging and understanding these two theories enhances the opportunities for board members to become more efficient and effective.

Adult Learning Theory

An engaged, knowledgeable, well-functioning board of trustees is critical to a higher education institution to meet today's complex challenges. How adults learn and process information is critical in creating a highly effective group. Undoubtedly, adults have the ability to learn; how and in what ways adults learn is often the conundrum. Learning for adults is a process of gaining knowledge.

Much of the actual learning process throughout society, including higher education institutions, was initiated in a manner of pedagogy, as if adults learn in the same way as children. Under the model of pedagogy, the teacher holds all of the power in deciding what is significant for the learner and what is not. As stated by Knowles (1990), "The pedagogical model assigns to the teacher full responsibility for making all decisions about what will be learned, when it will be learned, and if it has been learned" (p. 54). For the purposes of this research, it is important to understand the conceptual differences between the pedagogy and andragogy models of learning. Pedagogy has its roots in the seventh century Europe and is embedded in the religious training and education of young boys to become priests. Knowles described origins of pedagogy in the following way:

> Since the teachers in these schools had as their principal mission the indoctrination of students in the beliefs, faith, and rituals of the Church, they evolved a set of assumptions about learning and strategies for teaching that came to be labeled "pedagogy"—literally meaning "the art and science of teaching children" (since the term is derived from the Greek words "*paid*," meaning "child," and "*agous*," meaning "leader of." (Knowles, 1990, p. 28)

This form of teaching and education has permeated throughout our educational system.

The purpose of this study is to understand how and in what ways the professional development activities can be used to improve the effectiveness of the board of trustees. Therefore, an understanding of appropriate adult learning principles, concepts, and theories are required as a lens for this research. Learning and implementing these principles, concepts, and theories can help build and sustain a culture that produces a high performing board; the resulting culture in the board room may at times be contentious, but at the end of the debate the culture becomes collaborative.

Each trustee contributes to the life and success of an institution. An effective board of trustees is a group of individuals coming together to fulfill a common purpose for the benefit of the college. However, to do this successfully, each individual and the group as a whole must learn not only about the roles and responsibilities of their position as trustee, but also how to work effectively as a group. The trustees make decisions as a group; therefore, the high-performing board of trustees recognizes that working together and functioning well takes effort and is a learned endeavor.

To considerable extent, deciding on the most effective strategies for learning depends on what kind of learning is desired and toward what ends. Debates have often centered on how adults learn and how to improve this activity. Most relevant for this study is the exploration and insights as to how boards of trustees as individuals and the board as a whole can learn to effectively function as a group.

For the adult, learning takes place in a social and cultural context; in this instance, the context revolves around the board of trustees. What members of the board of trustees learn depends on and is influenced by what is valued by the board as a group. Culture

influences the knowledge and experiences people bring to their position as trustees, the way they communicate, their expectations, and the ideas they have about what is worth learning. The social context created as a result of the forming of the board as a group, the way communication and trust is cultivated, and opportunities for collegial interactions are fostered by the trustee's (learner's) understanding and construction of knowledge. This collaboration and compatibility among those finding themselves as members of this unique social cultural context, the board of trustees, has an impact on the ease with which each individual is able to learn what is necessary for the effective and efficient working of the board as a group.

Learning for adults has developed over the years and has made great strides since the last half of the 20th century. Although little consensus exists among adult learning theorists, many generally accept that adults learn differently than children under the age of 18 years. Some of the most prominent scholars on adult learning are Sharan B. Merriam (professor of adult education at the University of Georgia), Rosemary S. Cafferella (professor at University of Northern Colorado), and Stephen D. Brookfield (distinguished professor at University of St. Thomas, Minnesota). However, Malcolm S. Knowles, former professor at Boston University and executive director of the Adult Education Association of the United States of America is probably the leading scholar in the area of adult learning.

Others from a wide range of academic disciplines have also addressed the concepts of learning relevant to the adult. John Dewey, a former professor at the University of Chicago, former president of the American Psychological Association, and

early leader of adult education, espoused the idea that learning should be based on the theory of experience (Ecker, 1997). Dewey thought of learning as a social and interactive process whereby the student should be highly engaged in the education experience. "Dewey believed that school should teach students how to be problem-solvers by helping students learn how to think rather than simply learning rote lessons about large amounts of information" (Ecker, 1997, para. 3). In Dewey's view, education curriculum should be designed around the student's experiences to be more effective in the learning process.

Jack Mezirow is an emeritus professor of adult and continuing education at Teachers College, Columbia University; his research includes the transformation theory and its effect on adult learners. Mezirow (1991) stated, "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe new or revised interpretation of the meaning on one's experience in order to guide future action" (p. 12). Undoubtedly, prior knowledge and how it is interpreted helps guide any new learning.

Stephen Brookfield's (1995) scholarly writings on adult education focused on four major areas: (a) self-directed learning, (b) critical reflection, (c) experiential learning, and (d) learning to learn. Brookfield's view of how adults learn included many factors such as culture, ethnicity, personality, and guiding beliefs or political persuasion that strongly influence how adults learn rather than chronological age. To understand how trustees or any adult learns, an understanding of these factors should be included in the learning experience. Therefore, designing professional development activities and curricula for adult learners requires the facilitator to pay close attention and incorporate these factors. As stated by Brookfield (1986), "The importance of ensuring that new

knowledge, concepts, skills, or frameworks of interpretation are presented to adult

learners in a manner that is comprehensible in terms of their own experiences is a major

reason for using participatory learning methods" (p. 12).

In other words, direct instruction or lectures without a participatory type of

process that incorporates the adult learners past experiences into the learning exercise

will most likely not be successful. Brookfield (1986) articulated a point relevant to

groups that are in the process of learning: "Central to the effective facilitation of learning

is the development of powers of critical reflection, and this means that adults will

frequently be challenged by educators and fellow learners to consider alternative ways of

thinking, behaving, working, and living" (p. 13). Creating synergy for an effective board

to become high performing requires a thorough understanding of the adult learning

theories and how they should be an integral part of any professional development

program and curriculum. Brookfield (1986) summarized, "Adults learn best when they

feel the need to learn and when they have a sense of responsibility for what, why, and

how they learn" (p. 30).

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) expressed their belief that learning is an evolving

process. As Merriam and Caffarella stated (1999), "Learning as a process (rather than an

end product) focuses on what happens when the learning takes place" (p. 250). Learning

can be considered to happen if an adult's altering change in behavior is permanent and

positive. For example, the trustee learns to work in a collaborative manner with other

board members who have diametrically opposed viewpoints. This action can be

considered a behavioral change and a positive one because the institution benefits by

having a variety of different opinions and thoughts that are debated in a healthy

environment and examined in a collegial manner. Merriam and Caffarella (1990)

described learning in the following way: "Although learning has been defined in a variety

of ways, most definitions include the concepts of behavioral change and experience" (p.

249).

Malcolm Knowles has been referred to as the preeminent scholar on adult

learning since the early 1970s, when he first introduced the theory of adult learning called

andragogy (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2005). Knowles was an associate professor at

Boston University when he wrote his two key books, *The Modern Practice of Adult*

Education (Knowles, 1970) and *The Adult Learner* (Knowles, 1973). These books placed

him at the center of the debate and discourse on adult learning. An understanding of adult

learning theory is central to this study because of its influence on professional

development activities and curriculum for trustees. Knowles' (1970) theory of androgogy

is relevant to this study because it provides the context to understand how individuals

learn on their own and thus how a group learns. Professional development programs for

these particular adult learners should consider that their time is precious, and that the

activities must be convenient, timely, readable, understandable, and continuous. For

professional development activities to be useful, they must also contain programs that

enhance the work and decision-making ability of the board of trustees.

The andragogical theory of adult learning is the term Knowles (1970) eventually

coined to describe his theoretical framework for adult learning. The term andragogy was

used to describe adult learning in contrast to *pedagogy*, which means the art and science

of teaching children. The andragogy theory of learning advocates that adults should take responsibility for their own learning; engaging the adult in the process is a key component in the success of the adult learner. Knowles (1990) articulated it was not until the end of World War I in the United States and Europe that a converging of research began to occur centered on how adults learn. Andragogy became known and accepted in the United States and elsewhere as the study of how adults learn, thanks in large measure to Knowles and his extensive research and writings on this subject.

For Knowles, the foundation of andragogy contained four crucial assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners; he added a fifth assumption later in 1984. These assumptions are the following: (a) the learners' self-concept, (c) the role of the learners' experience, (c) readiness to learn, (d) orientation to learning, and (e) the motivation to learn (Knowles, 1984). Considerable debate revolves around Knowles' set of assumptions or theory; this debate primarily revolves around whether his theory is about learning or about a model of teaching.

Androgogy requires the learner to be part of the process and an active participant. As Knowles (1984) averred, "The andragogical model assumes that there are many resources other than the teacher, including peers, individuals with specialized knowledge and skill in the community, a wide variety of material and media resources, and field experiences" (p. 14). All of these resources, if linked together, provide an environment for the adult learner that is conducive for learning. Knowles (1984) stated it clearly: "Most teachers, trainers, and resource people know only the pedagogical model; they have no idea about how adults learn" (p. 419).

Members of boards of trustees are often individuals who come to the board from previous experiences in high-profile positions and are accustomed to being involved and engaged in strategic issues (i.e., active adult learners). Governing boards are charged with directing the welfare of the institution; therefore, professional development activities must be provided to them, with relevant and pertinent information crafted and presented in a manner that facilitates learning. Providing successful specific educational activities for boards of trustees regarding the challenging and complex issues they face in higher education requires the curriculum to be based on adult learning principles.

Houle (1972) posited, "If pedagogy and andragogy are distinguishable, it is not because they are essentially different from one another but because they represent the working out of the same fundamental processes at different stages of life" (p. 222). Perhaps the maturity of the adult and his or her life experiences make the process for learning different for the adult. If so, then educators of those who prepare professional development activity for trustees must understand these differences.

Knowles was not alone in his vision for adult learners. *How Adults Learn*, Kidd (1973) contended three factors distinguish adult learners from child learners: (a) adults have more experiences, (b) adults have different kinds of experiences, and (c) adult experiences are organized differently. Both Houle (1972) and Kidd (1973) recognized and agreed with Knowles (1984) that various approaches exist to the learning of adults compared to pedagogy, which focuses on learning styles of children.

Knowles (1990) added to his original work when he wrote *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species.* Knowles' approach to adult learning was to have the educator or, for

purposes of this research, the professional development instructor as a facilitator of

learning. In his research, Knowles described how little study of adult education has been

done over the years; however, the education of adults has been a concern of many great

teachers since ancient times. For example, Knowles discussed how Confucius, Aristotle,

Socrates, Plato, and others were teachers of adults not children. The teaching by these

individuals and many others focused on the participants as active students rather than

passive observers in the learning process. As Knowles asserted, "They perceived learning

to be a process of active inquiry, not passive reception of transmitted content.

Accordingly, they invented techniques for actively engaging learners in an inquiry" (p.

27). The dichotomy is interesting to note; since ancient times, the early philosophers'

concern was with adults, not children. However, little research as noted by Knowles has

been spent studying how adults actually learn. Knowles did point out that many times a

pedagogical model may work for a learner who is approaching a subject from no prior

experience as a starting point; however, the desired outcome is the movement to an

andragogical model in which the learner takes responsibility for his or her own learning.

Understanding Knowles's (1990) theories of adult learning requires facilitators of

professional development activities to be self-directed and possess the desire to have the

learner take responsibility for his or her own learning. Understanding how the adult

learns and the design of the educational activity for the learner is unique. As Houle

(1972) asserted, "The analysis or planning of educational activities must be based on the

realities of human experience and upon their constant change" (p. 32). For the adult

learner or, in this case, the trustee, the material must be contextual, consistent, and

applicable to his or her specific needs and attainment of his or her goals and objectives to be relevant.

Groupthink Theory

Irving L. Janis (1972) was a social psychology professor at Yale University and at the University of California, Berkeley. Janis is attributed with coining the term *groupthink*. Janis' research focused on the faulty decision making of powerful groups that are policy makers. Groupthink occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment" (Janis 1972, p. 9). According to Janis, a group is especially vulnerable to groupthink when its membership consists of those similar in background, when the group is insulated from outside opinions, and when there are no clear rules for decision making.

Groups experience groupthink under the following conditions: (a) when they are under considerable pressure and are expected to make a quality decision, (b) when pressures for unanimity seem overwhelming to the group, and (c) when members are less motivated to pragmatically evaluate the alternative courses of action available in relation to the decision (Janis, 1972). Powerful group pressures, akin to coercion, lead to reckless, irrational, and illogical thinking because groups experiencing groupthink fail to contemplate all alternatives and seek to maintain unanimity. Janis (1982) believed that decisions shaped by groupthink have a low probability of achieving successful outcomes. Janis (1982) described groupthink in the following way:

> I use the term "groupthink" as a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. (Janis, 1982, p. 9)

Through his research, Janis (1982) documented eight symptoms reflective of groupthink. These are as follows:

- Illusion of invulnerability—creating an excessive optimism, which encourages undertaking extreme risks;

- Collective rationalization—members discount any and all warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions;

- Belief in inherent morality—members believe in the correctness and rightness of their cause and consequently ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions;

- Stereotyped views of out-groups—members' view of "enemy" make effective responses to conflict seem superfluous;

- Direct pressure on dissenters—members are under pressure to not express arguments or differing opinions against or contrary to any of the group's views;

- Self-censorship—reservations and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed;

- Illusion of unanimity—majority views, perspectives, and decisions are assumed to be unanimous; and

- Self-appointed "mindguards"—members guard and defend the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, perceptions, judgments, and decisions.

When any or some of these symptoms are demonstrated in a group, particularly a policy-making group such as a board of trustees, there is a reasonable assumption that groupthink will occur.

A group with an agreed upon purpose of intent, such as a board of trustees, is made up of members whose personalities run the gamut from extremely self-confident and assured to hesitant and unsure. Even though powerful internal as well as external pressures to conform to the group's norms always exist, some individuals sitting on community college boards do exhibit a high degree of self-confidence. They may not need the support and affirmation of a group as much as other members when their opinions or perspectives are subject to criticism. However, they may be held hostage to groupthink because their opinions may conflict with the majority of the members. In addition, other group members may not be as confident and feel intimidated but do not openly express or offer various solutions to a complicated problem, issues, or policies being deliberated because of fear of being ostracized. Regardless of the personality type, it is natural for individuals of the groups to want to feel a sense of belonging.

To work effectively on behalf of the community college, trustees must function first as an effective group. John Carver (1990) is president of Carver Governance Design and author of *Boards That Make a Difference*. Carver stated, "As a board sets out to fulfill its trusteeship, its most immediate responsibility is to deal with the implications of being a group" (p. 135). A dysfunctional board or group prevents effective communications within the group and/or can block the creative innovation of ideas needed to tackle complex crucial decisions. As Carver posited, "Boards are fraught with

extensive interpersonal dynamics as is any other group of human beings. People differ in their comfort with confrontation, inability to express feelings, and in personal defenses brought to an interaction" (p. 135). Houle (1989) suggested, "Like any other group of human beings, a board takes on a distinctive social character resulting from the way its members react to one another and to their environment" (p. 119). Groupthink can be a powerful deterrent to how members interact with each other as they strive to fulfill their responsibilities related to governing the institution. It is not improbable to find the members intimidating each other to continue marching to the same drumbeat, insisting that everyone in the group fall into step.

There is no doubt the struggle of making of decisions can generate conflicts within the group. Given all the uncertainties and dilemmas that arise whenever boards of trustees share in the responsibility of making policy decisions, it is reasonable to assume that the group strives to alleviate stress, thus improving the function of the group. It is not about seeking group consensus regarding each and every decision. Because boards of trustees vote on a decision or action, consensus although desirable is often not possible. However, a basic construct of building consensus must be adhered to, meaning that no one should feel that his or her position on the matter was misunderstood or that it was not given a proper hearing. "Indeed, groups are supposed to be better than individuals at making complex decisions, because, through the membership, a variety of differing perspectives are brought to bear" (Tropman, 1996, para. 5).

Janis (1982) argued that groupthink was exceedingly apparent to prevent prudent U.S. government decisions. The escalation of America's involvement in the Vietnam War

was also part of Janis' research to discover if the symptoms of groupthink during

President Lyndon B. Johnson's administration contributed to poor decision making. As

pointed out by Janis (1982), "Before discussing symptoms of groupthink, we must

consider whether Johnson's inner circle was unified by bonds of mutual friendship and

loyalty, an essential precondition for the emergence of the groupthink syndrome" (p. 99).

President Johnson relied on a very select group of advisors known as the Tuesday

Cabinet to debate the efforts of the Vietnam War. During this time, Bill Moyers served as

the White House secretary to President Johnson. Janis (1982) pointed out, "Directly in

line with the groupthink hypothesis, Moyers mentions the concurrence-seeking tendency

of the members as part of his explanation for the lack of critical debate about the Vietnam

War policies" (p. 101). It is not the point of this research to debate the pros and cons of

the escalation of the Vietnam War, and Janis was quick to point out that avoiding some of

the symptoms of groupthink may not have caused a different pathway for the Johnson

administration. What Janis did argue is the following:

> Still, it is probable that if they were indulging in groupthink they were prevented
> from becoming fully aware of the futility of their ill-conceived escalation
> decisions and from correcting some of their most fallacious assumptions soon
> enough to reconsider the alternatives open to them. (Janis, 1982, p. 129)

Jerry B. Harvey (1988), professor of management science at George Washington

University in Washington, DC, researched the inability to manage agreement among

groups primarily because of a lack of quality communication. His work added an

important dimension to Janis' (1982) work with group dynamics, particularly regarding

the construct of concurrence. His article titled "The Abilene Paradox: The Management

of Agreement" describes the inability of organizations or groups to manage agreement.

Harvey (1988) used the following analogy to depict his view of group dynamics. A group of individuals was quite content during a hot and steamy day in Coleman, Texas. They were relaxing by drinking lemonade and playing checkers under a cool fan until one member suggested that they drive to Abilene for dinner. They drove to a mediocre diner in Abilene 50 miles away in a car that had no air conditioning. The group of individuals did not voice their opposition to the plan once it was suggested by one of the members. They simply went along because each member thought the group really wanted to make the drive. After the hot and dusty trip there and back, they all were exhausted and happy to be home. Then, on reflection of the trip, the group members started to blame each other for the lousy idea. In truth, all of the individuals were satisfied with what they were originally doing prior to the trip to Abilene.

Harvey (1988) used this analogy as a way to describe what he called the Abilene paradox: "Stated simply, it is as follows: Organizations frequently take actions in contradiction to what they really want to do and therefore defeat the very purposes they are trying to achieve" (p.18). Harvey mentions groupthink in his research when he refers to the idea that individual distinctiveness is lost in a group when pressures to comply with certain behavior occur. Although none of the members of the Abilene group really wanted to leave the comforts of home and drive in the hot sun for mediocre food, no one communicated their preference for fear of not agreeing with what they thought other members really wanted.

The importance of communicating and assuring that one's desires and opinions are heard are crucial to effective group decision making. Chait *et al*. (1993) described

inclusiveness of groups in the following way: "A group cannot easily develop or sustain unity if even a small minority of its members chronically feel that they are excluded from some inner circle or kept in the dark while others are always 'in the know'" (p. 44). The Abilene example illustrates what is often the case: that group members conform to what they think the other members really want just to be included as a member of the team at the risk of making an unwise decision. Harvey (1988) discussed how the inability to manage by agreement, as in the Abilene example, is a paradox. By not speaking and discussing the issue, the group made a decision. However, collectively, the individuals really did not want to make that decision and later regretted the decision. The symptoms of Harvey's paradox can be shown in the following ways:

1. Organization members agree privately, as individuals, regarding the steps that would be required to cope with the situation or problem they face. For members of the Abilene group "more of the same" was a solution that would have adequately satisfied their individual and collective desires.

2. Organization members fail to accurately communicate their desires and/or beliefs to one another. In fact, they do just the opposite and thereby lead one another into misperceiving the collective reality. Each member of the Abilene group, for example, communicated inaccurate data to other members of the organization. The data, in effect, said, "Yeah, it's a great idea. Let's go to Abilene," when in reality members of the organization individually and collectively preferred to stay in Coleman.

3. With such invalid and inaccurate information, organization members make collective decisions that lead them to take actions contrary to what they want to do, and thereby arrive at results that are counterproductive to the organization's intent and purposes. Thus, the Abilene group went to Abilene when it preferred to do something else. (Harvey, 1988, p. 18)

Harvey's (1988) Abilene paradox reflects the idea that "[o]rganizations frequently take actions in contradiction to the data they have for dealing with problems and, as a result compound their problems rather than solve them" (p. 20). Harvey concurred with

Janis's (1982) belief that knowledge of the concept of groupthink can help minimize it

from occurring. Janis articulated as follows:

> My two main conclusions are that along with other sources of error in decision-making, groupthink is likely to occur within cohesive small groups of decision-makers and that the most corrosive effects of groupthink can be counteracted by eliminating group insulation, overly directive leadership practices, and other conditions that foster premature consensus. (Janis, 1982, p. 275)

It is apparent that as postsecondary institutions increasingly reflect the rich human

diversity of the communities they serve, so do the boards of trustees. To improve their

functionality, an understanding and nurturing of the many voices within boards is crucial.

A better understanding of board dynamics, socialization, and acculturation of board

members is needed. This study explores the professional development activities provided

for board of trustees in the early 21st century and how these activities can be used to

enhance and improve the effectiveness of the board.

Conclusion

Professional development is accepted as an expansive and ongoing, multifaceted

set of activities to bring someone up to another level or threshold of performance, or to

assume a new role. After careful review of the literature, what appear to be lacking are

the consistent and contextual developments activities relevant for all trustees and the

significant concepts involving groups (i.e., board of trustees). None or very little of the

research documented to date reflects or accommodates how adults learn, the interaction

and dynamics of group socialization, or the pitfalls of groupthink. In addition,

professional development activities for trustees offered by the trade associations might

benefit from emphasizing that adults learn by consistent and regular, contextual, repeated

learning experiences as expressed in this research based on the andragogical model

developed by Malcolm Knowles (1973). If adults such as trustees use prior knowledge to

learn, the professional development programs and activities should recognize the

importance of their previous learning and incorporate it into any curriculum for the adult

learner.

CHAPTER 3.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design used to answer the research purpose and driving questions. This chapter also sets forth the methodology and criteria for soundness, which serve to hold this study accountable. It is the research design that provides a logical systematic guide and structure for conducting the research. This chapter describes and presents rationale for the following: (a) the qualitative paradigm selected and case study methodology; (b) site and participant selection; (c) survey and interview protocol; (c) data collection and analysis; and (d) reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the study.

The purpose of this study was to identify the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for 2-year postsecondary trustees that assist them to become more effective contributors in shaping higher education policy decisions. This research also provided insights into these trustees' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities. The qualitative paradigm and case study methodology was used to address the purpose and driving research questions of this study.

The Qualitative Paradigm

The design of a research study begins with selecting a topic and a paradigm in which the study will be situated. Because little is known regarding the topic, this study was exploratory in nature with the primary purpose to garner the unique personal perspectives of those serving as trustees of 2-year postsecondary institutions.

According to R. Burke Johnson and Larry Christensen, professors at University of

South Alabama, "A research paradigm is a perspective based on a set of assumptions,

concepts, values, and practices that are held by a community of researchers. More simply,

it is an approach to thinking about and doing research" (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p.

29). John W. Creswell (2007), professor of educational psychology at the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln, described qualitative research in the following manner:

> Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a
> theoretical lens and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning
> individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this
> problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry,
> the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under
> study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. (p.
> 37)

Johnson and Christenson (2004) concurred with Creswell (2007) regarding the

basic characteristics of the qualitative paradigm. Understanding the differences of these

paradigms assisted in selecting the qualitative paradigm as most appropriate for this

research study. A synthesis of the key characteristics found in quantitative and qualitative

approaches (paradigms), as outlined by Johnson and Christensen, is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. *Adaption of Key Characteristics of Creswell's Quantitative and Qualitative Paradigms*

Research paradigms	Quantitative	Qualitative
Scientific method	Deductive or "top down"	Inductive or "bottom up"
View of human behavior	Behavior is regular and predictable	Behavior is unpredictable, fluid, dynamic, situational, social, contextual, and personal
Most common research objectives	Description, explanation, and prediction	Description, exploration, and discovery; situated in the natural environment

Research paradigms	Quantitative	Qualitative
Focus	Narrow-angle lens, testing specific hypotheses	Wide-angle and "deep-angle" lens, examining the breadth and depth of phenomena from an individual's perspective
Forms of data collection	Experiments with measurement using structured and validated data collection instruments	Interviews, participant observations, field notes, and documents; researcher is the primary data collection instrument
Data analysis	Identify statistical relationship; reducing data to numerical indices	Identifying patterns, and themes; holistic features
Results	Findings that can be generalized	Findings transferable by the reader

Similarly, Norman K. Denzin, a professor at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Yvonna S. Lincoln, a professor at Texas A & M, defined qualitative research in the following manner:

> Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8)

Qualitative inquiry attempts to understand a phenomenon holistically, from the participant's point of view. According to Jerry W. Willis (2007), a professor at University of Alabama, situating a study in the qualitative paradigm allows the researcher to look at the subject matter holistically and within the larger context in which it resides. Johnson and Christensen (2004) agreed with Willis and contended that qualitative research is holistic. The trustees' perceptions involving professional development activities and their

roles and responsibilities are situated within a particular context: membership of a college board. Acquiring data and information from their perspectives in this context allowed for a holistic description of events occurring in a natural setting. Researcher Michael Patton (2002) concurred by stating, "This means that a description and interpretation of a person's social environment, or an organization's external context, is essential for overall understanding of what has been observed during fieldwork or said in an interview" (p. 59).

Sharan B. Merriam (1998), a professor of adult education at the University of Georgia, stated, "Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world" (p. 6). Trustees were interviewed to understand their roles in influencing higher educational policy decisions at their institutions and what type of professional development activities would be helpful in preparing them for this significant endeavor.

Qualitative research is identified as naturalistic with no manipulation of experimental variables by the researcher. As noted by Merriam (1998), "In contrast to quantitative research, which takes apart a phenomenon to examine component parts (which become the variables of the study), qualitative research can reveal how all the parts work together to form a whole" (p. 6). The naturalistic inquiry approach allows the participants to tell their stories without any constraints or predetermined conditions. In this study, the interviews allowed the researcher to collect descriptive quotes and pursue emergent issues as expressed by the trustees. Patton (2002) described that in a naturalistic inquiry, "Qualitative designs are naturalistic to the extent that the research takes place in

real-world settings and the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (p. 39).

Qualitative research, as compared to quantitative research, uses a wide-angle lens rather than a narrow-angle lens to study the research topic. According to Patton (2002), "Qualitative methods facilitate study of issues in depth and detail" (p. 14). This study's design employed a wide-angle lens to examine and shed new insights on trustees' professional activities that assist them with their institutional stewardship.

Patton (2002) stated, "Qualitative findings grow out of three kinds of data collection: (1) in-depth, open-ended interviews; (2) direct observation; and (3) written documents" (p. 4). This study primarily used interviews to solicit in-depth responses about the trustees' experience, perceptions, feelings, and knowledge. The direct observations or fieldwork consisted of obtaining of rich detailed description of the trustees' behavior and actions during the interview process. For this study, a variety of documents were obtained and reviewed from official publications such as American Association of Community Colleges and ACCT, as well as from the participants' particular college.

Johnson and Christensen (2004) contended, "In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument of data collection" (p. 33). The researcher captured the detailed account to address the study's purpose with the use of interviews, document review, and field notes, and attempted to organize the data in general types of framework. Patton (2002) discussed how important field work is in a qualitative study by stating the following:

> The data for qualitative analysis typically comes from fieldwork. During fieldwork, the researcher spends time in the setting under study—a program, an organization, a community, or wherever situations of importance to a study can be observed, people interviewed, and documents analyzed. The researcher makes firsthand observations of activities and interactions, sometimes engaging personally in those activities as a participant observer. (Patton, 2002, p. 4)

The researcher strongly believed that data collection and interactions with study participants would be enhanced by completing the interviews in a setting where they feel comfortable, in a natural setting. Therefore, the study was most appropriately situated in the qualitative paradigm to study this particular phenomenon.

Case Study Methodology

Many definitions and understandings of case study methodology exist. In general, case studies have been noted to garner knowledge in the fields of sociology, psychology and anthropology. Over the past 30 years, utilizing case study methodology has become a more prevalent and common research strategy. Robert K. Yin (2009), president and CEO of the COSMOS Corporation, believed case studies can be the chosen methodology when the purpose of the study is to answer the why or how of a phenomenon.

Case study has at times become a catch-all term for any type of qualitative research. Deborah J. Cohen and Benjamin F. Crabtree, researchers at University of Medicine and Dentistry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, cited Robert E. Stake, a professor at the University of Illinois, who stated, "A case study is defined by individual case, not by the methods of inquiry used" (D. J. Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, para. 3). Merriam (1998) eloquently described a case study "as a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries. I can 'fence in' what I am going to study" (p. 27). The perspective

of the trustees' roles and responsibilities and the adequacy of their professional development activities served to contextually bind the study.

Merriam (1998) also explained the intent of a case study: "A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Creswell (2007) concurred: "Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (p. 73).

However, a definitive explanation regarding three components or conditions to be explored when deciding to employ a case study was found in the writings by Yin (2009). These three conditions are (a) identify research questions or other rationale for doing a case study; (b) decide to use the case study method, compared to other methods; and (c) understand its strengths and limitations.

Types of Case Studies

To bring clarity to the types of case studies, Stake (as cited in D. J. Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, para. 12) identified three types:

- Intrinsic—aimed at understanding a particular case because the case itself is of interest;

- Instrumental—aimed at providing insight into an issue or problem or to refine a theory; and

- Collective—a number of cases are studied jointly in order to understand a phenomenon, population, or general condition.

This study was an instrumental case because the research focused on a single issue

bounded by the selected trustees' experiences and perspectives.

Yin (2009), president and CEO of the COSMOS Corporation, contended that the

boundaries of a case study should be defined in terms of the research process. He stated,

"A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon

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

context are not clearly evident" (Yin, 2009, p. 18). This research was bounded by the

participants' position as community college/technical college trustees, their roles and

responsibilities, and the professional development activities available to them.

Merriam (1998) had a similar view of case study research; she stated, "The case

study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple

variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life

situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon"

(Merriam, 1998, p. 41). The case study approach was appropriate because the research

focused on the real-life experiences and perspectives of trustees.

The study was situated in the interpretive paradigm, which allowed the researcher

to understand and interpret meaning shared by the trustees that had been shaped by their

experiences as a new trustee or as a long-serving trustee.

> The question of interpreting data in context highlights the concern interpretivists
> have about the situatedness of knowledge. Thus, the goal of interpretivist's
> research is an understanding of a particular situation . . . more than the discovery
> of universal laws or rules. (Willis, 2007, p. 99)

The interpretive paradigm recognizes and relies on the participant's perspectives

of the situation or phenomena being studied. Creswell (2007) contended, "Thus the

researchers make an interpretation of what they find, an interpretation shaped by their own experience and background. The researcher's intent, then, is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). Because the intent of the study was to discover from the trustees what resources they need to become more effective contributors in shaping higher education policy decisions, a qualitative inquiry and the interpretive paradigm was used.

Site and Participation Selection

Qualitative inquiry aims to provide information and understanding of the event or phenomenon from the perspectives of those involved. Qualitative research uses nonprobability sampling because the intent is not to draw a statistical inference. To answer the purpose and driving questions of this study, selection criteria were purposefully crafted to collect rich, thick data from a representative sample of 2-year secondary institutions' trustee members.

Purposeful sampling for this study was characterized as the selection of sites and participants most appropriate to provide relevant and pertinent data to answer the research purpose. Merriam (1998) suggested, "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 61). Creswell (2007) concurred, describing the purposeful sampling in the following manner: "This means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125).

Use of purposeful sampling with maximum variation enabled a gathering of different participant accounts from a variety of unique perspectives. Comparing and contrasting these perspectives allowed for a more holistic understanding of the phenomena being studied. Maximum variation sampling was used. It was a purposeful sampling strategy aimed at heterogeneity, not homogeneity, of participants and their perspectives. According to Johnson and Christensen (2004), maximum variation allows "that all types of cases along one or more dimensions are included in the research" (p. 220). The rationale for using purposeful sampling with maximum variation for this study were as follows: (a) participants were solicited from different regions of Wisconsin and Illinois, (b) participants' experiences differed based on their length of service, and (c) Wisconsin and Illinois have different methods to fill the trustees' positions (election and appointment). As described by Patton (2002), "This strategy for purposeful sampling aims at capturing and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation" (p. 235). This combination of purposeful and maximum variation sampling for sites and participants increased the likelihood that all relevant facets of the phenomena were studied.

Site Selection

A primary site selection element revolved around states having different methods to fill trustee membership of single-campus, 2-year postsecondary institutions: election and appointment. Illinois and Wisconsin were selected because they are reflective of the U.S. community college system and each has a different process for individuals to become board members. To enhance the maximum variation of participants, a diverse

geographic selection process within these states was implemented. This allowed for

community college and technical college trustees to be selected from institutions located

in rural, suburban, or urban settings. In addition, the size of the institutions was taken into

account, which allowed participant representation from small, medium, and large

institutions. A total of eight randomly selected institutions that met these criteria were

part of the study.

The analysis of enrollment size including rural, suburban, and urban technical

colleges was provided by the WTCS and the ICCB. The criteria for the eight participants

were presented to the WTCDBA and the ICCTA.

Only single-college institutions were eligible for this study because each

institution is served by one president. The Illinois Community College System contains

48 colleges, which includes two multi-campus systems in 39 community college districts.

The map in Figure 3 illustrates the district boundaries for all community colleges in

Illinois. Therefore, the seven City Colleges of Chicago and the four Illinois Eastern

Community Colleges were excluded from the site selection criteria because they are

multi-college organizations with a chancellor/president and a governing board over the

organization.

Figure 3. Illinois community college districts. Adapted from "District Boundaries," by the Illinois Community College Board, n.d. Copyright 2008 by Illinois Community College Board. Reprinted with permission.

The use of unduplicated student headcount assisted with the geographic

distribution of participant colleges as a representation for urban, suburban, and rural

designations. Organizing the institutions according to unduplicated headcount allowed for

the purposeful selection of a greater geographic diversity of the study college sites.

Feedback and confirmation of the geographic designation of the participant college was

provided by the ICCB and the WTCCDBA. Groupings of all selected Illinois community

colleges by unduplicated headcount for 2008 is presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Unduplicated Headcount for Illinois Community Colleges for Fiscal Year 2008*

Group	Headcount greater than 20,000
1	College of DuPage, Oakton Community College, Moraine Valley Community College, College of Lake County, Harper College, Southwestern Illinois College, Joliet Junior College, Triton College, and John A. Logan College.
	Headcount 10,000 to 19,999
2	Illinois Central College, Waubonsee Community College, Lake Land College, Parkland College, Elgin Community College, South Suburban College, Rock Valley College, Lincoln Land Community College, Rend Lake College, Lewis & Clark Community College, Black Hawk College, Prairie State College, and McHenry County College.
	Headcount below 9,999
3	Kaskaskia College, Danville Area Community College, Kankakee Community College, Heartland Community College, Shawnee Community College, Kishwaukee College, Illinois Valley Community College, Morton College, Richland Community College, Southeastern Illinois College, Sauk Valley Community College, Highland Community College, Spoon River College, Carl Sandburg College, and John Wood Community College.

Note. Adapted from *Data and Characteristics of the Illinois Public Community College System, 2008,* by the Illinois Community College Board, 2008. Copyright 2008 by Illinois Community College Board. Reprinted with permission.

The Wisconsin Technical College System has 16 colleges, each with a president

governed by a district board appointed by local elected officials. All are single-college

institutions; some have additional off-campus sites. The map in Figure 4 shows the

district boundaries for all technical colleges in Wisconsin. The grouping by technical

colleges uses the same unduplicated headcount criteria as in Illinois. Grouping of all

selected Wisconsin's technical colleges by unduplicated headcount for 2008 is presented

in Table 7.

Figure 4. Wisconsin technical college districts.

Note. Adapted from *Colleges,* by the Wisconsin Technical College System, n.d.
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permission.

The grouping by Wisconsin technical colleges used the same unduplicated

headcount criteria as in Illinois. The groupings of all selected Wisconsin's technical

colleges by unduplicated headcount for 2008 are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. *Unduplicated Headcount for Wisconsin Technical Colleges Fiscal Year 2008*

Group	Headcount greater than 20,000
1	Fox Valley Technical College, Milwaukee Area Technical Colleges, Northeast Wisconsin Technical College, Madison Area Technical College, Waukesha County Technical College, Wisconsin Indian Technical College, Gateway Technical College, Northcentral Technical College and Moraine Park Technical College.
	Headcount 10,000 to 19,999
2	Chippewa Valley Technical College, Western Technical College, Lakeshore Technical College, Blackhawk Technical College, Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, and Mid-State Technical College.
	Headcount below 9,999
3	Nicolet Area Technical College.

Note. Adapted from "Headcount Enrollment by Aid Category," in *WTCS Fact Book,* by the Wisconsin Technical College System. Copyright 2009 by the Wisconsin Technical College System. Reprinted with permission.

A total of eight sites (four in each state) were selected based on geographic location, designation (urban, rural, and suburban) and size of unduplicated student headcount. To ensure diversity in urban, suburban, and rural sites, careful attention was paid to regions in each state along with the number of students enrolled. Site criteria for both states are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. *Site Criteria for Selected Institutions in Illinois and Wisconsin*

Criterion	Locale of Illinois community colleges'
I-1	Northeastern part of the state with unduplicated headcount greater than 20,000
I-2	Central part of the state with unduplicated headcount between 10,000 and 19,999
I-3	Northern part of the state with unduplicated headcount between 10,000 and 19,999
Criterion	Locale of Illinois community colleges'

I-4	Far western part of the state with unduplicated headcount below 9,999
	Locale of Wisconsin technical colleges'
W-1	Far southern part of the state with unduplicated headcount greater than 20,000
W-2	Northeastern part of the state with unduplicated headcount greater than 20,000
W-3	Central part of the state with unduplicated headcount greater than 20,000
W-4	Far eastern part of the state with unduplicated headcount greater than 20,000

Eligibility requirements to serve as a community college trustee can vary from state to state. For those seeking to serve in Illinois, the general criteria pertinent to board membership are found in the Illinois State Statutes Chapter 110, Act 805/3-7 Public Community College Act with related acts, as amended through P.A. 95-1037 (Illinois Public Community College Act). General eligibility for an Illinois resident to stand for election as a community college board of trustee is presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Criteria Applicable to Trustee Members of Illinois Community College Boards

1. Elected for 6-year terms
2. Nonpartisan elections
3. Must be a resident of the district
4. Elected by registered voters within the district that serves the community college
5. No restrictions on how many times a trustee can be elected

Note. Adapted from *Illinois Community College Act,* 2009, pp. 16-61.

According to the WTCDBA (n.d.), the 1911 law required the school board in cities of more than 5,000 persons (and allowed school boards in those of less than 5,000) to establish local boards of industrial education with an appointed board of two

employers, two employees, and the local school superintendent serving ex officio. The

general criteria pertinent to board membership are found in the Wisconsin Continuation

School Law, Chapter 616, Laws of 1911 (WTCS, n.d.b). The board of trustees for the

WTCS has nine individuals who serve. The general eligibility criteria for a resident to

stand for appointment as a Wisconsin technical college board member are presented in

Table 10.

Table 10. *Criteria Applicable to Trustee Members of Wisconsin Technical Colleges*

1. Trustees must be residents of the district and are appointed to 3-year staggered terms by a committee consisting of the county board chairpersons of the counties that make up the technical college district

2. Trustees may be appointed to consecutive terms

3. Wisconsin technical colleges must follow state statue that requires trustees of technical colleges to be appointed from two employer members, two employee members, three members at large, one elected official who holds a state or local office, and one school district administrator

4. Board appointment must be certified by the Wisconsin College Board, the governing body for the Wisconsin Technical College System

Note. Adapted from "Chapter 38, Technical College System," by Wisconsin State Legislature Legislative Reference Bureau, 2010, p. 5. Copyright 2010 by Wisconsin State Legislature Legislative Reference Bureau.

Participant Selection

There are no hard and fast rules set for the number of participants or sample size

in qualitative research (Patton, 1990). Sampling in qualitative research usually relies on

smaller numbers of participants because the aim of the study is to understand in detail

and depth (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 1990). A total of eight participants were

selected from community college trustees; four who have been elected to their positions

in Illinois and four who had been appointed to their positions in Wisconsin.

Of these eight participants, four were trustees serving in their first term and four had served for one term or more. The participants serving in their first term provided a perspective on the adequacy and availability of the professional development activities from the lens of the novice trustee. Seasoned trustees afforded a perspective garnered from both experience and time in the position. Even though the experiences of the two study participant groups were situated within a common social context, their perspectives were unique and distinctive based on time and experience. These multiple perspectives were essential because they allowed for a comparison across groups.

Participant College Contact Protocol

A contact protocol guided the consistent and systematic solicitation of participants. This protocol included the following steps to ensure validity of the participant selection process:

1. Executive director of the ICCTA and executive director of the WTCDBA identified possible trustee participants based on the established participant selection criteria.

2. The executive directors contacted those identified to ascertain their willingness to participate in the study.

3. Once agreement was obtained, the trustee contact information was provided to the researcher.

4. The researcher contacted each trustee and discussed the nature of the research and answered all questions.

5. Suitable times and locations for the interviews and document retrieval were

   agreed upon by the participants and the researcher.

Multiple Data Sources

Multiple data sources were utilized in this study to afford a more holistic

description and understanding of the phenomena. For this research, the three primary data

sources were used: semi-structured interviews, documents, and field notes. An audit trail

of the data gathered from these sources fostered a transparent systematic plan of

collection and analysis processes.

Pre-interview Questionnaire

The pre-interview questionnaire was e-mailed to each participant 1 week in

advance of the interviews. Demographic and personal information was acquired to elicit a

frame of reference for each participant. The pre-interview questionnaire is presented in

Appendix A.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. Patton

(2002) succinctly stated, "The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into

the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that

the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (Patton,

2002, p. 341). Merriam (1998) agreed by contending, "In qualitative research,

interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding

the phenomenon under study" (p. 91). The interviews with the trustees were undertaken

in a relaxed setting using a conversational approach. Stressing the conversational

approach to interviewing study participants, Yin (2009) described the process in the

following way:

> Throughout the interview process, you have two jobs: (a) to follow your own line
> of inquiry, as reflected by your case study protocol, and (b) to ask your actual
> (conversational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of
> your line of inquiry. (Yin, 2009, p. 106)

The semi-structured interview process utilized the interview questions as a guide. Semi-

structured questions allowed the researcher an opportunity to probe, clarify, and gather

additional details to understand the participants' perspectives. Merriam (1998) stressed,

"This format allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging

worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic" (p. 74). The interviews

lasted from 1 to 1.5 hours, allowing a degree of flexibility relative to subsequent probing,

elaborating, and clarification of answers to the initial questions. The interview questions

were provided 1 week in advance to all of the participants, allowing sufficient time for

preparation and reflection, if they so desired. Participants agreed to have their interviews

audio-recorded.

Document Collection

Existing documents offer unique insights into the context of the study. A strength

of utilizing documents as an additional data source is the fact they already exist. They are

not a record or history of a phenomenon. For that reason, they are not subject to recall

biases, nor are they altered by participants in response to the researcher. Referring to the

usefulness of both documents and interviews, Merriam (1998) found the following:

> The data found in documents can be used in the same manner as data from
> interviews or observations. The data can furnish descriptive information, verify

emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on. (Merriam, 1998, p. 126)

A variety of documents were obtained pertaining to any past and/or current professional development activities undertaken by the trustees. Consequently, requesting these documents from study participants confirmed what each considered professional development information. Yin (2009) advocated document collection as another multisource of data: "For case studies, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 103). Yin also suggested there are three ways to effectively utilize documents. First, the documents can be helpful in verifying correct information such as names and titles. Second, the documents can be useful in corroborating information from other sources. Third, inferences may be able to be made based on information obtained in the document.

The sources of these relevant documents varied, but all were gathered from the study participants. In addition, a variety of documents were obtained from the ACCT, American Association of Community Colleges, ICCTA, AGB, and WTCDBA. All of these associations have web sites that are available and are easily accessible.

Field Notes

Field notes were used as a systematic record of descriptive notes gathered during the participant interviews; the reflective detailed notes were written afterward. Observational or descriptive field notes were created to capture the behaviors, actions, and impressions surrounding the interview process. In essence, the field notes are a pictorial script fostering a quick reflection of a moment in time to recreate a visual image

of the interview. The reflective field notes were written as soon as possible after the interview to avoid needing to rely on the researcher's memory later.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary tool in data collection and analysis. Therefore, reflective field notes can be useful. As an active participant rather than a passive observer in the interview process, the researcher must constantly be aware and cautious not to interject his or her own perspectives. Because the researcher was serving as a community college trustee, care was taken to remain vigilant to refrain from imposing personal viewpoints. One way this was done was by the use of reflective field notes.

Regarding field notes, Johnson and Christensen (2004) wrote, "It's a good idea to correct and edit any notes you write down during an observation as soon as possible after they are taken because that is when your memory is best" (p. 188). The original field notes may be written in a cryptic or "scratch note" form, but they should be carefully reviewed for accuracy and readability as soon as possible so that valuable content is not lost.

As part of the data collection audit trail, the field notes included the participant's name, date, and location of the interview, number and type of documents procured from each participant, as well as other pertinent demographic data. Computer and hard copy color-coded files were created, which facilitated easy retrieval of the data.

Ethics

Ethical considerations must be safeguarded in the research process. Approval from the university's Institutional Research Review Board was granted as part of the

research protocol process. These ethical guidelines ensure protection for the participants throughout the study. Merriam (1998) succinctly stated, "While policies, guidelines, and recommendations for dealing with the ethical dimensions of qualitative research are available to researchers, actual ethical practice comes down to the individual researcher's own values and ethics" (p. 218). The participants all agreed to be recorded for the interview. Anonymity and confidentiality of all participants and their respective colleges was maintained. Study participants signed two copies of the informed consent form (see Appendix B). One copy was kept by the participant and the other retained by the researcher and placed on file. In addition, the transcriber of the interview audio tapes signed a transcriptionist confidentially forms (see Appendix C).

The researcher was the only person with access to the research the data. All documents, field notes, audio-recorded interviews and their transcriptions, and all documents were and continue to be securely stored. After 7 years, all of the data will be destroyed.

<center>**Data Analysis**</center>

Qualitative research results in a large amount of data obtained from a variety of sources, contextually weighted, and abundant with rich, thick details. It is time-consuming, iterative, and a continuous analytical spiral process. Merriam (1998) suggested that the right way to analyze data starts as it is collected. The data analysis allows for a methodical, continued search and highlighting of useful information. Creswell (2007) agreed: "It is a process of pulling the data apart and putting them back together in more meaningful ways" (p. 163).

One of the challenges of qualitative analysis is to reduce the documents, interviews, observations, and field notes from data into meaningful findings. All the data is continuously reviewed to discover patterns, themes, and concepts, which can lead to an explanation of the phenomena under study. Miles and Huberman (1994) made the point that the researcher must make sense of massive amounts of data, but that there are few agreed ways in which this is accomplished. Segmenting the data to develop codes and categories allows review of the data to discover meaningful and relevant descriptive words or phrases, which coalesce into meaningful key themes and patterns. As noted by Johnson and Christensen (2004), "Coding is the process of marking segments of data (usually text data) with symbols, descriptive words, or category names" (p. 502).

As Merriam (1998) so simply stated, "Data analysis is the process of making sense out of data" (p. 178). The task of making sense of all the data gathered revolved around discourse analysis of the tapes and content analysis of the documents and field notes. Data analysis is an inductive or bottom-up process that is used to create a contextually rich constructed narrative. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated the following: "The process of data analysis, then, is essentially a synthetic one, in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes" (p. 333). The exploratory process of data analysis provided a pathway for useful and meaningful information that was extracted from the volumes of raw data. The conclusions from the data analysis provided useful insight into the professional development activities offered to new and seasoned trustees.

All the data was continuously reviewed to discover patterns, themes, and concepts, which can lead to an explanation of the phenomena being studied. The discovery of patterns, themes, and concepts allowed a visual representation of all the data, but it was fragmented and needed to be organized in a consistent manner. Utilizing a framework for the data analysis served as a tool to organize the data into meaningful segments.

Framework for Data Analysis

A framework for data analysis brings structure and meaning to the vast amount of data and information. A systematic, integrated process was instituted that gave the chaotic data analysis process order and provided a useful way to categorize the study participants' responses. Organizing and preparing the large amount of data gathered from the study participants requires a systematic approach. The trustworthiness and validity of this process is incumbent on the careful and meticulous handling of all data as well as a skillful interpretation.

The data analysis was a process that allowed the information collected to be organized in a fashion that was easily retrievable to help make sense of the data. Creswell's (2007) spiral analysis process was adopted that helped organize the voluminous amount of data. It is the using of the spiral analysis process or framework that allowed an orderly system for analyzing the data. The process of organizing and managing the data is illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11. *Framework for Analysis Adaptation of Creswell's Data Analysis and Representation for Case Study*

Step	Process
1	Data managing: Create and organize files for data.
2	Reading, memoing: Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes.
3	Describing: Describe the case and its context.
4	Classifying: Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns.
5	Interpreting: Use direct interpretation, develop naturalistic generalizations.
6	Representing, visualizing: Present in-depth picture of the case (or cases) using narrative, table, and figures.

Data Managing

The data must be easily accessible and sorted for quick access. Digital files for each interview (including the demographic surveys) were organized by participant's name, postsecondary institutions, and were placed in color-coded files in a secure cabinet. For additional security and safety, all digital files were placed on two separate flash drives.

Memoing

The recording of the interviews allows the conversation to be heard again and again, creating a reflective process whereby the opportunity to discover themes or patterns can be readily interpreted. Memoing or note-taking provides for an opportunity to reflect on what is being ascertained during the interview and to glean a perspective that can assist in making sense of the data.

Johnson and Christensen (2004) described the process of memoing: "Memos are reflective notes that researchers write to themselves about what they are learning from

their data" (p. 501). Memoing, as suggested by Johnson and Christensen, should be done as expeditiously as possible, which allows less reliance on the researcher's memory, which greatly enhances the accuracy and reliability. A written account utilizing both field notes and memoing to create reflective notes from the data should be an ongoing process and greatly enhanced the accuracy and reliability of the data analysis process. Merriam (1998) succinctly described, "What is written down or mechanically recorded from a period of observation becomes the raw data from which a study's findings eventually emerge" (p. 104).

Describing, Classifying, and Interpreting

By organizing the data into large groups or classifications, a categorizing and coding system was established. Categorizing and coding show connections or relationships in the phenomena being studied and assist in constructing meaningful themes and patterns from the raw data. Categorizing the data, as suggested by Creswell (2007), may include parceling the data into small pieces to search for themes and patterns. Merriam (1998) concurred: "More commonly, researchers extend analysis to developing categories, themes, or other taxonomic classes that interpret the meaning of the data. The categories become the findings of the study" (Merriam, 1998, p. 192). Interpreting the data means analyzing and understanding what is meant from the participants' perspectives or the insights being conveyed. As Creswell proposed, "In the process of interpretation, researchers step back and form larger meanings of what is going on in the situations or sites" (p. 154).

Representing and Visualizing

Once the data was categorized and coded for themes and patterns, diagrams and

tables were created that concatenated the qualitative data into categories. The categories

that were created assisted in a typology classification system that organized the

qualitative data into relationships from the transcribed interviews. The diagrams and

tables were used as drawings and outlines in the search for themes that accommodated

the generation or exploration of theories based on the data. Johnson and Christensen

(2004) suggested that diagrams can be helpful in making sense of the data. Showing

linkages or causal relationships between key items in the data were shown to be effective

by the researcher in analysis of the data. The findings from the data analysis provided

useful insight into the professional development activities offered to new and seasoned

trustees.

<div align="center">

Trustworthiness and Validity

</div>

Qualitative research must be conducted in a consistent manner that ensures that

the study is trustworthy, valid, and rigorous to achieve confident outcomes. According to

Lincoln and Guba (1985), trustworthiness means that a rigorous process was embodied,

which includes the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. Validity refers to whether the study results are accurate and reliable and

meet the original intentions of the study purpose questions. As Merriam (1998)

contended, "Every researcher wants to contribute results that are believable and

trustworthy" (p. 218). Expounding on the concept of rigor, Creswell (2007) stated,

"Rigor means, too, that the researcher validates the accuracy of the account using one or

more of the procedures for validation, such as member checking, triangulating sources of

data, or using peer or external auditors of the accounts" (p. 46).

All elements described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were utilized in this research

study design and methodology process. Lincoln and Guba's four elements of

trustworthiness in qualitative naturalistic study are detailed in Table 12.

Table 12. *Lincoln and Guba's Evaluative Criteria*

Step	Criterion
1	Credibility—confidence in the truth of the findings. Techniques for establishing creditability include prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, referential adequacy and member checking.
2	Transferability—showing that the findings have applicability on other contexts. A technique for establishing transferability includes thick description.
3	Dependability—showing that the findings are consistent and could be repeated. A technique for establishing dependability is an inquiry audit.
4	Confirmability—a degree of neutrality or the extent to which the findings of a study are shaped by the respondents and not researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Techniques would include confirmability audit, audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity.

Note. Adapted from *Naturalistic Inquiry,* by Y. S. Lincoln and E. Guba (1985), pp. 234-237 Copyright 1985 by Sage Publications.

Creditability in the research study was accomplished by spending time with the

participants (i.e., trustees). In addition, creditability was further enhanced by having peer

examiners in the small pilot study provide insights and suggestions to the study data

collection process and the interview questions. Member checks were accomplished by

having all of the participants review the transcripts for accuracy. All of the participants commented that the transcripts were an accurate portrayal of the actual interviews.

Transferability in the study was achieved by providing rich and thick description information concerning the background of the participants, conclusions, and interpretations of the findings. Merriam (1998) suggested the researcher provide rich and thick description information that will allow the reader to determine whether the findings can be easily transferred to another setting or environment. Creswell (2007) agreed and recommended, "To make sure that the findings are transferable between the researcher and those being studied, thick description is necessary" (p. 204).

Dependability is a key element in assuring trustworthiness and validity remained embedded in the research process. An audit trail was provided that gave a clear description to the reader of the process methodology, data collection procedures, coding of the data, and conclusions found in the study. Providing an audit trail allows readers to follow a roadmap of the researcher's findings, which allows the data to be examined and can support the interpretations and conclusions. The transparent study also enhanced the dependability of the research by providing clear, logical explanations for the selection of the design and methodology. In addition, the theoretical lens from which the study was explored was explained in expansive detail with supporting documentation that gave further credence to the dependability of the findings.

Conformability in the research study greatly improved upon the trustworthiness and validity aspects of the design process by guarding against any researcher bias. Conformability refers to whether the results can be collaborated by others. Several

techniques for establishing conformability are available such as audit trail, triangulation of the data, and critical reflection in the field notes. Critical reflection was a significant element in this study because the researcher was a sitting trustee. Acknowledging the background and perspectives of the researcher helped clarify how the study was positioned and/or possible innate bias. Clearly stating any biases or perspectives provides for transparent process in the design methodology. The researcher is the instrument of research, but should not be the central figure of the research. As Merriam (1998) articulated, "The best a researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process and to examine his or her own philosophical orientation vis-à-vis these issues" (p. 219).

Yin (2009) articulated a four-test approach to the research design of a case study that is similar to Lincoln and Guba's (1985) techniques to evaluative trustworthiness. Each of Yin's four design tests has a tactic associated with it that provides specific ways to assess and codify the soundness of each. The case study tactics are analytical measurements designed to offer more than one way of validating the test results. Yin's criteria are described in Table 13.

Table 13. *Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests*

Tests	Case study tactic	Phase of research on which tactic occurs
Construct validity	Use multiple sources of evidence	Data collection
	Establish chain of evidence	Data collection
	Have key informants review draft case study report	Composition

Tests	Case study tactic	Phase of research on which tactic occurs
Internal validity	Do pattern matching	Data analysis
	Do explanation building	Data analysis
	Address rival explanations	Data analysis
	Use logic models	Data analysis
External validity	Use theory in single-case studies	Research design
	Use replication logic in multiple-case studies	Research design
Reliability	Use case study protocol	Data collection
	Develop case study database	Data collection

Note. Adapted from "Case Study Tactics for Four Design Tests," by R. K. Yin (2009), *Case Study Research: Design and Methods,* p. 41. Copyright 2009 by Sage Publications.

The four tests described by Yin (2009) represent a logical approach to producing trustworthiness and validity in the research design. Of the four tests and tactics espoused by Yin, all were incorporated into the research process. Construct validity was accomplished by triangulating multiple data sources of evidence such as interviews and documents resulting in more than one source of evidence. Yin (2009) contended, "The use of multiple sources of evidence in case studies allows an investigator to address a broader range of historical and behavioral issues" (p. 115). A chain of evidence or audit trail was provided that can give the reader a clear and concise method of review and the data that supported the research findings. Yin's other tactic in the construct validity was achieved by participants (informants) reviewing their transcripts. Internal validity for the

case study research reveals how inferences were made based on a particular event

occurring (e.g., the professional development opportunities and activities for trustees).

External validity is applicable and was present because the research findings could be

transferred and used in another situation. Reliability was present in the research findings

because the processes and procedures employed in the study could easily be duplicated to

allow another researcher to arrive at conclusions that answer their study's purpose. The

trustworthiness and validity, as described by both methods articulated in Lincoln and

Guba (1985) and Yin, enhanced the trustworthiness and validity of the research findings.

Limitations

All research has inherent weaknesses and limitations associated with the design

and methodology. Therefore, they must be minimized through actions taken and

strategies employed, and others must be acknowledged as realities of the study design.

Because limitations may in some way affect the transferability of the research findings, it

is crucial to address them clearly. Careful and deliberate steps must be taken with

attention to documenting the research process in this qualitative case study to protect the

integrity of the research.

Although the case study research is a rich, descriptive narrative, it presents the

participants' stories as moments in their tenure as trustees and is bounded by the guiding

questions presented in the research. The research was also limited by time and in the

exploration of certain aspects of the trustees' role and responsibility of their governing

positions with the data presented as a single and purposeful focus. However, as stated by

Merriam (1998), "Case study is the best plan for answering the research questions; its

strengths outweigh its limitations. The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon" (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

The limitations relevant to this research were recall or memory of the pertinent events by the participants, as well as researcher bias. Because some of the participants had served in their positions for a number of years, exact recall or memory of the event may have been difficult because of the length of time that had passed. To adequately allow time for the participants to prepare and to reflect on their time as trustee, the interview questions were e-mailed 1 week in advance. In addition, to assist in the recall of the participant's memory, probing questions were utilized to assist in stimulating reflexive thought.

Research bias was acknowledged because the researcher is a sitting trustee. Researcher bias was decreased by creating an exhaustive audit trail that included an extensive collection of reflexive field notes. Critical reflection by the researcher and a focus on subjectivity assisted in the avoidance of bias, which is inherent in a qualitative case study. As described by Yin (2009), "All of the preceding conditions will be negated if an investigator seeks only to use a case study to substantiate a preconceived position" (p. 72). Steps of the research were carefully documented throughout the journey, which allows for future duplication of similar research by others and the transferability of the findings. As a limitation of the research, Merriam (1998) contended, "Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection, data have been filtered through his or her particular theoretical position and biases" (p. 216).

Pilot

In preparation for the participant interviews, two experts (current trustees of community colleges) agreed to participate in a simulation of the interview process and review the interview questions. A research protocol was followed for both participants that included the following: (a) e-mailing the participants the interview questions 1 week in advance of the interview, (b) asking for their permission to record the interview, and (c) requesting the participants to provide demographic information contained in the survey. Once the experts agreed to be in the pilot, the research purpose and the driving questions were e-mailed to the participants in advance of the interview. The simulation of the pilot was beneficial because it allowed for practicing and timing the interview questions to be rehearsed. Therefore, future interviews were succinct and concise. In addition, several follow-up or probing questions were discovered during the pilots that were introduced into the actual interviews. The actual data collected was destroyed and not used in the study.

Researcher as the Tool

The researcher is the tool through which the information is collected, presented, analyzed, and situated. As Merriam (1998) described, "The final product of this type of study is yet another interpretation by the researcher of others' views filtered through his or her own" (p. 23). Creswell (2007) agreed: "The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem, and it extends the literature or signals a call for action" (p. 37). Therefore, for the reader, it is important to understand the researcher's

background, experience, and expertise as the lens from which to view the perspective of the study.

The community college experience of the researcher, Bill Griffin, spans a long period. He began a career in the electric utility industry; as he received more advanced degrees, he began to climb the corporate ladder from a supervisory level to middle-level management and eventually to senior-level positions. While working full time, he attended a community college part-time and graduated with an associate of arts degree. He continued his education by graduating from DePaul University in Chicago with both a bachelor of science and a master of business administration degree.

After completion of a master of business administration degree, Bill became an adjunct faculty member; he taught undergraduate courses at a community college and graduate courses at a university. His previous experience as a part-time community college student as well as his rise through the ranks of the corporate world provided credibility with many students who were on the same path in business and industry as he had journeyed.

After teaching for 11 years as an adjunct, Bill decided he wanted to participate at the community college in a different role. His senior-level positions in business gave him the opportunity to influence policy decisions and to participate in an organization's governance structure at the highest level. He saw the same opportunity to leverage his business and educational experiences at the community college from which he previously graduated. Bill decided to seek an elected trustee position to share his expertise and passion for education. He was elected and is currently serving in his third 6-year term.

Serving as a trustee offered many opportunities to become involved at the state and national level in promoting the community college mission, not only for the local community college, but for postsecondary institutions throughout the country and internationally. He has held several leadership positions at the national level and meets frequently with members of the general assembly of Illinois and the U.S. Congress to advocate for students and community colleges. In addition, Bill has spoken on behalf of community college issues locally, nationally, and internationally.

After many years serving in corporate America, including a period of time as a chief operating officer, Bill retired. However, he never lost his passion for teaching and education. After this retirement, Bill was able to again pursue his true calling, which was to teach in a community college. Bill is currently a faculty member in the business department at a community college, developing many new and innovative online classes. Bill now serves as the business department coordinator at one community college and a member of the board of trustees at another community college.

Summary

This case study was situated in the qualitative paradigm and set in the interpretive paradigm to explore the adequacy and availability of professional development opportunities for new and seasoned trustees. The participants were interviewed to explore perceptions about their roles and responsibilities as governing board members, but also where they obtained information about professional development activities. Documents and field notes were used to gain a historical perspective and to supplement the comments received from the study participants. The research was bounded by each

participant's role as a governing board member, geographic location within the states, and the identification of the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for 2-year postsecondary trustees.

Purposeful sampling ensured a holistic and rounded perspective would be articulated from the participants. Because they were from different regions of Illinois and Wisconsin, their experience varied depending on their length of service, and the different methods (election or appointment) upon which they came to their positions. Maximum variation provided a diverse geographic selection process along with representation from rural, suburban, and urban settings.

The goal of the research was to discover insights into the professional development activities made available to trustees that were useful and beneficial as they debated and decided higher education policy issues. Role and responsibilities and development activities needed for both new and seasoned governing board members will provide a more collaborative and efficient system for the governing board members.

CHAPTER 4.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

This chapter begins with a review of postsecondary institutions in Illinois and Wisconsin selected for this research, along with demographic profiles for the trustees interviewed. The transcribed interviews are analyzed from the perspective of the educational and interpersonal dimension from the competencies of governing boards, as developed by Chait *et al*. (1993). Documents generally noted as containing professional development information regarding the board of trustees and gathered from a variety of sources are also analyzed. The chapter also presents the data related to the three theories presented in this research: adult learning, group socialization, and groupthink, along with any emergent themes.

The purpose of this study was to identify the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for 2-year postsecondary trustees that assist those trustees to become more effective contributors in shaping higher education policy decisions. Guiding questions arising from the purpose for this study explored the roles and responsibilities of boards of trustees, how they feel they influenced policy decisions, and what professional development activities for the trustees are available and what seems to be lacking.

Background of Trustees and Postsecondary Institutions

To garner a broad perspective of rich data from study participants, diversity among site institutions as well as the participants themselves was important. The rationale for the selection criteria for the states, institutions, and the participants was to

capture a wider diversity of trustee perspectives from two states with different processes for selecting trustees.

Trustees from four community colleges in Illinois and four technical colleges in Wisconsin participated in this research. Illinois community college trustees are elected to 6-year terms by voters within the college district. Wisconsin technical college trustees are appointed to 3-year terms by county board chairpersons. However, for the Milwaukee Area Technical College, Fox Valley Technical College, and Southwest Wisconsin Technical College, the appointment is made by school board presidents. One of the participants came from one of these institutions. To take into account the perspective of seasoned and new trustees, the participants were also divided into these two groups.

To protect their identity and maintain confidentiality of the participants, the designation for the trustees was as follows: Trustees in Illinois who were serving their first term were designated as Trustee IL-N-1 and Trustee IL-N-2, and trustees serving beyond one term were designated as Trustee IL-S-1 and Trustee IL-S-2. In Wisconsin, the designations were Trustee WI-N-1 and Trustee WI-N-2 to represent trustees serving in their first term, and Trustee WI-S-1 and Trustee WI-S-2 to represent trustees serving beyond one term.

Three of the Illinois trustees were men and three were over the age of 50. One was under 30 and had also been a student trustee. Their education status was very diverse; two of the trustees hold a doctoral degree. All of the men had a background in business and were currently employed in a business. The lone female trustee was over the

age of 60 and had an extensive educational background. Demographic profiles of the

Illinois study participants are presented in Table 14.

Table 14. *Illinois Trustees' Demographics and Postsecondary Institutions*

Designation	Gender	Age group (years)	Ethnicity	Trustee role	Years served as trustee	Career position	Terminal degree
IL-S1	Male	51-55	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Vice chair of board	11	Business executive	Doctorate, business administration
IL-S2	Female	60+	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Chair of board	10	Retired middle school teacher	Master of arts, education
IL-N-1	Male	51-55	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Trustee	1	Business executive	Doctorate, physics
IL-N-2	Male	25-30	Hispanic	Trustee, former student trustee	1	Business executive	Bachelor of arts, business

Three of the four Wisconsin trustees were men. Two of the male trustees were 46

to 50 years old, and the two remaining trustees were over 60. The trustees had common

backgrounds in business; two of the trustees held executive positions in nonprofit

institutions and one owned a business. The female trustee was over the age of 60 and was

also an entrepreneur and owned a small business. One of the trustees had obtained a

doctoral degree, two had earned master's degrees, and one held a bachelor's degree.

Table 15 presents the demographic profiles of the Wisconsin study participants.

Table 15. *Wisconsin Trustees' Demographics and Postsecondary Institutions*

Designation	Gender	Age group (years)	Ethnicity	Trustee role	Years served as trustee	Career position	Terminal degree
WI-S1	Female	60+	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Trustee	15	Physical therapist	Master of science
WI-S2	Male	46-50	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Past chair of board	15	Business owner	Bachelor of science, business
WI-N-1	Male	46-50	African American	Vice chair of board	3	Senior executive, not-for-profit organization	Doctorate, veterinary medicine
WI-N-2	Male	60+	Caucasian, non-Hispanic	Past chair of board	3	Senior executive, not-for-profit organization	Master of arts, business administration

Restatement of Research Purpose and Questions

Framework for Analyzing the Data

To gain insights and explore the perspectives from the two distinct groups of participants, analysis is separated into seasoned trustees and new trustees. To provide a more encompassing dimension to the analytical framework, data was also considered from two points of reference: practical competencies of board members and the theoretical lenses situating this research. The practical competencies of board members utilize two of the six competencies needed for effective college/university boards

suggested by the research of Chait *et al.* (1993). The theories and lenses serving to situate

this research were group socialization, adult learning, and groupthink.

Two Practical Competencies for Analysis

Chait *et al.'s* (1993) six competencies include the following themes: (a)

contextual, (b) educational, (c) interpersonal, (d) analytical, (e) political, and (f) strategic.

Most relevant to this research, the competencies of educational and interpersonal

competencies were used. Education competency centers on trustee education and

development. Interpersonal competency focuses on the development of the board's

performance as an effective and efficient group. Table 16 presents details of Chait *et*

al.'s. educational and interpersonal competencies.

Table 16.*Competencies Relevant to This Study*

Competency/dimension	Required activities
Educational dimension: The board takes the necessary steps to ensure that trustees are well-informed about the institution, the profession, and the board's roles, responsibilities, and performance.	Consciously creates opportunities for trustee education and development. Regularly seeks information and feedback on its own performance. Pauses periodically for self-reflection, to diagnose its strengths and limitations, and to examine its mistakes.
Interpersonal dimension: The board nurtures the development of trustees as a group, attends to the board's collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness.	Creates a sense of inclusiveness among trustees. Develops group goals and recognizes group achievements. Identifies and cultivates leadership within the board.

Note. Adapted from *The Effective Board of Trustees,* by R. P. Chait, T. P. Holland, and
B. E. Taylor (1993) pp. 2-3. Copyright 1993 by the American Council on Education and
The Oryx Press.

A Priori Themes From Theories and Concepts for Analysis

Group socialization theory focuses on the functioning of a group; in this case the group was the community college board of trustees. All board decisions are group decisions; therefore, it is important that boards can function well as a group. However, collectively, the board is a group of individuals from different backgrounds who come together to ensure that the institution's mission is fulfilled and representative of the community that it serves. This research explored what the individual members believed is their role and responsibility as a trustee and if they recognized the functioning of the board as a group.

Professional development encompasses all types of learning opportunities for the improvement of skills, understanding, and to gain knowledge. Undoubtedly, the professional development activities consist of two components: the content or information, as well as the delivery method. No one who assumes a trusteeship position knows what this role entails. Other than learning via various professional development activities, there is no way to prepare for this important position. Regardless of the number of years seated on the community college board, trustees need continuous and regularly scheduled learning opportunities focused on the particular college and the board's role and function. To effectively impart relevant and pertinent content, the delivery method must involve adult learning principles. There is no question; professional development activities designed and delivered using adult learning principles will enhance trustees' learning outcomes. This research explored if the trustees (both new and seasoned) believed they had adequate professional development activities, the benefits of

professional development activities, and suggestions for improvement for the trustees to be an engaged and effective functioning community college board.

Groupthink and its inherent negative context can be seen as the antithesis of a well-functioning group. A group such as the community college board of trustees is especially vulnerable to groupthink because those coming onto the board are novices in every sense of the word. Therefore, it is paramount that community college boards of trustees are acutely aware of the problems caused by groupthink and strive to become a high-functioning and cohesive group of individuals. This study attempted to discover if the participants were aware of the possibility of groupthink as they serve as a board member.

In addition to using the theories and concepts in the literature review as a priori themes, emergent themes and patterns arising from the data were also captured and analyzed. The data presented by the participants was explored to search for key patterns and themes, first by the seasoned trustees, then by the new trustees related to each of the guiding and interview questions separately. This process allows the reader to easily understand the complicated research findings by these governing board members operating at different spectrums of their policy-making positions.

Guiding Question 1

What are the perceived roles and responsibilities of selected community and technical college boards of trustees' members?

Simply stated, the board of the trustees is a group of individuals legally charged with the responsibility to govern a college. In the broad scope, the roles and responsibilities of the board are both simple and complex. The trustee's role is to

establish the vision and mission of the institution, set strategy and structure, delegate to

management, and exercise accountability to constituents, state and federal regulatory

bodies, and accrediting agencies. The responsibilities of trustees are to look after the

affairs of the college and act in good faith in what they believe is in the best interest of

the institution. These responsibilities include the following:

- Monitoring that the college attains its mission;

- Approving the strategic plan and monitoring compliance with the goals and

  objectives to see that it is accomplished;

- Hiring, supporting, evaluating, and sometimes firing the president;

- Ensuring the fiscal integrity of the college's operations;

- Representing the ideas, beliefs, values and desires of the community it serves;

- Developing the policies and procedures governing human resource

  management; and

- Fairly running the institution with skill and care.

The AGB (2010) echoed this simplified explanation and contended that the

following are certainly at the top of the list for a governing board member and can be

used as universal guidelines.

1. Ensure that the institution's mission is kept current and is aligned with public

   purposes. In the case of a multi-campus system, ensure the alignment of each

   campus' mission with the system's vision and public purposes.

2. Select a chief executive to lead the institution.

3. Support and periodically assess the performance of the chief executive and

   establish and review the chief executive's compensation.

4. Charge the chief executive with the task of leading a strategic planning process, participate in that process, approve the strategic process, and monitor its progress. (AGB, 2010, p. 7)

Not surprisingly, the majority of trustees came from business backgrounds. Therefore, one would expect that their understanding of business requirements and practices would be transferable to their position as trustees. In addition, some of the participants had also served on boards of other organizations or had direct experience with boards for their businesses. However, even with this previous experience, each knew how boards worked, but could not describe or explain what was their comprehensive role and responsibility as a board member.

All participants believed they understood the functioning of the board. They expressed their positive experiences as a trustee throughout the interview and felt that in general, they were "doing their job well." However, the participant answers for this guiding question were fragmented rather than concise and summarizing regarding their role and responsibility. As expected, distinctions were seen between the seasoned and new trustees' answers.

Seasoned trustees. The findings suggest that some trustees perceive their role in the realm of a regulator overseeing a process that is happening around them rather than as active participant in the process. All of the seasoned trustees discussed their commitment to the constituents (taxpayers) who live within the community college district and the students the college serves as being of utmost importance to them. However, most of the seasoned trustees described their roles only in general descriptive terms. Interestingly, seasoned trustees' comments represented only fragments of their roles and

responsibilities as a trustee. Comments from seasoned trustees are illustrative of this

phenomenon, as demonstrated here:

> So I thought I pretty much knew what I was doing. I quickly learned that I didn't have a clue and started to do a great deal of reading and talking to people and figuring out that the kinds of concerns that sometimes K-12 boards address are definitely not the kinds of concerns that we deal with at community colleges. (IL-S-2)

> Two seasoned trustees discussed their role and responsibilities as liaisons; they

serve as linkages to the communities they serve, and they are expressed as follows:

> My role is merely a connection between the community and the school. It is really important part of what we do. We need to know what the issues are and what the concerns are. What are the needs out there? To me, one important thing is that connection. Trustees are involved with and need to help lead the school in terms of setting direction, setting the tone, setting the attitude, not only for the administration, but for the faculty and students. (IL-S-1)

> I did not meet the board members until the very first meeting. It was like being thrown to the wolves. I see my role as an overseer, without a doubt. I see it as a guide for the college as a whole to ensure that the students have access to programs, to ensure that the college is fiscally responsible, and to meet the needs of the constituents. (WI-S-1)

In addition, these seasoned trustees saw their role and responsibility as fiscal agents who

were dutifully charged by the taxpayer to monitor and control the purse strings of the

institution.

> Basically, as a trustee, we are the gatekeepers. We hold the keys. We have asked questions; make decisions and lookout for the people in our districts. Students, the population, taxpayer. (WI-S-2)

> The one thing that comes to mind right now is the budget, which obviously is one of the most critical pieces as far as a tool in controlling what we do and what we focus on. (IL-S-1)

> One seasoned trustee's comments set her apart from the others. This seasoned

trustee responded by giving the textbook response to the trustee role and responsibilities.

Of all the trustees interviewed, this IL-S-2 presented the most succinct and to-the-point

answer to this question:

> As a representative of almost a million residents of District ___. To provide the
> best possible education to the residents' needs is part of our mission. But, as a
> trustee, our only concerns are setting policy, hiring a president, evaluating that
> president and overseeing our fiscal responsibilities. (IL-S-2)

> Almost all of the seasoned trustees viewed their role as overseer of the college.

They also tended to see themselves as a gatekeeper, meaning that the trustees hold the

keys, ask the difficult questions, and act as an advocate for the taxpayer and the students.

With one exception, none of the seasoned trustees mentioned viewing their role as being

one of assisting the institution in meeting the mission of the college.

> The responses also seemed to suggest that the trustee is a passive observer unless

something is discovered that is wrong or a potential problem that causes the trustee to

leap into action to correct a perceived oversight or deficiency within the institution. One

seasoned trustee gave a narrow view of his responsibility by stating he had the authority

to approve or deny items presented to the board and openly question the administration.

Here is an example from a seasoned trustee that supports this more passive role.

> Also, with the board meetings themselves things will just pop up and it gives us
> the chance to look at things and explore things on how do we want to approach
> this. (IL-S-1)

> Growth and development of a well-functioning community college trustee takes

time and effort. To gain knowledge of their unique role and responsibility, the onus is on

the trustee to take the initiative and be proactive to better understand the mission of the

community or technical college. In addition, the trustee must learn who the stakeholders

are and their inherent interest in the institution, as well as comparing and contrasting

what comparable institutions in the general area are doing. Another trustee discussed how

it is important to take the initiative and continually engage oneself in a learning process

that helps the governing board member understand the institution and all of the

stakeholders who hold them accountable. Of primary importance is to learn as quickly

and thoroughly as possible the internal functions of the college. The seasoned trustee

expressed it this way:

> You have to understand your college and you have to understand your
> communities. You also have to understand the business climate and you need to
> understand basically all the entities that drive the college and the budget. (WI-S-
> 1)

The time required to build knowledge was also recognized as an important process of

trustee development. One of the seasoned trustees expressed this theme in contemplating

the roles and responsibilities of a trustee, as indicated by this comment:

> As a trustee . . . it is a learning experience. We also learn. For trustees it is an
> ongoing learning experience. That is the reason why I feel it is so important for
> trustees to get out in the world and to network with other trustees throughout the
> country so we are not living in silos. We are not just being told what our
> administrators want us to hear. (WI-S-2)

Seasoned trustees were also asked if their perceptions of their roles had changed

since they became a governing board member. All participants responded in the

affirmative; examples of their answers are presented here:

> Well, quite honestly, when I came in, I wasn't sure what my responsibility was. I
> was really the new kid on the block. I had an idea of the fact that I was basically
> to make decisions and oversee programming of the college. It wasn't until after
> the basic orientation and the basic tour and actually after 6 months of being in the
> position that I began to understand. (WI-S-1)

> I think it has. Part of it, I guess, when I first got on the board, I didn't know that
> much about what community colleges did. I was a student for a little bit at _____
> is my school and I had always heard great things about it. But for me, it was more
> of an issue of how I could give back to the community. How I could help out.

> That's what got me motivated originally to get involved with _____. But since then, I have learned much, much more about what the school does. What their focus is. Who are the players? How they are making a difference. It gives me a deeper understanding and appreciation and maybe a passion of what community colleges do. I guess, too, I have gotten more involved and have gotten to know my board members and my president. Then you go to state meetings and you meet other trustees. You get to know what they are about and why they go to these things. Why they are involved. This doesn't pay. This is not a paying job. This is something people do because they want to. (IL-S-1)

The comment by IL-S-1 explains primarily why trustees serve in this role because there is no remuneration. One might ask what drives the trustee. Is it self-interest or a passion for what the community college does? From this seasoned trustee, one could extrapolate that it is passion for community and technical colleges that drive their motivation and interest to serve as governing board members.

These changes in perceptions offer valuable information about how trustees viewed their roles over a period of time. Of particular interest is how, over time, trustees began to see their responsibilities more holistically and began to view their role as making an impact at the postsecondary level. Before they were elected or appointed, they really knew very little about the community or technical colleges they were now charged to govern. Even though only one of the participants described the long and steep learning curve, one suspects many more felt this way as well. Seasoned trustees discussed how, over time, they developed a deeper understanding of the institution and began to bond with other trustees at different institutions around the state and the country. Here is an example of this subject in a statement by a seasoned trustee:

> An appreciation at the local level to a deepening understanding of what the school is trying to do. When I go to Illinois meetings, I meet folk like___ and ___ those guys, we develop some friendships over time. It hooks you. (IL-S-1)

New trustees. In general new trustees viewed their role and responsibilities differently, but like the seasoned trustees, the majority could not specifically define their roles and responsibilities. The new trustees were more inclined to specify the institution's mission and strategic items as part of their role and responsibilities compared to the seasoned trustees. Why this distinction exists causes one to pause and ask why the new trustee would be more apt to mention strategy and mission in their comments. Was it because they were not as far removed from their initial professional development and training, as compared to their seasoned trustee counterparts, and this issue perhaps was frequently discussed and remembered as a significant part of their roles? Two of the new trustees felt their role and responsibilities were part of a larger picture, not only a connection with the community, but involved with the institution's mission, strategic planning, or setting policy. Examples of their comments are presented here:

> As I understand it, some of the obvious responsibilities are providing oversight, sort of financial oversight for the institution that the resources of the college are being used in an appropriate way given the mission of the institution. In addition, the role of the board is to establish policies for the operation of the institution and to put into place mechanisms to provide checks and balances, audit and so on, and services to ensure that the policies put in place are actually being followed. (IL-N-1)

> I view a trustee's role as setting long-term strategic objectives then being part of the board to develop and monitor policy that assures that we reach those strategic objectives. (WI-N-2)

> Even though they discussed their involvement with the mission, it was not

apparent that these new trustees understood how and in what ways their roles and responsibilities assisted to maintain the mission of the institution. Two new trustees described their function as operating within the realm of policies and procedures already established at the institution. Examples of their comments follow.

There will be the ceremonial graduation commencement. There will be building dedications and different fundraising components where we partner with the Foundation to do outreach with the community with different folks that we identify as potential donors or with whom to build a broader network. (IL-N-2)

First and foremost, I believe that trustees or board members have an overall responsibility of providing assistance with issues pertaining to governance, dealing with policies, procedures, and protocols. In that our primary function is to make sure that from an administrative standpoint, we stay within the realm of policies, procedures and protocols. (WI-N-1)

These new trustees did not view their roles and responsibilities as being an overseer, which was in contrast to the seasoned trustees. In fact, one of the new trustees warned against micromanaging the affairs of the institution. He expressed his concern and view of the role and the responsibility by these comments:

I am very much a stickler for not micromanaging the administration but being available to answer questions from the administration . . . we should deal with more big-picture issues. (WI-N-1)

Another interesting observation was the advocacy comment by the IL-N-1 trustee. It would seem particularly important that a key role and responsibility would be for trustees to frequently communicate with their state and federal legislators on the needs of their institutions to take advantage of the spotlight that community and technical colleges are enjoying in today's political arena. One of the new trustees mentioned advocacy with elected representatives as part of his role. His comment was as follows:

There is an advocacy role for the trustee position, not something of which I have a chance to do at this point. Obviously, we are here in Washington, DC, and we are intending to do that. (IL-N-1)

Importantly, only two new trustees specifically mentioned working with their colleagues as a group as an important part of their role and responsibility. Their comments are as follows:

> But as a cohesive unit, you are really responsible to discharge the duty of trustee only at the meeting. (IL-N-1)

> From a board member standpoint you are part of the collective board . . . as a cohesive unit, you are responsible to discharge the duty of trustee only at the meetings. (IL-N-2)

These new trustees not only discussed the board as a group, but one made it very clear that he knew the statutory power of the governing board members only existed when the board is formally in session. The other new trustee, IL-N-1, brought up the idea of the board as a collective unit, alluding to the board as a functioning group. From this comment, the concept of group began to enter into the conversation as part of the roles and responsibilities of a board member.

One comment by the youngest participant and a new trustee, IL-N-2, brought perhaps a different perspective to the table as part of his answer to how he perceived his roles and responsibilities as a trustee:

> Community colleges have to start acting like private colleges in terms of how they approach different revenues enhancements. (IL-N-2)

This perspective was the only one presented by the trustees that provided a concern specifically about a different approach to solving some of the financial concerns of 2-year postsecondary institutions. Trustee IL-N-2 referred to scrutinizing how private colleges are approaching funding issues, but the comment raises a larger issue of how a different approach or model to some of the problems should be considered as a breakthrough on thinking for trustees related to problems they currently face. As Johnston *et al.* (2010) noted, "Funders and the general public have grown impatient with rising costs, and current questions about the 'valued added' of a college degree indicate public frustration" (p. 16).

Guiding Question 2

How, and in what ways, do community and technical college trustees believe they

influence policy decisions in their institutions?

For clarification purposes, the word *policy* is defined by Merriam-Webster (n.d.)

as "a definite course or method of action selected to guide and determine present and

future decisions" (para. 2). The board understands the mission and the operations of the

college, sets policy, and delegates the responsibility and authority for carrying out those

policies to the president. As a general concept, setting policy was recognized as being

fundamental among all of the trustees, but none of the participants described this as an

inherent power or duty of the board. It was unclear from the responses if they truly

understood the difference between a policy and a procedure, and a policy and a strategic

planning goal.

Seasoned trustees approached this question with more of a political perspective

than did the new trustees. Seasoned trustees commented on the personal political agendas

often seen in the board room, which in turn affects the work of the board. Discussed as

factors in the development of policy decisions included seeking input from administration

and working with the president, collaborative efforts with other board members, and

common respect for their fellow board members. Only the new trustees specifically

addressed the need for data and information to assist them with setting policy.

Seasoned trustees. One of the seasoned trustees responded by stating that

influencing policy or reviewing policy was a chance to be reflective of some of the

board's past decisions. During this reflection regarding the policies, he also felt this was a

time for the board to look forward and perhaps change direction. In addition, this

seasoned trustee commented that it could be done in a collaborative manner, discussing

polices with his fellow trustees:

> In your board retreats we get a chance to sit down and really let your hair down. That's where you get into some of the issues that go on with the philosophy those policies are the direction we might want to focus on. When I think of policy, I think of progress. (IL-S-1)

In addition, two trustees discussed how they were influenced by internal and external

needs of stakeholders:

> Part of that is the partnership with your administrators who are there every day. They see the issues and hopefully see it a lot better than we do because they are there. (IL-S-1)

> Then it would be definitely be external . . . student needs. You are looking at the faculty and their specific program needs or facilities. You do not build a building if you do not have the need to do it. (WI-S-1)

> Another seasoned trustee viewed the dynamics of her board as being divisive

along political lines and that decisions affecting policy were being made with very little

input from outside of the board members. This trustee suggested often a board can be

divided when it comes to policy-making decisions, either because of differing political or

ideological points of view. This trustee described her example in the following way:

> A little over a year ago, the board formed a subcommittee to review all of our policies. Even though we were constantly going through and looking, the whole thing hadn't been done for quite some time. The board was quite divided at the time. Some of the new policies that were created were very, how can I put this appropriate way; they were not good for the college, quite frankly. The other concern was that these policies were written and proposed to be adopted without any input from staff, faculty, nobody. So it was a very difficult process because of political makeup of the board and some of the things people were trying to do. (IL-S-2)

> Another seasoned trustee stated that to change policy, first the board members

must be knowledgeable about the current policy before being able to move forward to

change or modify policies. However, an important comment made by this trustee was that

policy decisions or factors that affect the college should include input from both internal and external constituencies. The participant's statement reflected this perspective:

> First of all, we are responsible for the knowledge of what policy really is through leadership training. You begin there . . . you also have to be aware of what it is and want to know what it is and develop the responsibility of educating yourself and others of what those requirements are and how you can achieve policies and you have to understand your communities. (WI-S-1)

One of the seasoned trustees mentioned the benefit provided by a long-serving board member. He explained this individual provided the current board a historical prospective surrounding the policy and was a mentor to him and the whole board. The seasoned trustee addressed this issue with the following comment:

> Somebody had that history and has gone through presidents, gone through staff, history and it does repeat itself, to a point. We can always revisit it, but these are some of good things and bad things and it is nice to have some of that history to share because now with the retirements that are happening institutions get less and less history. (WI-S-2)

It is interesting to note that although some of the seasoned trustees mentioned or implied the need to be cognizant of the communities they served, they did not articulate being influenced by outside pressures.

New trustees. There was a hint of trepidation in their voices as two of the new trustees responded to this question, as if they were feeling their way around their comments. It appeared they were not sure of the boundaries of their authority or how willing the seasoned trustees were prepared to listen to them. One new trustee commented that he was influencing policy by giving advice directly to the president, and was surprised that his fellow board members were willing to listen to his counsel as they discussed policy issues. Another trustee stated that he used the newness of his position to

play the devil's advocate to explore questions posed to his fellow board members. Two

comments about how they influence policy decisions are as follows:

> My first chance to maybe influence what is happening is just in that one-on-one
> conversation with the president. We have a good rapport and she seems to trust
> my background. I will often give her pointers about where I see things are going
> in terms of what she's suggesting and where there might be some pitfalls for that.
> Right now the way I find the board is that all the current board members seem to
> [be] becoming very collaborative. I thought the attitude would be about what I
> heard yesterday at the new trustee academy: "Shut up for 2 years and then we'll
> talk to you." If you have an area of expertise and the right kind of board, people
> are more willing to contribute to some of the decision making that goes on. (IL-N-
> 1)

> For me, it's a unique position where I am new to the board. I can use that
> perspective to be the devil's advocate or to just ask questions that, frankly, may
> not seem apparent. That's a powerful position to be in. (IL-N-2)

The two Wisconsin new trustees had opposite viewpoints on how they influenced

policy. One new trustee wanted to make sure he understood existing policy before

deciding how and in what ways he could influence future policy; however, he did

emphasize that policy decisions should be student-focused. The second Wisconsin new

trustee gave an excellent response that could be considered a textbook example as well by

describing that the board sets the policy and expects the president to carry out that policy.

In addition, he also believed the board has the task to monitor the progress toward the

goals and objectives as developed by the board. This new trustee was referring to the

policy governance model created by Dr. John Carver (2010), a former chief executive

officer and adjunct professor at the University of Georgia Institute for Nonprofit

Organizations.

The policy governance model (Carver, 2010) is designed as a leadership model

for boards to better fulfill their obligations of accountability for the organizations they

govern. If used, the model enables the board to focus on larger issues, to delegate with

specificity and clarity, to provide guidance for the president and administrators without

meddling, and to evaluate the accomplishments of the organization. The central tenet is

the board works on the big-picture ideas by leading and delegates the day-to-day

activities to administration, but holds them accountable for success of the goals and

objectives developed by the governing board. Comments by the new trustees are as

follows:

> You have to know the normal before you can diagnose the abnormal. The first thing we have we have to do is acquaint ourselves as much as we can with school policies and protocols . . . acquaint ourselves with these things or have them available through the administration or the staff. It is important to realize that our purpose is to provide direction for the college, but that our ultimate constituency are our students . . . all of our direction and all of our conversation, regardless to whether it is dealing with finance, operations, governance, should always be student-focused and student centered. (WI-N-1)

> We operate under Carver's policy governance. So we, as a board, set the perimeters which the president of the college operates. Then we measure his or her success in reaching the goals and operating within the contexts of the end statements. We influence that primarily by what we set up as end statements and how we monitor what the president does. (WI-N-2)

> Of the four new trustees, only one from Wisconsin, WI-N-2, specifically

mentioned that once a policy was established; the board holds the president accountable

for implementing that policy by monitoring the progress to make sure the board

directives are carried out. It is also interesting to note that none of the new trustees

discussed the interdependent relationship in developing policy between the president and

the board of trustees. Chait (2011) addressed this subject as he spoke recently to a group

of presidents at a Council of Independent Colleges Conference: "Presidents and boards of

trustees have an important and somewhat unusual relationship in academe: Their

partnerships are close but with mixes of respect and distrust. Their relationships are

interdependent, or perhaps codependent" (Chait, 2011, para. 1).

However, boards have an obligation to be effective stewards of the community

interests. This requires them to find ways to work cooperatively with the president to

develop policies that serve the best interests of the college, students, and stakeholders.

The new trustees commented on the need for more data and information to make a policy

decision. This effort was articulated by two of the new trustees when the first trustee

discussed how the use of intelligent data helped him influence policy and the second

trustee expressed his desire to assist the president in constructing strategy. Here are their

comments:

> We were trying to make some decisions about what some of the differential costs
> we likely would have with that many more students and what type of planning did
> we need to do because of that. I didn't feel that we had enough data to understand,
> for example, how full were classes? We asked the administration to study that and
> they did a really fine job of demonstrating that by smart scheduling, it would be
> possible to actually eliminate parking bottlenecks . . . pretty much went away by
> the intelligent use of data. (IL-N-1)

> For me, I really wanted the opportunity to dive into the issues and figure out what
> is our role and how can we best support and enable the president to construct his
> strategy. (IL-N-2)

Guiding Question 3

What professional development activities are available and are perceived as

beneficial and what seems to be lacking when addressing the learning needs of all

trustees?

Whether a seasoned or new trustee, all participants indicated they received some

type of orientation at their specific institutions. However, none of the trustees described

the orientation process in terms of being a professional development activity. This

orientation included long conversations with the president, vice presidents, directors, or other senior staff members about their specific areas of responsibilities, college tours, and a review of the institution's policy and procedures. Essentially, there was no identified formal professional development activity provided but many types of informal activities that were considered more as an orientation to the institution.

Seasoned trustees. Seasoned trustees described different orientation activities at their institutions. Some of their comments are as follows:

> When you say professional . . . what we did was I had some meetings set up with the administration before we had our board meeting. We had some set up afterwards. It was more informal, like, I would come in and I would spend 2 hours talking about the budget. Two hours to take a tour of the buildings. Two or 3 hours to sit down with the president and talk about four or five issues that I wanted to cover but also what she wants to cover, too. (IL-S-1)

> Very limited. Actually the president and I met several times . . . I was in that strange group when we changed the election law. I was elected in April and was not seated until November. In a way, that was an advantage because I was able to attend board meetings. I was included in all the mailings and during that time, the president of the college did an amazing job of setting me up with interviews with every one of the vice presidents. I met not only with the vice president, I met not only with the vice presidents, but that vice president would bring in some key people. We took tours of their area. I had mountains and mountains of material, but the good news was I had the luxury of having April to November to do that preparation. I could not have done it if I had been elected in April seated on the board 2 weeks later. (IL-S-2)

> We had an orientation. The vice presidents basically did the orientation. When I first started and that was 15 years ago, a lot has changed then. But prior to that, there really was not anything at all. (WI-S-1)

> I was lucky. Our college was very, very progressive. When I came on board, I spent, gosh, 7 hours of my time with different parts of the college. Different areas finance and human resources. At one time, I spent 2½ hours with this group and spent 2½ hours with this group. We got a packet and, in the packet, you had basically had [*sic*] background information about the main areas of the college. Then I met with the vice presidents in charge of those areas. All the while the president said, "If you have any questions, do not feel afraid to call me." It was really a learning experience. (WI-S-2)

New trustees. The new trustees described the orientation process in a similar fashion by confirming the professional development activities they received were an informal orientation process. This can be seen from their statements:

> At _____, specifically none. There is no formal structure for introducing me to [the] institution, putting a fact book in front of me. Learning the institution. The board chair has really been helpful and friendly in trying to bring me up to speed on issues, to introduce me to different individuals and take me places and so on. There has been more of that informal attempt to help me understand the institution but formally, nothing was there at the institution level. (IL-N-1)

> No, that is a good question. I would say from the initial moment when I was sworn in to the board, Dr._____, our president, took time, took an afternoon. We walked through everything from board policy to college accreditation status to union labor issues. That was the first formal; I would say professional, development for myself as a new trustee. (IL-N-2)

> The first was involving orientation at the college by administrative staff, the senior level staff, and just getting me acquainted with the college and the several branches. There are four different colleges here in the area and how they operate. The second level deals within local and regional, and then national meetings where their meetings are semantic, based on what the committee chairs have decided. That has probably been the greatest degree of continuing education that we had because . . . at the annual meetings and semiannual meetings. (WI-N-1)

> Officially, I think that the answer would be yes, but realistically the answer was nominal. I was given a very brief description of what a board member's responsibility was. I read it. I signed that I read it and that pretty much constituted my training. Since that time though, it has been recognized by both myself and two or three other trustees, that isn't enough. (WI-N-2)

Regarding what the participants found most beneficial regarding professional development activities, topics revolved around fiscal management issues and attending the state association meetings. Understanding the finances and the unique budgeting process of their college were clearly pertinent to the trustees. In addition, understanding the mission of the college was prominent with the new trustees. However, three of the four seasoned trustees viewed attending the state associations meetings as the most beneficial.

Seasoned trustees. Seasoned trustees described what they gleaned as most beneficial regarding the professional development activities. Almost all revolved around attending the state association and national meetings. Some of their comments are included here.

> But what was very helpful is seeing how that budget was organized and understanding the board's role in the budget. Being an educator, of course, I was very interested in the academic side of the house and still am. I keep my distance staying in my role. I was interested in hearing the huge number of programs we have and the services that we provide. I remember being impressed with the technical side of the operation . . . so that was really an amazing opportunity for me to be able to see the kinds of technology that was [*sic*] here at the college. (IL-S-2)

> My first impression was that the state association training probably had the most impact for me and maybe for a couple of reasons. One, I got to see how big it really was since I was learning from that without really going to the training. Inside the training, they talked about issues for new trustees and I could relate to everything they talked about. We talked about things that I wasn't really comfortable talking about with my peers and my school because I should know that. I don't; I'm a dummy. (IL-S-1)

> I would have to say at the top of the list is our state board association. We are right in the heart of what drives Wisconsin and it gives us really a good opportunity to network with our colleagues so that our program wants and needs are very similar so it gives us opportunities to observe and to be able to investigate and gain knowledge and gain access to the needs of our students in Wisconsin. (WI-S-1)

> It is through the board association, just talking to someone and knowing that I was in the same boat. The thing I really appreciated was the networking. I felt a little bit that I was so underprepared. But I was not really, but you had the feeling of whether I am out of my league here. You realize you are not, but everybody has something to offer. (WI-S-2)

New trustees. The professional development activities cited by new trustees as most beneficial were a number of operational topics including the mission of the college, finances, accreditation, and unions. This can be seen from their comments.

> I would say first of all, understanding the mission of the college because that will always serve as the foundation. So, understanding the mission of the college.

Getting to know some of the faculty because I wanted to know who are the people in the classrooms. Before I started learning policies and procedures, I wanted to know some fundamental things about the college. (WI-N-1)

It was finance. If I would have had a one-page flowchart that said revenue emerges from these sources . . . it is basically on 8 x 11 or maybe an 11 x 17, and it is a flowchart. It is very graphic, it is a "see Dick, see Jane," this happens first, and it is played out on a 12-month period. You basically start out with this is where we have to be on this date. You will approve a budget on this date, no matter what. And then you start backing it to the beginning of the fiscal year. That puts things into perspective. (WI-N-2)

The basic building blocks of the college would be Number 1. Apart from that is what are the inputs or drivers that influence those different criteria? What's happening in our area? Political issues of the state. Were there any problems with labor? What is our contract cycle? Accreditation is obviously key. Those kinds of big things of how do we . . . run the business of the college and let's understand the different components of those. (IL-N-2)

What was lacking in their professional development activities for both seasoned and new trustees centered on relevancy. Trustees need to understand how everything is tied together and have it presented to them in the context of their decision-making process. For example, one seasoned trustee voiced her displeasure that she needed to learn about cafeteria and bookstore contracts and felt they were not very important to know. An explanation regarding the relevancy of the information presented to the board was lacking. An ill-advised contract approved by the board can saddle the institution with a significant financial commitment. Two of the seasoned trustees indicated what was lacking revolved around the work as a board, or according to one trustee, "boardsmanship."

Seasoned trustees. Seasoned trustees described what was lacking or what was least beneficial regarding the professional development activities. Some of their comments included the following:

> Yeah, I remember one person, nice guy, still here, talked about requisitions and bids, the cafeteria and the bookstore, and I am thinking, "*Who cares?*" It was that I suppose I needed to have it, but it seemed like the least urgent at that point of all things I needed to know. (I1-S-2)

Two seasoned trustees expressed what they perceived as lacking as information regarding what would assist the working of the board.

> The other thing is [a] fact I will admit, that I do not know all the Robert's Rules of Order, etc. I usually rely on other people, which is not always necessarily good. Sometimes in trustee meeting or board meetings, I should say there are emotional things that arise and you are pretty well aware of that and sometimes the meetings could go a little better if we were better versed or more knowledgeable . . . in how exactly things should go. (WI-S-2)

> It has to be boardsmanship, how you work with each other, including that trust and respect for each other. When you have a good working board, everybody is at ease at these board meetings. People feel they can speak up. They can ask questions. The administrators feel more at ease and I think that there is less stress. If you have a rogue trustee who is making notes of everything, you can tell they are out to get you. Well, doggone it, the board meeting is going to be a little more tense. You will not be as comfortable or relaxed, which is what you need to be. The administrators are going to be on guard thinking, "*I am going to have to think about this and this. What if they ask me this?*" (IL-S-1)

Two of the new trustees felt the following items were lacking in their professional development activities: (a) communications, (b) overview of the college programs, and (c) the process of building the budget. They expressed they would have preferred to have learned more about these items. Following are their comments.

> Better communication around what are the expectations of the board from a macro perspective and also from . . . you know we are operating on a 12-month calendar. What are the key things we should focus on at different periods of time? From every standpoint—from financing, from academics, from community *X*, *Y*, and *Z*. That would be helpful, to frame it in a way that you could say, "Okay, it is November, we are ending the term, let's understand what we have to do to get ready for the next term as a board." (IL-N-2)

> I guess if I were to get some orientation, the first thing I would have liked to have had was a comprehensive overview of the programs that are offered at _____. I find out about them now on piecemeal basis, but I would like to understand how the college sees itself fitting into the institution and how it is doing that. Another

thing I would like to understand better is the process of building the budget. As a piece of that, I would like to understand the negotiation process with the various [*sic*], in particular, the union, but any of the constituencies within the university. (IL-N-1)

The trustees were asked how often should professional development activities be scheduled and all of the seasoned trustees discussed that there are plenty of opportunities for professional development activities at both the state and national level. Interestingly, none of the participants indicated the need for professional development activities provided by the college. All focused on the state or national professional development activities. Almost all of the trustees indicated the need for quarterly professional development activities, while one seasoned trustee said everyone should attend activities as frequently as they can. Only two of the four seasoned trustees recognized that attending these activities would be costly.

Seasoned trustees. Seasoned trustees indicated professional development activities should be held quarterly. Two of the participants did acknowledge the cost of these activities might be prohibitive. Some of their comments are included here.

> You get board retreats, which provide opportunities to learn about things. You have the state organizations (held at least quarterly). . . for Illinois, and not every state is as organized as Illinois. There is no doubt we probably have one of the most organized groups in the country, maybe top three. (IL-S-1)

> I am comfortable with what we have right now (quarterly) and the reason being is if you do it more often, it is obviously more costly. It is more costly and more time-consuming. If you do it any less, it is less effective. (WI-S-1)

> Oh, gosh we have, in Wisconsin, four quarterly meetings. This next year, it will be three because of budget cuts, which is really a shame. We are going back and forth on that. (WI-S-2)

New trustees. Three out of the four new trustees believed quarterly meetings were just the right amount, and expressed their thoughts on this subject in the following manner.

> I would like to try doing something on a quarterly basis. For example, two national meetings, like the legislative, and then the annual ACCT, and then a couple sessions in Springfield, and I would like to make some sessions in Chicago as well. (IL-N-1)

> In terms of frequency, once or twice a year, potentially every quarter. I would say, in the ideal state, once a quarter. (IL-N-2)

> I can only speak for Wisconsin, but I think the quarterly meetings are fine. I think quarterly, but national meetings should almost be mandatory. You have to go and press the flesh . . . you are a board member. You get your tush out there and you talk. Quarterly, if well done, is a wonderful thing. It is more than adequate. (WI-N-2)

Chait *et al.*'s Competencies for Effective Boards

Education Competency

Although no perfect model for the governance of board of trustees exists, the education competency espoused by Chait *et al.* (1993) suggests that the board is self-entrusted to take the necessary steps to make sure its members are well informed. This competency seems to suggest that a culture of continual learning must be emphasized as part of any professional development activity for trustees for the very reason that each time the board meets, a new group dynamic is produced particularly when a new trustee takes his or her seat as a governing board member. Board engagement strategies that are deliberate and intentionally promote a culture of learning and reflection are vital to the long-term success of any board of trustees. In addition, the existence of a learning culture, continually nurtured and accepted, can strengthen the ever-changing group dynamics of the board of trustees.

Interpersonal Competency

This competency encourages and recognizes that the board must be functioning as a cohesive group to be effective and high performing. Chait *et al*. (1993) stressed the need for a coherent group in which the interpersonal competency of the board nurtures the board's collective welfare and enables it to function well as a group. Trusteeship is built on the trust and interdependence of one's fellow members. Even when governing board members strenuously debate and advocate for a particular issue, at the end of the day, the board is a group and makes its decisions public with one voice. However, differing opinions and points of view should not stifle the lively art of debate. If differing informative discussions and perspectives are not allowed, the stage can be set for groupthink to seep into the boardroom, which is never healthy.

None of the participants mentioned that any of their professional development activities addressed the idea that the board operates as a group. Only two seasoned trustees spoke in broad terms about the board as a group, but not with any specificity as to the importance of understanding the dynamics and complexities of how a group forms.

Interestingly, however, two seasoned trustees did address the negative aspects and the consequences as a result of an ineffectively functioning group and for failing to evaluate or reflect on the performance of the group. One seasoned trustee did address the issue as a group and recognized that the dynamics of the group can change based on new members, as noted in the following sample comments:

> If you have a rogue trustee who is making notes of every little thing, you can tell [they] are out to get you. (IL-S-1)

> They don't want to evaluate themselves. They think that's a waste of
> time. . . . They don't want to change. They want to be able to walk into the door,
> have their 2-hour meeting, and leave. (WI-S-1)

> It is the whole group. When you bring on a new member, they bring a new
> perspective from the past. First you are a little nervous when somebody comes on.
> You hear they want to pound their ideas through. Once they get on, they see the
> respect, the common respect that is there. (WI-S-2)

Group Socialization

It is interesting to note that none of the trustees mentioned any effort to become

high-performing boards or even what it would involve to reach that level of performance

as a board acting as a group. Such phrases as board engagement, culture of the group, and

meaningful deliberation or partnerships with the president were discussed, but not as a

clear and convincing part of their roles and responsibilities. Using the collective

intelligence of the board to work through complex issues together to reach difficult

decisions was not articulated, as would have been expected.

The board's group dynamics were discussed, but the trustees did not express

thoroughly how this concept affects the board as a whole, either positively or negatively.

Every time the board meets, a new group dynamic is produced, and the same is true each

time a new member joins the group. There was very little discussion of the board as a

group or any education opportunities made available to them. Most trustees discussed

their role in a linear or one-dimensional fashion, which is not surprising; professional

development and training did not connect the dots as to how this information would be

used in the context of making decisions as a board member. "Here is the information that

you need to know" was presented, but what may appear to be lacking is the group

socialization and how the decisions that must be reached are really processed as a group

and how this process may alter the dynamics of the board. In the interviews with the participants, no participant mentioned that his or her professional development activities included significant amounts of training dedicated to governing as a group, which is exactly what the trustees are obligated to do.

Educational strategies that are deliberate and intentional that do promote a culture of learning and reflections are vital to the long-term success of any board of trustees. In addition, the existence of a learning culture, continually nurtured and accepted, can strengthen the ever-changing group dynamics of the board of trustees and should be included as part of any professional development activities for all board members.

Adult Learning Principles

It is evident from the participants' comments that they did receive a great deal of information about the institution prior to taking their seat as a board member. However, the sharing of this vital information facilitated by the use of Knowles' (1990) adult learning principles may not have occurred. According to Knowles (1990), "Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it" (p. 57). The information received by the trustee should assist each to accomplish his or her responsibilities and fulfill his or her role. From the following comment, it is essential to have professional development activities explaining the trustee's role in decisions that fulfill the mission of the institution, and not to exercise a personal grudge.

> Trustees, when they run for the board, don't realize what it all entail. They don't understand the time commitment. They have no concept of the time commitment, if they are going to do it right. They don't understand who the players are going to be. All they are thinking is they are going to be on the board. And that's probably as far as they are thinking. Or they have an axe to grind or [are] upset with a teacher and [think], *I'll run for the board and get them fired.*" If there is a way

we can prepare trustees before they get on the board, I think that would help a lot. (IL-S-1)

According to Knowles (1990), adults are relevancy-oriented and must understand that what they are learning is applicable to their responsibilities to be of value. Therefore, upon receipt of information related to their specific college or the general duties of trustees, it should be contextually situated with examples and explanations as to the relevance of how this information is needed to make decisions. The more the information can be seen as directly related to activities of the board, the better it is understood in assisting the trustee to become a more effective as a board member. For example, one of the new trustees expressed this thought as follows:

> I always say to my students, "You eat a sandwich one bite at a time." When I'm talking about taking large pieces of information, break it into something that is digestible and understandable. It would probably always be good if there were a series of introductions into board work. (WI-N-1)

As suggested by this participant, the enormous amount of information that is required by the trustee to know could be segmented and, using adult learning principles, include explanations and descriptions as to the relevancy of the information.

The adult learning principles also indicate that adults are self-directed and goal-oriented. This suggests that, as the individual assesses his or her own results or accomplishments, boards of trustees should also engage in self-reflection to evaluate their own performance. Knowles (1990) described adult learners by stating, "Once they have arrived at that self-concept, they develop a deep psychological need to be seen by others and treated by others as being capable of self-direction" (p. 58). The professional development activities made available to the trustee should emphasize that they are responsible and are held accountable for those decisions. Knowles (1990) agreed, stating

"Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own decisions" (p. 58). One seasoned trustee articulated this thought by suggesting the following.

> WI S2: As a trustee . . . it is a learning experience. We also learn. For trustees, it is an ongoing learning experience. That's the reason why I feel it is so important for trustees to get out in the world and to network with other trustees throughout the country so we aren't living in silos. We aren't just being told what our administration just wants us to hear. Because we are the leaders . . . the bottom line is that we are responsible.

This is no doubt utilizing the theory of adult learning as expressed by Malcolm Knowles (1990) will have a significant impact on both the presentation and content of professional development activities for new and seasoned trustees. Making a concerted effort to embrace adult learning principles will directly advance the capabilities of the trustee and, as a result, improve board performance. The andragogical model espoused by Knowles specifies the characteristics of adult learners: they are self-directed, have accumulated life experiences, are goal-oriented, are relevance-oriented, practical, and must be shown respect. Thus, those providing professional development activities should understand that adults learn by the recognition that the information they need to know is relevant to their role as a trustee. The learning experience should include and be reflective of their past experiences.

Groupthink

None of the participants specifically mentioned groupthink by name or the harmful effects it can have on group's (i.e., board of trustees') decisions. Trustees must not allow groupthink to diminish the board's effectiveness by not allowing dissenting opinions to be considered. Efforts to strive for unanimity and by ignoring alternatives to reach decisions quickly, either wittingly or unwittingly, can negatively alter the course of

action that a board should consider in its decision-making process. Group pressures to make decisions quickly and that seek to maintain unanimity among the members can open up the possibility of a faulty or irrational conclusion that has little chance for success.

Documents

Participants received documents regarding being a board member from a variety of organizations. Many documents were either provided or made available that were institution-specific (e.g., annual and foundation reports, student demographics, strategic goals and objectives, credit and noncredit program offerings, capital projects, and characteristics of the population that the community college served). The documents received by the trustees came from either the institution itself or from state or national trade associations that specifically serves the needs of community college trustees. The orientation process was typically provided by the president of the institution who was, at times, assisted by the chair of the board and other administrative leaders.

Besides generic documents regarding their own institutions, a variety of information and documents available on how to be an effective trustee is presented in Table 17. Upon review of the documents, it was found they offer little to the trustee regarding working in a group; such information would result in a well-performing board. The documents did not address the need to present the wealth of information given to the trustee to read and understand professional development activities in a format that would enhance trustee learning (based on adult learning principles).

Table 17. *Primary Sources of Documents for Trustees*

Source (website)	Offering

Source (website)	Offering
Illinois Community College Trustees Association (http://www.iccb.org)	*Welcome to the Board: A Handbook for New Trustees.* The handbook provides an overview of the higher educational system in Illinois, duties and responsibilities of a trustee, the law governing community colleges.
Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association, Inc. (http://www.districtboards.org)	*Guide to the Appointment of District Board Member.* This guide gives an explanation of the appointment process of trustees in Wisconsin, along with primary responsibilities and district board composition. District board members are also given a set of competencies explain the duties and tasks of the technical college trustee.
Association of Community College Trustees (http://www.acct.org)	"New Trustee Academy" provides documents related to the history of the community college system, job description, role of the trustee, the role of the board, how to be an effective chair, rules of order, board/CEO relationship, the role of advocacy, presidential evaluation, and the importance of board evaluation.
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (http://www.agb.org)	A resource on higher education governance and leadership issues for academic governing boards, boards of institutionally related foundations, and senior-level campus administrators.

These documents provide a wealth of information pertaining to the governing process in Illinois, Wisconsin, and at a national level for the trustee. The fiduciary duties are clearly explained; however, professional development activities must focus on the dynamics of working with a diverse group of individuals as they face difficult decisions. Few educational tools are available that delve into the psychological aspects of how adults learn, the importance of group socialization, and how to avoid the pitfalls that can be the result of groupthink. The board of trustees will continue to face many challenges

that require thoughtful provocative engagement of all members to achieve the status of

high-performing and respectful policy makers of their institutions. Trustees will need all

of the possible tools available to them to ensure the educational quality of the institution.

Summary

It is evident that the participants in this study were not very well prepared to take

their seats as trustees. Admittedly, the state and local associations played a significant

role in assisting the trustees to become more knowledgeable in their positions, but this

knowledge may have come sometime after they were already seated, if at all. The

research produced no curriculum for trustees that included the theories of group

socialization, adult learning, and avoidance of the groupthink as part of the professional

development activities. These theories are of paramount importance for the development

and education of the trustee. To reach the pinnacle of effectiveness or at least have the

ability to strive for this status, as called for by this research, requires that these theories to

be an integral part of professional development training for 2-year postsecondary trustees.

CHAPTER 5.

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Actions and decisions by college boards can have far-reaching positive or negative ramifications for the institution. In these times of increased accountability, governing boards of public institutions face complex challenges such as improving quality, maintaining access and affordability, reducing costs, facilitating student learning outcomes, and advancing retention and graduation rates. Trustees serve as volunteers and are entrusted by the public to serve as stewards who are committed to providing quality educational opportunities for all enrolled at their institutions. To accomplish this leadership responsibility also requires boards of trustees to work collectively and effectively as a group, resulting in a high-performing and engaged board.

This qualitative case study sought to explore the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for trustees serving at 2-year postsecondary institutions. The study involved eight participants from two states in the Midwest who were elected or appointed to their positions as members of a governing board. Research findings are based on their shared insights and perceptions into the roles and responsibilities of board members and the professional development activities they feel are needed to prepare them to function well in this truly unique American system of governance. However, transferability of study findings and recommendations can have implications across all spectrums of higher education governance structures.

Trustees come from all walks of life and the majority of trustees are not academicians. Yet, because of their position on the board, they are ultimately responsible

for the most critical decisions affecting any institution. There is no doubt trustees are dedicated to the colleges they serve. Therefore, it is prudent for trustees to have available carefully crafted, tailored, timely, and meaningful opportunities to enhance their understanding and knowledge of the issues so that they can make these crucial decisions. This study provided some insights into how to accomplish this task for the benefit of all. This final chapter includes the following: (a) brief overview of the research study described in Chapters 1 through 4, which establishes a context for the research findings; (b) summary of the findings, followed by implications for community colleges, organized by the research and guiding questions; (c) overview of the Griffin framework for effective professional development for governing boards, designed for nonprofit and for-profit boards to improve governing boards effectiveness; and (d) recommendations for further research.

Overview of the Research Study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the purpose of the study regarding the trustees at two Midwestern 2-year postsecondary institutions. It described the significance of the study and how these uniquely American institutions are governed by individuals residing in the community. In addition, the chapter included a discussion of how these trustees, whether appointed or elected, all share the same responsibility to assure that the mission of the institution is met. A brief overview of the conceptual framework and the design of the study were included.

In Chapter 2, the literature review provided a conceptual framework for the study and a structure for analysis of the data obtained. A history of the community and technical college movement was presented that included a discussion on the governance

of community colleges. Statutory laws from Illinois and Wisconsin that affect the role of the trustees in these two states, along with the differences and commonalities between the two community college systems in these two states were outlined in detail. Competencies for trustees, as developed by Chait *et al.* (1993) provided a context as to how nonprofit organizations could implement these six competencies as they strive to become more effective in their governance structure. As boards of trustees can only function and make decisions as a group, the concepts and theories surrounding group socialization and groupthink were also explored. Adding to the discussion of how and in what ways the content of professional development activities are delivered to the trustees, Malcolm Knowles' (1970) adult learning principles were also included.

These theories were selected because of the significant lack of literature and research regarding the importance of trustees functioning as a group, how and in what ways trustees learn their role and responsibilities to effectively govern a college, and the pitfalls groupthink can bring to a board of trustees. No research was found regarding the relevance of crafting professional development delivery modalities for trustees of community and technical colleges. Therefore, findings of this research serve to address these gaps in the literature.

The study's design and methods employed were addressed in Chapter 3. The study was a qualitative case study situated in an interpretive paradigm. Eight trustees, four seasoned and four new, from Illinois and Wisconsin were participants in the study. Semi-structured interviews were the primary data collection method in addition to a demographic survey and documents. This design allowed for an in-depth exploration into the trustees' perceptions and relevant insights when answering the research purpose and

guiding questions. Methods and strategies employed to enhance the trustworthiness and strength of the study were detailed.

Chapter 4 presented the data and analysis garnered from the eight participants. Anonymity for the trustees and confidentiality of their responses were protected by assigning designation initials for each. The data was analyzed utilizing two of Chait *et al.'s* (1993) competencies of governing boards, the educational dimension and interpersonal dimension, and the three a priori themes of group socialization, adult learning principles, and groupthink. A review of documents relevant to board of trustee professional development activities was also included.

Findings and Implications

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to identify the adequacy and availability of the professional development activities for 2-year postsecondary trustees that assist them to become more effective in shaping higher education policy decisions.

Guiding Question 1

What are the perceived roles and responsibilities of selected community and technical college boards of trustees' members?

Findings. Although the findings indicated a wide variety of responses from participants, they had demographic similarities. Five of the trustees came from a business background, two from executive positions in the not-for-profit world, and one was a previous education teacher. Three of the trustees were over 60 years of age, four were between 46 to 59 years of age, and one was between the ages of 25 and 30. Two were women; six were men, with one African American.

Each participant brought a certain skill set to his or her position as either an elected or appointed trustee. However, it was apparent his or her previous business and organizational experiences did not necessarily provide for an easy transition into the role as a college trustee. Even though it has been generally voiced that trustees bring their professional experience to their trustee position, few could concisely discuss and explain their trustee role or responsibilities. In fairness to the participants, assuming the role of a trustee in a complex organization such as a college is not a comfortable, quick, or easy task. Building competency at any given complicated and multifaceted task, job, position, or situation inevitably takes constant and consistent time and effort. There is a learning curve. This was particularly apparent when most participants freely expressed the general consensus, "I really didn't know what my responsibilities were as a trustee."

However, there was no ambiguity to the participants' responses. Each could describe some important piece of the role or responsibility he or she had as a trustee. Collectively, they did communicate various parts of their overall duties, but these reports were not necessarily expressed in a succinct manner, which raises questions about their understanding of trustees' roles and responsibilities. These questions bring to the forefront the breadth and depth of preparation received in their professional development activities as they began their terms as a governing board member.

Implications for community colleges. College boards of trustees are vested with the ultimate authority to make policy and key decisions. To do this effectively and wisely, they must be knowledgeable. Trustees need to know vital information and understand the process of working together to be a well-performing board and arrive at appropriate decisions. Ongoing professional developmental activities to educate trustees

must focus on two general fronts: the operations of the institution itself and the state system where it is situated, and an understanding of their role and responsibility as a board member.

Providing trustees ongoing opportunities for a variety of professional development activities is a joint commitment of both the college and the board itself. These activities are not done during the board meetings but should be offered routinely and consistently throughout the year. Because turnover of board members occurs frequently, the regularity of educational offerings is essential. Consistent core components of these offerings could incorporate such topics as fulfilling the mission, hiring and evaluating the president, mentoring of new members, challenges facing the college, the strategic plan, and meeting the college's fiduciary obligations.

Education of each member should not focus on only their roles and responsibilities, but include insights and information pertinent to the effective working of a group. Without a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, unprepared trustees can lead to a dysfunctional board and perhaps a trustee who may develop into what Dr. Terry O'Banion (2009), referred to in his book, *The Rogue Trustee: The Elephant in the Room.* O'Banion stated, "Rogue trustees run roughshod over the norms and standards of behavior expected of public officials appointed or elected to office. They tend to trample over the ideas and cautions of the CEO, the trustee chair, and member trustees" (O'Banion, 2009, p. 12). The educational preparation of trustees, therefore, is key to the college's success and needs to be acknowledged as a primary obligation of the board. How to accomplish this is known; now these activities merely need to be done.

Guiding Question 2

> *How, and in what ways, do community and technical college trustees believe they influence policy decisions in their institutions?*

Findings. In essence, a policy is the general principle by which an institution's management is guided. Formulation of policy by trustees does indeed set the directions of the college and thus will alter the lives of students and the college's varied stakeholders. These policies transform ideas, thoughts, and feelings from the realm of possibility into the concrete of the present. The directions established by policy are an exercise of power of the board of trustees and are a core element of governance.

The present power system in higher education is reflected in the actions of the board acting as a group in competition, collaboration, and cooperation with one another to make institutional policy decisions for the many. The quality of the policies, therefore, depends on the competency of the board to manage policy-making processes. There is no doubt it is complex and multidimensional in nature. A board's process of policy making is also widely acknowledged as residing within a sociocultural and political context. But there has been no clear understanding of what constitutes this board competency or of what the policy formulation process should resemble. As a result, it has been difficult to actually understand it and know how to enhance it.

In this study, trustees 'answers regarding how they influenced policy at their institutions were quite diverse. Some did recognize the political context in which policies were made and that the process, if not handled well, could lead to a divisive board. Others felt establishing policy offered the opportunity to be reflective and saw policy formulation as a forward-looking instrument and a chance to make healthy changes. A

few participants underlined the need for a collegial working relationship with the president and others in administration, and one felt policy decisions should be aided by the intelligent use of data.

However, what was not clear was an understanding of the importance of policy formulation by the board. There was little mention of policies setting direction for the institution, or being influenced by external factors such as inadequate financial resources, state and federal rules and regulations, accrediting agencies, and student demands. Lastly, it seemed the participants saw little difference between policies and procedures.

Implications for community colleges. A policy guides the institution, provides the direction, and establishes the boundaries from which the administration can perform the functions necessary to operate the college. It is the president's job to implement these policies, and it is the responsibility of the board to monitor and evaluate the implementation and progress of these policies. The policy decisions can and do have long-term effects on the institution, and poor decisions can take decades to reverse or modify.

Therefore, the following steps are recommended for the evaluation and review of established policies and formulation of a new policy. Trustees should ask themselves the following generic questions:

1. What areas in the college are affected by this policy?

2. What is the objective or desired outcome of this policy?

3. What action has been taken or needs to be taken (e.g., political, economic, administrative mechanisms) in the process of implementation of the policy?

It is important the board members understand that any policy decision will have intended and most likely an unintended consequence after implementation and are not to be undertaken hastily. Critical to the formulation of a good policy is having timely and accurate data and information. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the college staff to provide the right amount of accurate data and information to the trustees so that they may debate and discuss the relevant issues to formulate a good policy.

Consequently, some of the educational topics must surround working as a group and socialization concepts to enhance trustees' talents to work as efficiently as possible in a group setting that fosters the appreciation and tolerance for all opinions to be heard. This leads to the making of sound policy decisions. Without ensuring adequate time and proper deliberations, quality data and information for the discussion prior to policy formulation, the old adage of "garbage in, garbage out" will ultimately result.

Guiding Question 3

What professional development activities are available and are perceived as beneficial and what seems to be lacking when addressing the learning needs of all trustees?

Findings. Overwhelmingly, the new and seasoned trustees described that their professional development activities held at their local institutions as a single informal orientation to the college. Participants indicated their desire for educational activities that prepared them to be immediately effective in their roles. Many felt this orientation was not as useful as it could have been. However, they commented that many topics included were beneficial, particularly discussions on the budget process. Both the seasoned and new trustees felt the orientation process needed to be much more than a carousel ride

around the institution, spending hours and hours with the president, and then stops at the different functional areas of the college that included only cursory downloading of information. This type of orientation took an extraordinary amount of time and effort on the part of both the trustees and the employees.

The findings also indicated that the new trustees needed the first year to learn about their specific college but, after that, the participants strongly felt it was advantageous to attend state and national associations to expand their knowledge. Many expressed that attending these meetings opened their eyes to the larger context from which to view their new roles. Clearly, attending the state and national associations received high marks and was considered by many of the trustees as a watershed event in their professional development as trustees. However, these state and national associations do not and actually cannot train all of the new and seasoned trustees. In addition, some participants expressed that travel was costly and often time-prohibitive to attend.

The findings from both the new and seasoned trustees clearly indicated the professional development information was not contextualized; they found it difficult to understand. According to a tenet of adult learning principles, adults need to know why they are learning something (i.e., its relevancy to the situation). This relevancy-oriented requirement of adult learners is very pertinent to trustees because they must understand in a short period of time massive amounts of college-related data and information. Contextualization of information allows providers of the information the opportunity to relate the subject matter content to real-world situations—to situations the trustees will find at the college. This assists the trustees to knowingly and actively create meaning in relationship to their previous experience tied to the situations found at the college. The

trustees commented they had information regarding students, faculty, unions, operations, and functional areas of the administration as well as the community and technical college system, but the relevancy of this information and how it was tied to the responsibilities of the board was lacking.

It was apparent these participants did not see the board working as a group as an element to be including in professional development activities. A few participants did mention they were very thankful they had a mentor who was a seasoned board member that took them under their wing because otherwise they would have been lost. Only one trustee mentioned the need for professional development activities focused on boardsmanship for all.

Implications for community colleges. The professional development of trustees is an investment in the future for community and technical college institutions. The results for the college can be disastrous if a trustee assumes his or her board tenure without a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities. It is obvious; this trustee unpreparedness can have immediate and long-term effects on the operation of the institution. From the moment trustees assume their seats at the board table, they need to be knowledgeable about the institution, understand their role and responsibilities, and recognize that they can only be a high-level performing board if they work effectively as a group.

Boards operate as a unit or group, not as individual members. If boards are performing at their peak, it is because each individual member is cognizant of his or her individuality, yet recognizes the need to function and make decisions as a group. Taking a seat on a board without adequate knowledge of the institution, and understanding the

importance of working as a group can increase the risk of poor decisions. A trustee who is not prepared to engage in the debate, dialogue, and discourse regarding the future direction of community and technical college puts at risk the future direction of the institution.

Regularly scheduled, well-constructed, and meaningful professional development activities for trustees should be provided and facilitated by the college. Though the participants felt strongly that these activities needed to be held quarterly, for many colleges, assuming the costs incurred with sending six or seven trustees three to four times a year to state and national association meetings is just not affordable. In these times of financial constraint and ever-tightening budgets, trustees must practice cost-conscious behaviors when selecting conferences to attend. Trustees must understand that several trustees frequently attending state and national meetings will deplete the travel funds for professional development activities and conferences for faculty, staff, and administrators.

A compromise might be for each trustee to annually attend one travel conference with two to three activities or retreats sponsored by the college on or near the home campus. It is also important that attendance at these state and national meetings be equitably dispersed among the trustees, allowing each an opportunity to gain from this travel activity.

The content for educational programs and the mode of delivery of these college-sponsored activities are just as important as their timely offering. Paying particular attention and adhering to adult learning principles while crafting the program presentation will be extremely beneficial for the trustees and, in turn, for the institution.

For the highest return on the investment of time, energy, and dollars, the educational

program content must be designed with the adult leaner in mind. These adult learning

principles to recognize and adapt include the following:

1. Connect the program content to the trustees' knowledge/experience. Adults

    learn at various rates and draw from their past experiences and skills to assist

    them in connecting new information to what they already know. This process

    fosters learning. The incorporation of metaphors, similes, and analogies

    provide strategies and methods for trustees to become actively engaged in

    constructing meaningful knowledge. It is by this linking of new ideas or

    concepts to prior knowledge or previous experiences that understanding is

    fostered.

2. Adults are goal-oriented and appreciate a well-organized educational program

    that has clearly defined elements. Presenters should show participants how

    understanding the content (data and information) assists them to attain their

    goal of becoming better trustees.

3. Adults are relevancy-oriented and must see a reason for learning something.

    Presenters must provide real-world examples and connecting the relevance of

    the data and information decisions, policies, and strategic plans needed to

    benefit the college. This improved understanding advances the mission of the

    college.

4. Adults are practical. Presenters must convey how and in what ways the

    professional development programs are relevant to them as a trustee.

5. As with all learners, adults need to be shown respect. Presenters and trustees should treat each other as equals, allowing each to voice his or her opinions and suggestions freely.

6. Adults learn by repetition; therefore, professional development activities need to be offered with regularity, presenting the same or similar content but in a different context. Rarely is anything new learned effectively with only one exposure.

Showing relevancy and contextualizing the data information serves as the cornerstone of trustee professional development activities. In general, the professional development activities for trustees need to incorporate three content elements: (a) growth of the individual's boardsmanship and development of the board as a group, (b) knowledge and understanding the operations of the institution and the constituents the college serves, and (c) awareness of state and federal policies and trends relevant to 2-year postsecondary institutions.

Conclusions

The governing board members of 2-year postsecondary institutions will continue to face complex challenges in the 21st century. This will require trustees who are well-prepared the moment they take their seats on governing boards. Therefore, the quality of professional development activities they receive prior to assuming their seats and throughout their tenure on the board is of paramount importance. One might say a predictor of the board's effectiveness tomorrow is the regularity and quality of the professional development activities provided today. Whether these informative programs are labeled as professional development activities, orientation, or training is of no

consequence. What is most relevant regarding these informative educational programs, nonetheless, are the following: (a) occur with regularity, (b) adult learning principles support the delivery of the content, and (c) content includes the concept of group socialization to foster the practices of a high-performance board.

Griffin Framework: Effective Professional Development for Governing Boards Educational Activities

The Griffin framework was designed to increase professional development programs effectiveness, efficiency, and relevancy. The framework is underpinned by elements based on the research findings. Educational programs for governing board members are often acknowledged as rather freeform, trying to address the ubiquitous topics, and covering whatever is needed. This framework presents the basis for a rational systems approach that is flexible enough to craft educational activities for new and seasoned governing board members at any institution.

The mission of the Griffin framework is to serve as an organizing guide to coordinate the systematic planning and presentation of any professional development activity. The framework reflects current understanding of the nature of adult learning and knowledge regarding the board functioning as a well-performing group. In addition, the framework infers the need to regularly provide educational activities and, as a result, enhance efficient use of the trustees' as well as the college's staff time and efforts designing and implementing these programs. Figure 5 illustrates the three important elements of the Griffin framework.
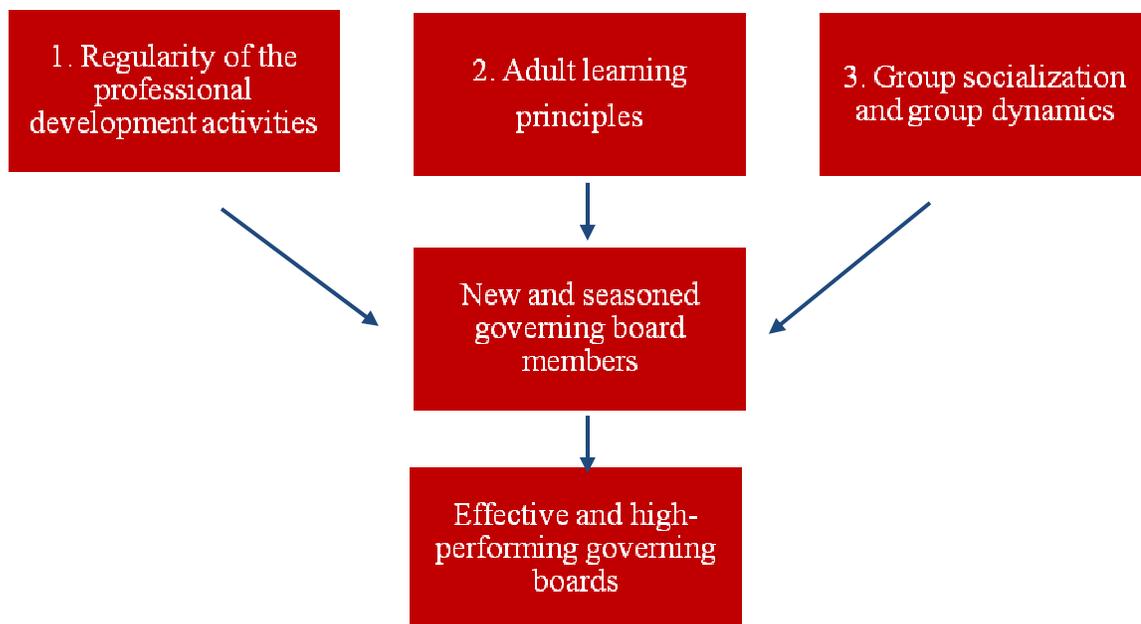
Figure 5. Griffin framework: Effective professional development for governing boards' educational activities.

Attention to these elements while developing board professional development activities consequently can have an immediate impact on individuals serving as board members and, therefore, the institutions they govern. Discussion of the three Griffin framework elements follows.

Element 1. Regularity of the Professional Development Activities

As a starting point for the both new and seasoned board members, the number of times the professional development activities occur is crucial. These activities should be available at least three to four times a year. Regularly presenting data and information at these quarterly optimal intervals strengthens and reinforces the trustees' understanding of

what is most significant to the institution. Boards only meet monthly and trustees are very busy with their own professional and personal lives. Therefore, it is logical to assume that information, rationales, and explanations previously presented may be forgotten. Items and information presented to the board, which is the basis of the decisions they must make, are often complex and complicated. For these reasons, to ensure valuable information (knowledge) is remembered, repetitive educational activities presented with regularity is required.

Element 2. Use of Adult Learning Principles in All Programs

The embedding of adult learning principles must be the basic tenet of all professional development activities engaged in by the board members. It is important for college administrators and staff designing board educational activities to understand that learning is a continuous process building on previous knowledge. What is more, individuals learn at different rates and, as a result, not all board members learn everything in one setting, or during one activity. Understanding adult learning principles actually places more responsibility on the program developers.

Basic adult learning principles state that adults are (a) autonomous and self-directed, (b) goal-oriented, (c) relevancy-oriented, (d) practical, and (e) have amassed myriad life experiences and knowledge. When adult learning principles are consistently included in the development of these programs, the results are positive, especially when presented in a context that has meaning for the trustees. When educational activities have relevance and the possibility for immediate application, each trustee will feel empowered. This allows the board as a whole to move from acquisition of material, information, and

data to application and problem solving as they strive to address the challenges faced by the institution.

Element 3. Incorporation of Topic: Group Socialization and Dynamics

The statutory authority exists relative to individuals serving on the college's board only when they operate together as the board. Inherent in the role of a board member is the requirement that each work effectively with the other trustees. Consequently, in order to effectively govern the college, board members must interact with a widely diverse group of people with a broad range of personalities and personal agendas.

Socialization is the process by which a trustee becomes an acceptable member of the board, behaves appropriately, understands the meaning of governing, knows the language, and holds the prevailing group beliefs and attitudes. Including the concepts of group socialization and group dynamics in board professional development activities can enhance the performance of the board. An understanding of group socialization can lead to a more collegial environment within which the board functions. Pertinent group socialization and group dynamic elements to include in professional development activities are the following: (a) the five stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning; (b) board dynamics change as new members are seated; (c) contentious issues affects the group dynamic; (d) every meeting may bring about new group dynamics; and (e) relationships between the board members change over time.

The understanding of how groups function can also lead to the prevention of groupthink. As the board strives for unanimity and/or consensus, the trustees may ignore alternatives that can possibly lead to poor decisions. Being able to recognize groupthink

and how to prevent it are extremely important concepts for governing boards to understand.

Summary

The ultimate outcome of this framework is to assist the college to enhance the engagement and productivity of its board. Including these elements as part of the professional development activity for trustees can lead to a high-performing board. This framework also can provide an organized foundation that prepares trustees to perform their duties by understanding their role from a contextual perspective. First of all, through education activities, the trustee gains familiarity, understanding, and knowledge of the institution, its operations, and the environment in which it functions. It is crucial trustees recognize the impact their decisions have on the institution, students, faculty, staff, and administrators and the constituents it serves. They must also be cognizant that all board decisions are influenced by the dynamics of the group.

Being mindful of the need for the regular educational activities and implementing strategies that include adult learning principles to efficiently and effectively design these professional development activities enables the board to make better decisions on behalf of the college, its employees, and stakeholders. Fostering a board culture that continuously pays attention to group socialization processes serendipitously promotes board self-evaluation efforts. Acknowledgement of the need to consider how the board is working produces better results for the board and the institution it governs. The Griffin framework can enhance board development and is relevant to 4-year universities and colleges, as well as not-for-profit and for-profit boards.

Recommendations for Further Research

Governing boards will continue to play a substantial role in 2-year postsecondary institutions, and the skills sets required of these trustees will be even more pronounced. The roles and responsibilities of the trustees must be clearly understood prior to taking their seats as they quickly face challenging decisions. The volatility of the financial resources, increasing accountability issues by regulators, and ensuring academic quality will require boards of trustees to work collectively as a group in order to successfully meet the institution's mission.

The individuals who serve as governing board members, whether elected or appointed, are very often novices to these positions; therefore, an orientation is required to provide an understanding of the operation of the institution as well as how to function as a member of a group. Research identifying core elements of these orientation activities could tailor the content and also provide insights into methods and strategies to reduce the time and effort of their development and presentation. In addition, research investigating how and in what ways to incorporate adult learning principles would enhance the effectiveness of these activities.

Additional research exploring the characteristics of effective boards would be helpful to all higher education institutions. Forward-thinking trustees, either elected or appointed, will be needed; these trustees must be able to see beyond the obstacles they face and work together in creative ways to solve the multitude of challenges higher education faces in the 21st century. Future research is needed to understand where the new trustees will be found, as well as their changing demographics. Also essential is the topic of how and in what ways the mentoring of new trustees is designed and

implemented to improve the effectiveness of college boards. To continue replenishing the

board membership, research to better understand the individual's motivation to serve as a

trustee would be of benefit to all changes.

As new generations of younger and more diverse members begin to fill the ranks

of governing boards, they will demand a new and different approach to board

engagement. These new trustees bring a wider scope of values, beliefs, and cultures to the

creation of an effective board. Research exploring the group dynamics and sociocultural

relationships surrounding the changing composition of boards and its influence on

decision making is needed.

It is also necessary to foster research regarding those individuals assuming the

leadership position as the board chair. Research to understand the leaders of these boards,

and their commonalities and differences could assist with the development of educational

programs for those holding these critical positions. In addition, topics surrounding

succession planning for the chair are crucial for the continued maintenance of high-

performing boards.

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Appendix A

Driving Questions Mapped to the Interview Questions

Guiding questions	Interview questions
1 .What are the perceived roles and responsibilities of selected community and technical college boards of trustee members?	1. Describe how you see your role and responsibilities as a community college/technical trustee. 2. Has your perception of your role and responsibility changed since you began your term? Please explain. Or 2. As a seasoned board member, has your perception of your role and responsibility changed since you started serving? Please explain.
2. How and in what ways do community and technical college trustees believe they influence policy decisions in their institutions?	3. Describe how you influence policy decision making at the college? 4. What are some of the factors you consider in making policy decisions for the college?
3. What professional development activities are available and are perceived as beneficial and what seems to be lacking which address the learning needs of all trustees?	5. Describe what professional development activities were made available to you as a new trustee? Or 5 a. Describe what professional development activities are available to you as a seasoned trustee? 6. What professional development activity did you feel was most beneficial? Please explain. 7. What professional development activity was the least beneficial? Please explain. 8. How often should professional development activities be scheduled for trustees? Please explain.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study that will take place from October, 2009, to January, 2011. 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 William M. Griffin, a doctoral student at National-Louis University, located in Chicago, Illinois.

I understand the study is entitled "The Whole is Greater than the Sum of the Individual Parts: A Case Study." The purpose of this study is to identify the adequacy and availability of professional development activities for two year postsecondary trustees which assist them to become more effective contributors in shaping higher education policy decisions.

I understand that my participation will consist of audio recorded interviews lasting 60 to 90 minutes with a possible second, follow-up interview lasting 60 to 90 minutes. I understand that I will receive a copy of my transcribed interview, at which time I may clarify information.

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

I understand that my anonymity will be maintained and the information I provide confidential.

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

I understand there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me, no greater than that encountered in daily life. Further, the information gained from this study could lead to a general understanding of the resources required in order to provide the learning opportunities for new and seasoned trustees so that they can contribute to a more effective governing board.

I understand that in the event I have questions or require additional information I may contact the researcher, William M. Griffin, 181 Winthrop Lane, Lake Forest, Illinois, 60045 (phone 847-295-7249, e-mail williammgriffin@comcast.net).

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that you feel have not been addressed by the researcher, you may contact my primary advisor and dissertation chair, Dr. Rebecca S. Lake, National-Louis University (Chicago Campus), 122 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60603 (phone: 312-261-3534, e-mail rebecca.lake@nl.edu).

Participant's signature:_____ Date:_____
Researcher's signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix C

Transcriptionist Confidentiality Form

This confidentiality form articulates the agreement made between William M. Griffin, the researcher, and [NAME OF INDIVIDUAL AND COMPANY OF A PROFESSIONAL TRANSCRIBER].

I understand and acknowledge that by transcribing the audio files provided to me by William M. Griffin, that I will be exposed to confidential information about the research study and the research participants. In providing transcription services, at no time will I reveal or discuss any of the information of which I have been exposed.

In addition, at no time will I maintain copies of the electronic or paper documents generated. Further, upon completing each transcription, I agree to provide the electronic and paper documents to the researcher:

William M. Griffin
181 Winthrop Lane
Lake Forest, IL. 60045
847-295-7249
williammgriffin@comcast.net

I understand that breach of this agreement as described above could result in personal and professional harm to the research participants for which I will be held legally responsible.

Transcriptionist's Signature:_____ Date:_____

Researcher's Signature:_____ Date:_____

Appendix D

Demographic Questionnaire for Study Participants

Date: _____

Participant Name: _____

Please complete this demographic questionnaire for this study.

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age Group:

  ☐ 25 – 30 years

  ☐ 31 – 35 years

  ☐ 36 – 40 years

  ☐ 41 – 45 years

  ☐ 46 – 50 years

  ☐ 51 – 55 years

  ☐ 56 – 60 years

  ☐ Over 60 years

3. Ethnicity:

  ☐ Asian or Pacific Islander

  ☐ American Indian or Alaskan

  ☐ Black, non-Hispanic

  ☐ Hispanic

  ☐ White, non-Hispanic

4. Trustee Information:

Institution: _____

City/State: _____

Committee position: _____

Number of years serving on the board: _____

Elected or appointed to the board: _____

Have you served as chairman of the board: _____ yes   no _____

If you have served as chairman of the board, for how number of years? _____

5. Current position: Please list your present full-time or part-time occupation:

Organization: _____

Job Title: _____

City/State: _____

Number of years in position: _____ From: _____/_____ to: ___/_____

6. Why did you want to sit on the board of trustees of the college?

Please describe: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. Please list your experience(s) that prepared you to serve on the board of trustees:

List the relevant experiences:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. Please list all degrees and certificates you have earned:

Degree/certificate	School	Location	Year

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your careful responses will provide substantive depth and clarity to this study and will aid in providing necessary context.

William M. Griffin
Doctoral Student
National-Louis University
williammgriffin@comcast.net
847-370-6979